Omani EFL Learners' Proficiency in Using Idiomatic Expressions: Researched Pedagogical Perspectives

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Abstract
The purpose of this pretest/posttest quasi-experimental study was to explore the strategies English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students use on understanding the meanings of idioms both in oral and written submissions. The study also investigated the strategies on comprehending the meaning of idioms and improving idiomatic vocabularies in the language learning processes to both English teachers and students. Further, the study began to identify the criteria of idiom and idiom-understanding aspects so that the identified EFL students will be able to guess and become familiar with frequently used idioms and their desired contexts.Omani university students in English 101 Basic Academic English course comprised the experimental (n=30) and control (n=30) groups. Both groups were exposed to the same curriculum and set of idioms. The experimental group received direct instructions: (pictures, videos and discussions) while learning idioms and the control group received input through traditional methods of lecturing in learning idioms. Students completed the Inference Task (Al·hassan, Haidar 2007) as pretest and posttest. Results indicated that Direct Instruction of idioms provided significant improvement of students' performance on the Inference Task. Given the positive study outcomes, EFL teachers would benefit from incorporating visual aids, direct instructions and active discussions which will automatically support specific common idioms, increase students' comprehension and thereby their communication skills.
Keywords: Omani EFL learners, idiomatic expressions, proficiency, direct instruction, inference task

Introduction

During Muamar Qadafiused's speech in the United Nations on September 23, 2012, (one so long that his interpreter collapsed), the former Libyan president used many figurative Arabic phrases. One of the phrases he used was "YazeedA'teenbilah." He did not trust the interpreter to translate the phrase, so he grabbed the headsets, and said, "I'm not sure how the translator would say this in English, but I will help him out. It means *adding insult to injury*." Despite the nuisance that Qadafi had been known for, he had a point. Some idiomatic expressions do not translate from one language to another, and they require knowledge and understanding of the source language, its culture and the target language.

So what are idioms? An idiom is a phrase or turn of phrase whose meaning is different from the individual words (Rundell & Fox, 2007), or a term that cannot be easily understood from original meaning of its separate words but that has a particular meaning of its own. Idiom teaching has in recent times attracted a greater level of interest in English learning contexts, from online learners and those who are using language textbooks. This trend reflects the necessity of including idioms in the process of learning English as a foreign language (EFL).

This ability to use idioms, therefore, establishes the figurative competence in the communicative competence (Celce-Murcia, 2008). Within this trend, the assessment of how EFL students use idioms in communication is attracting greater attention and concern. For example, English learners in Asia, such as pupils, university graduates, foreigners, and teachers of English language, have to be competent with idioms as part of the requirement for English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) in the national curriculum.

Earlier research done in various parts of the world has shown that idiom teaching might not have received enough concentration in past foreign language teaching frameworks (Vasiljevic, 2011). In Asia, for instance, very few teachers are aware of the roles of idioms in communicative competence. They may have faced difficulties in choosing a suitable teaching method, selecting idioms, and explaining the use of an idiom in its appropriate context. In many instances, teachers tend to avoid idioms in their language and teaching, though there have been considerable studies of learning and teaching approaches for idioms (Cooper, 1998; Lennon, 1998; Levorato & Cacciari, 1992; Prodromou, 2003; Zyzik, 2011).

The current research was motivated to find how practicable it is for international students to be taught English idioms. Even if they know the meaning and grammar of the phrase, students find them confusing. This is because most of the phrases have their own historical, philosophical, socio-cultural, and even political genesis that cannot be understood appropriately without context (Sadeghi, Dastjerdi, &Ketabi, 2010).

EFL and ESL students find English idioms difficult to learn and understand since their meanings differ from the literal meanings of the words. For example, *come rain or shine* is an idiom meaning *doing something no matter what happens*. Throughout this study, the terms "guessing" meanings of vocabulary items from the real written texts that were extracted from different online sources and "lexical inferencing" have been interchangeably used.

In many cases, learners can actually use the lexical mechanism of different idioms somewhat successfully to "guess" their meanings. For example, the phrase *follow your nose* is a figurative idiom. This idiom does not literally refer to the nose but to do what you feel is correct in a particular circumstance, despite the fact that you are not certain. Therefore by these examples, listeners have to identify and decide the phrase in both figurative and literal meaning.

Background

Since idioms are figurative and do not mean what they literally state, and since they are so common in spoken and written communication, understanding and producing idioms has been a key challenge to EFL students (Cooper, 1998). EFL teachers know the difficulty of studying English language idioms and therefore they try to simplify instructions for their students by either not giving enough attention to teaching idioms or by totally avoiding teaching them. In both cases it is problematic.

Cooper (1998) argues that idioms contain several literary devices such as metaphors, similes, and proverbs, which makes them difficult to understand since their meaning is figurative and relies on understanding background culture and context. He argues that idioms fit in the class of figurative language. Out of the four figurative expressions, idioms are the ones most often encountered in discourse. Idioms have also facilitated the best way of learning a word with the aid of a framework (Mondria & Wit- De Boer, 1991).The majority of the EFL speakers communicate in their native languages using idiom, for example the Arabic phrase "AkilAlaihA'dahruwaSharib" describes something that is old and there is no use for it anymore, but the literal meaning of it is *time has eaten and drank on it.*

Idioms have also been used in poetry to portray or explain a situation. Great English-language poets in the world like William Wordsworth and Paul Williams wrote many poems that use idioms. In his poem *My Sweet Idiom*, Paul Williams wrote,

> Feeling under the weather
> you could have knocked me down with a feather. It was
> like a bolt out of the blue, when I met you.

Poems that use idioms are very common, and some poets have composed entire poems running in idioms.

Idioms are grounded in a specific culture and language, and their meanings are unique to that language. In other words, idioms define appropriate language of citizens of a particular country (Onions, 1966). It is further argued that when idioms in one's language are translated to another language they are likely to lose their meaning because context does not translate as it is. Therefore, use of English idioms has been of great significance since they separate native or fluent speakers of a language from language learners. It is crucial to teach non-native speakers common idioms so that they can truly participate in the day-to-day speech in a manner that is natural, and so that comprehension of communication is not blocked by figurative language.

Problem Statement

Traditionally, idioms have been extremely difficult for foreign language learners and teachers because their meanings cannot be determined from the meaning of their constituent parts. In addition, the scarceness of teaching curriculum and lack of clear methodologies make learning difficult **(**Deignan, Gabrys, & Solska, 1997). Therefore, this study seeks to explore the strategies EFL students can use to guess the meaning of idioms so their communication will be more native-like and genuine. Proficiency of the language can only be achieved in the context of practicing and learning idioms (Wright, 1999). This study also seeks to learn why it is hard to learn idioms. Is it the lack of meaning, or is it the ineffectiveness of the instructional materials used to teach idioms in an EFL context? Therefore, the meaning cannot be derived from its constituent part, and this makes the learner unable to determine the meaning of an idiom easily (Irujo, 1986a).

Research Questions

The pretest/posttest quasi-experimental study addressed the following questions:

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores on the Inference (idiom) Task for EFL students who completed English 101 and did or did not receive direct instruction related to idiom understanding?

Research Question 2: Is the frequency of errors in guessing idiom meaning on the Inference Task different by type of error?

Hypotheses

This study proposes two major hypotheses that are based on the overall objectives. The first concern is the guessing efficiency of the selected sample of EFL students on English learning contexts. The second is on the

effectiveness of the criteria and techniques used to select and guess the meaning of idioms and on the effectiveness of the frequency of which sample subjects used techniques on guessing the meaning of idioms.

The two hypotheses are:
1. The sampled subjects will be able to provide a correct guess of the unfamiliar idioms that they will encounter on their English learning contexts both in oral and authentic written submissions.
2. The strategies that the subjects use to guess the meaning of the idiom in both oral and written submissions will not significantly affect the accuracy of their guessing. That means there is no considerable difference between the accurate, partially correct, and incorrect guesses, as a result of different techniques.

Limitations and Delimitations
This study was delimited to only those students who were enrolled in academic English 101 section 80 and 85 in the summer semester of 2014 at Dhofar University in Oman. This may limit generalization of the study.

This study included students who are from Dhofar governorate. Generalizations to other parts of the country may be limited due to the differences in lifestyle and language exposure. Students in this part of the country do not get the same chances to speak English outside of the classroom, as do students in Muscat. The number of English native speakers outside of campus is small.

Students' prior experiences with languages were not measured. Some students grew up speaking other languages besides Arabic, and that may affect the results of the study.

Significance of the Study
The focus on the strategies that EFL students use to understand the meaning of idioms may provide important pedagogical implications for teaching idioms in EFL settings.

The authentic texts measured students' understanding of idioms and are similar to what students will come across while reading for academic purposes or for pleasure. The results of this study will provide changes in choosing or writing curriculum for EFL students in assessment and in teacher training. The results of the study will impact EFL teaching materials that are used in the classroom as well as teacher training.

In the case of Omani EFL students, there is a lack of research related to the efficiency of understanding English idioms and the techniques used. The results of this study will provide tips for improvements in teaching English and also in fields students will use to communicate.

Literature Review
This section sheds light on the problematic task of defining idioms. Nevertheless, a number of strategies are presented and conferred in order to reach a working meaning of an idiom. In any research of idioms, a significant initial question that arises is what composes an idiom. It is imperative to comprehend what an idiom is, since it is habitually not well defined. The explanation of an idiom differs significantly from scholar to scholar as well as from circumstance to circumstance. The fact that a selection of definitions exists demonstrates the lack of an agreement regarding the phrase "idiom." In other terms, the result of this deficiency of a clear-cut meaning is that learners and teachers must deal with a hodgepodge of objects that cannot be taken care of uniformly as components of the learning task (Grant & Bauer, 2004). An examination of the second language (L2) acquisition literature on idioms discloses an ongoing dispute over the technique with which to describe them (Abel, 2003; Grant & Bauer, 2004; Kömür & Çimen, 2009).

Therefore, this section will explore the meanings of idiom, how the EFL students use strategies to comprehend idioms, and the problems they encounter in making meaning from figurative language.

The Problem of Defining Idioms
Defining an idiom is a problematic task (Cooper, 1998; Grant & Bauer, 2004; Liontas, 2002a; Simpson & Mendis, 2003). According to Grant and Bauer (2004), the term idiom has been employed to encompass an extensive variety of dissimilar sorts of multi-word units (MWUs). They define a MWU as a recurrent and fixed pattern of lexical substances sanctioned by usage. Moon (1998), on the other hand, indicates that an idiom is a vague term, used in conflicting approaches. As Cooper (1998) indicates, comprehending idioms gives language learners inconveniences as idioms are metaphorical expressions that do not indicate what the individual terms literally state. Moreover, they are frequently stumbled over in both written and spoken discourse. Simpson and Mendis (2003) delineates an idiom as a faction of words that arises in a more or less present phrase whose general meaning cannot be guessed by analyzing the definition of its constituent parts. They also state that the concept of '*idiom*' summons up language, which is thought to be engaging, entertaining, casual, colorful, charming, and memorable.

Cooper (1998) states that idioms fit in the category of figurative, or non-literal language that also contains similes, metaphors, and proverbs. He asserts that these types of languages are not straightforward to learn and to

understand since they do not signify what they literally state. Of the four kinds of figurative expressions, idioms are generally the most frequently stumbled over in discourse. Indigenous speakers undoubtedly employ numerous idioms throughout the course of every day. Cooper (1998) points out that in view of the fact that idioms are rhetorical expressions that do not signify what they literally declare, and since they are so regular in written and spoken discourse, producing and understanding idioms, it causes a difficult language learning predicament for L2 learners.

Teaching Idioms

It is apparent that teaching idiomatic jargon deserves a vital place in developing a superior proficiency level for foreign language learners. Wray (2000) proposes that mastering idioms is needed for successful language education and native-like directive of language. On the other hand, the idioms of English words are often omitted by EFL teachers in an effort to simplify learning for their students. According to Lazar (1996), rhetorical expressions, such as idioms, have been given less thought than they deserve.

The actuality is that few indigenous English speakers employ only Standard English in their talking and writing; they frequently use phrases and words that make little sense when the literal explanation is used. In addition, when learning English, the emphasis of mastery of grammar permits little time for the other features of language competence, like the ability to comprehend idiomatic phrases (Mola, 1993). Historically, the teaching and acquisition of idioms has not had adequate consideration in L2 research due to a traditional prominence on the acquisition of "grammatical systems" along with a lack of focus on the acquisition of the lexis (Ellis, 1992). Whereas, some idiomatic research has persisted in the examination of the occurrence of English idioms (Liu, 2003; Simpson & Mendis, 2003), only a small number of studies have scrutinized the important question of employing a suitable strategy in teaching idiomatic jargon (Liontas, 2001).

Consequently, as idioms are usually encountered in every day speech, the lessons of idioms should receive more attention. Second or foreign language learning or teaching is a composite process. Employing a proper method or approach in language teaching has consistently caused apprehension among language teachers and learners. The present research aimed to discover a suitable approach for teaching and learning idiomatic expressions. Several of the previous researchers have investigated the consequences of framework on the idiom conception process, such as; idioms were offered within context as well as in isolation, outside a framework (Liontas, 2001; Kainulainen, 2006). Outcomes of such experiments demonstrate that when idiomatic jargons are encountered in a framework, participants do better. There also exists a great quantity of study carried out regarding vocabulary learning in perspective in general (Mondria & Wit- De Boer, 1991). Saragi et al. (1978) studied the quantity of new vocabulary that might be incidentally taught through context and came to the conclusion that a substantial amount of vocabulary could be studied in this way. Most of these researchers concentrated on scrutinizing the effectiveness of appropriate learning. All emphasize the preference of lexis acquisition in context. Consequently, until now previous researchers have studied the disparities between the employment of context along with non-context in learning and teaching idioms. Nevertheless, the researcher in the current study also presents the expressions in a limited context (for instance, at sentence-level), and contrasts the differences amid limited context and extended context.

L2 Learners' Idiom Processing

An early exploration of L2 learners' dealing with idioms is Yandell and Miles (1961) research, which was perhaps the first available experimental study to explore foreign speakers' processing of English idioms. In particular, they sought to establish the effectiveness of cultural groups of children when comprehending English idiomatic expressions as established in standard reading textbooks in the fourth, fifth, as well as sixth grades. The research provided an appraisal of effective L2 children's understanding of idioms. Employing a multiple-choice analysis, the scholars attempted to measure the idiom understanding of three cultural groups of Spanish, Navajo, and Zuni pupils (as investigational groups) in relationship to the control group of Anglos (Laufer & Yano, 2001). Idioms were shown in isolation, or in sentences which were taught to children in reading lessons. The group of Anglos outperformed the cultural groups in understanding the offered idioms; there was an arithmetically significant disparity between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups. This indicates that pupils in the cultural groups had a lot more difficulty understanding idioms than their equivalents as the group of Anglos did. As well, Yandell and Miles (1961) evaluated the subjects' reading level (as assessed by Stanford Achievement Test). The contrast illustrated that there was a positive association between the Navajo subjects' understanding level with their reading scores in the idiom test; similar results were found for the courses in one of the control groupings also (Yandell & Miles, 1961).

The research seemed to center on statistical behavior more than on presenting some interpretations of the outcomes in detail; for instance, the scholars did not touch on the probable factors along with sources of problems that concerned understanding of L2's idioms. Furthermore, the research did not recommend any evaluation of the subjects' idiom acquaintance, nor did it designate whether the participants could understand

some idioms due to their knowledge of them or due to other factors, like the degree of resemblance among the English idioms and their counterparts in the participants' L1. Yandell and Miles (1961) suggested carrying out further study on the effect of teaching approaches on L2 learners' idiom understanding.

Adkins (1968) responded with her study on figures of speech and teaching idioms. Adkins reviewed the effect of teaching figurative expressions and idioms with formal methods; she suggested encouraging learners to guess the significance of new vocabulary (comprising figurative and idiomatic expressions) offered in reading material. This scholar stated that it would be of far more importance to give the learner a broad perspective of the nature of figurative and idiomatic language as well as to encourage his guessing of the connotation from the context.

Adkins (1968) studied 15 high school Spanish-speaking learners, who in addition to living in the U.S. and were learning English, during six weeks of learning figures of speech and idioms included in reading texts which offered news stories. The scholar's techniques of teaching idiomatic expressions (figures of speech and idioms) to her learners were summarized in the following trends: the teacher introduces a news story to the learners; the learners read that story mutely; the teacher proposes a discussion of the figures of speech and idioms whose meanings have to be "repetitively pointed out;" the teacher then makes evaluations of the English expressions and their Spanish counterparts, if feasible, as well as discusses the disparity between literal and figurative meanings of those vocabularies. The participants then employ the vocabularies in sentences, and they create stories using them.A post-test, presenting a sample of figures of speech and idioms in isolation, found that the subjects enhanced their correct answers vis-à-vis the meaning of the vocabularies from 37.3 % in the pre-test to 64.6 % in the post-test. Such an augmentation of 27.3 % of accurate answers from the pre-test to the post-test performance proposes that direct coaching of idioms along with providing students with broad perspective of the temperament of idioms, as Adkins did, might well enhance their learning of new figures of speech and idioms in the target language.

Comparable findings were stated years later by Roth (1997) who established that metaphor training could develop Hungarian-speaking learners' ability to offer the missing elements for an illustration of English colloquial phrasal verbs. The grouping that received the metaphor teaching did improve more than the group which did not receive such training.

Adkins's (1968) research also indicates that the sample students might have speculated the connotation of a number of idioms offered in the post-test since, as stated, a small number of the post-test idioms were stumbled upon during the training period.

Even though the pre-test idioms were presented in isolation, the training period provided idioms in context that possibly improved those learners' understanding of figures of speech and idioms or that improved their perception of such expressions. Context, as discussed by Cooper (1998), has an affirmative impact on L2 learners' understanding of idioms. Yet, when idioms are provided in isolation, L2 learners might well understand the meaning of a number of them because of dissimilar factors, one of them being transparency, whether in stipulations of L1-L2 idiom resemblance or in expressions of other forms of transparency, like having a universal metaphor shared by L1 along with L2 idioms (Boers & Demecheleer, 2001). Previous research such as that of Bulut and Celik-Yazici (2004), and Liontas (2001, 2002a) all show that L2 or EFL learners had slight or no difficulty understanding L2 idioms that are similar to their L1 complements.

Without a doubt, most of the previous studies on L2 expression processing have been concerned with transfer (such as the effect of L1 to L2 idiom, pragmatic or lexical similarity on L2 students' understanding of idioms). Not simply the effect of L1 to L2 idiom lexical likeness was examined but other facets like pragmatic similarity as well as the metaphoric similarity, assumed in dissimilar languages, were also investigated. Earlier research, such as Cooper (1998) and Irujo (1986b) were predisposed by the dynamic contrastive-linguistic study at that time. A lot of the L2 idiom-processing studies are still restricted to the research of L1to L2 idiom similarity along with its consequences on L2 learners' understanding and production of idioms even though it is no longer the glory days of Contrastive Analysis.

Irujo (1986b) not only examined the effect of L1 to L2 idiom resemblance on some EFL learners' understanding, but also on their creation of idioms. Her intent was to discover the role shift in a group of 12 Venezuelan (Spanish-speaking) superior EFL learners' understanding and production of idioms. The scholar classified these expressions into identical idioms, which are those with a similar form and meaning; similar idioms, which are similar to their Spanish counterparts; and different idioms. In regards to understanding, Irujo (1986b) established that identical expressions were the simplest to understand; similar idioms were understood nearly as well as the identical expressions were, and different idiom expressions were the most complicated for the sample subjects to understand.

L2 Learners' Strategies of Idiom Comprehension

Generally, research on L2 learners' idiom understanding strategies has repeated the outcomes of earlier reviews such as that of Laufer (2000) and Irujo (1986b) as related to L1 to L2 idiom similarity. As well, it has revealed

the constructive role that framework can play in L2 EFL learners' understanding of idioms (Liontas, 2001). The review also detected significant subjects' dependence on guessing from circumstance as not merely a strategy that these students use to understand idioms. The outcomes suggest that L2 or EFL learners assume a heuristic model to understand the implication of idiom expressions whereby they devise hypotheses about the significance of idiom expressions in a trial-and-error approach (Cooper, 1998). Such students also assess their hypotheses and might restructure new ones (Liontas, 2002a). Abdullah and Jackson (1999) wanted to find the forms of English idioms which Syrian university-level EFL students might shift into their L1 (Arabic) for understanding and production. The scholars did not only examine the effect of L1 to L2 idiom *lexical* resemblance, as done in previous research, but they also investigated the effect of *pragmatic or translational* equivalence of L1 to L2 idioms (such as idioms with similar meaning but dissimilar form) on their subjects' understanding along with production of English idioms. The scholars presented a sample of idiom expressions in isolation and observed their subjects' approaches of comprehending as well as producing English idioms via interviews.

The scholars established that cognitive idioms, which are those with the identical form and meaning, were the simplest to comprehend, therefore the easiest to be shifted from L1 to L2. Idiom expressions with translational equivalents were the next easiest to comprehend and were trailed by idioms that are non-comparable. The trickiest idioms to understand were false equivalent idioms, or false friends, idioms with different meanings but the same form (Abdullah & Jackson, 1999).

Regrettably, the scholars did not state much concerning their subjects' approaches nor did they suggest an arrangement of such strategies. Nevertheless, diverse strategies of idiom understanding were reported in the review. Among these approaches were metaphoric association, idiom keywords, literal paraphrase of L2 idioms, and image association, giving contextual instances where an idiom can be employed, avoidance of elucidation, and previous familiarity of idioms.

According to Abdullah and Jackson (1999), the participants managed to understand 18% of the idiom expressions with no equivalents, which offers insights about Arab EFL students' guessing effectiveness at such idioms. The scholars reported that for such form of idioms, the participants were able to associate idioms with images. The responses were usually right when employing these techniques to understand idioms with no equivalents.

Language students, nevertheless, do not generally encounter idiom expressions in isolation, per se. Abdullah and Jackson's (1999) research did not say much regarding how language students might deduce idioms in circumstances, nor did their review characterize the participants' guessing of the connotation of idioms. Liontas's review (2002a) is very similar to, as well as based on, Liontas' (2001) research. This examined not only the consequences of context on L2 students' idiom understanding, but it also investigated the strategies of idiom understanding that L2 learners employ when offered idiom expressions in and out of circumstances.

Liontas (2002a) not only endeavoured to explore L2 learners' approaches of understanding idioms of dissimilar levels of L1 to idiom lexical resemblance, but he also examined the function of context on L2 students' comprehension of three forms of idioms: lexical-level idiom expressions (those that exist in both the L1, as well as the target language with literal lexical counterparts), semi-lexical level idiom expressions (those which have some lexical resemblance in both the L1 as well as the target language), along with the post-lexical level idiom expressions (those that only exist in either the L1 or the target idiom with no lexical counterparts in either of the two idioms). Liontas's participants were three groupings of native orators of American English, who were studying German, Spanish, or French as L2 at the university level.

The 60 subjects were required to give the connotation of a sample of L2 idiom expressions of the above mentioned forms in both contextualized (in the context) and in un-contextualized (in isolation) circumstances. They were then required to tell how they endeavoured to find the connotation of the idiom as well as to comment on the assignment and on the problems they faced while undertaking the task. The outcomes of Liontas's (2002a) research draws thought to the role that circumstance plays in L2 students' understanding of idiom. By comparing the outcomes of the subjects' understanding of idioms in a contextualized as well as un-contextualized circumstances, Liontas established that the subjects' understanding of idioms, despite the L2 they were studying and in spite of the degree of L1 to L2 idiom similarity that enhanced significantly when the idiom expressions were presented in context.

More significant for the current research is what Liontas' (2002a) study has provided in terms of the participants' efficiency as well as strategies of guessing the implication of idioms, in particular the post-lexical level ones. That study has shown that the utmost effect of context emerged in favor of the post-lexical level idiom expressions which acknowledged the largest boost of correct answers when presented in circumstance for all language groups, an augmentation that ranged between 38.7% and 45.8%. As well, Liontas's research presented a tally of L2 students' strategies of idiom understanding. In the contextualized situation, "context" was the most commonly used strategy, trailed by relating to other idioms that were in turn trailed by "translation," "literal meaning in English," along with "guessing" respectively.

In addition, it should be noted that the participants in Liontas's (2002a) study were able to understand post-

lexical level idiom expressions. Even when the idioms were provided in isolation participants scored 25.4 % of the possible accurate answers while they scored 67.8 % when the same idiom expressions were provided in context. The outcome suggests that L2 students can efficiently understand the implications of post- lexical level idioms particularly when presented in context. On the other hand, the texts espoused in Liontas's research were utilized from books written to train idioms to L2 language students, and so they were artificial texts. Yet, Liontas (2001) reported related results when he used Greek mythical texts. In both circumstances, nonetheless, the participants' idiom acquaintance was not controlled; therefore, the responses to the connotation of the post-lexical idiom expressions cannot inevitably be viewed as guesses.

Bulut and Celik-Yazici (2004) conducted a study that also did not utilize valid texts or account for subjects' idiom acquaintance. This research not only looked into the effect of L1 to L2 idiom resemblance on L2 learners' understanding of idioms, as the research of Abdullah and Jackson (1999) as well as Liontas (2001; 2002a) did, but it investigated the effect of the diverse levels of discourse (formal, informal, and slang) on EFL lecturers' comprehension of idiom expressions. Bulut and Celik-Yazici (2004) examined the consequences of such idiom expressions on 18 Turkish EFL teachers' understanding of English idioms. The sample idiom expressions, including three lexical- level idiom expressions (word-to-word matches in English and Turkish), were not provided in isolation; the scholars typed every idiom on a separate note-card and then formed a context so that the subjects would decipher the connotations of the selected idioms.

The results showed that the discussion level of an expression had no consequence on EFL Turkish lecturers' understanding of English idioms. Nonetheless, there was a positive outcome of L1-L2 idiom resemblance on the subjects' understanding of idiom expressions; two of the three lexical-level idiom expressions were the most understood ones of the sample idioms. With regard to the subjects' approaches, Bulut and Celik- Yazici (2004) supported Cooper's (1998) classification of idiom understanding strategies since the approaches that they established were almost the equivalent as those established by Cooper. The scholars reported that presuming was the most employed technique. In addition, 76.9 % of the subjects' presumptions were correct, which indicates that the subjects' presumptions were effective. Still, the number of accurate guesses appears to be positively influenced by the circumstances in which the idiom expressions were provided, those contexts formed by the scholars so that the subjects would decipher the connotations of the selected idioms.

The research discussed so far investigated into L2 learners' idiom understanding strategies within an inter-lingual advance(s) to idioms. Endeavoring to fill a gap in the literature, Cooper (1998) did not research the effect of L1-L2 idiom resemblance on L2 learners' understanding of idioms, but he examined the online idiom understanding strategies of 18 non-native speakers of English. Cooper (1998, p. 238) analyzed the direct thought processes of L2 students as they tried to understand a given idiomatic phrase on the spot, devoid of time for reflection. Cooper's (1998) participants were of diverse nationalities. The subjects were obliged to give the connotation of English idioms, and every meaning was to be established in a sentence that was taken from a phrase book of idioms or the writings approved in some earlier LI idiom research reviews.

Lexical Inferencing

In recent times, lexical inferencing has played a great role in English language contexts. This part, therefore, seeks to know the position and the nature of deductions that lexical inferencing plays in guessing the meaning of vocabularies and other typologies in English language learning approaches. This section also seeks to assess the tentative research concerned with L2 learners as far as lexical inferencing is concerned.

Lexical Inferencing versus Language Learning Approaches/ Strategy

Lexical inferencing, or guessing, is one of the learning strategies or approaches that, for a long time, has been used broadly by second language learners when dealing with unfamiliar words (Paribakht &Wesche, 1997), and it has been strongly associated with auxiliary vocabulary learning. Other online sources argue that inferencing is more about making a guess between what you know and what you do not know, or a *reading between the lines*.

Haastrup (1991) argues that lexical inferencing is a process whereby individual(s) generate informed guesses on the meaning of unfamiliar words based on existing linguistic and nonlinguistic cues in the text. Lexical inferencing can also be used to categorize the times and the reasons the meaning of the passage is indistinct to them (Duffy et al. 1987).

Learning approaches according to Rubin and Wenden (1987) refer to strategies which advance the language structure that the learner constructs and has directly impacted the language. It is also a set of behaviors that one uses to comprehend study or hold new information (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). A number of approaches have been used to describe learning strategies. For instance, terms like strategies, tactics, actions, techniques, and skills among others have been interchangeably used for any set of information to assist acquisition, storage, repossessing, and using of information (Oxford, 1990).

Oxford came up with 62 strategies which are categorized into two major parts. The first one refers to them as direct strategies, which is used directly to deal with new language. Oxford further argues that direct strategies

can be classified as cognitive, memory, and compensation. The second category is called indirect strategies; these indirect strategies are meta-cognitive, affective, and social strategies which are used in broad management of language (Oxford, 2001).

Methodology
English is the global language. It is the language of politics, business, education, sports, science, and almost of all fields. Idioms are part of figurative language and using them makes languages sound creative and more interesting. The English language learners' ability to use figurative language (including idioms) is a key to native-like fluency.

At Dhofar University (DU) English is a requirement for all majors except Arabic and Law. Even though English is the language of instruction in the three colleges of the university, idioms and the importance of idiom teaching are overlooked. This study looks at the efficiency of Dhofar University students who are enrolled in English 101 in guessing the meaning of idioms from authentic texts. It also investigates the effectives of instructions about understanding the meaning of idioms.

Thirty participants in English 101 section1 (experimental group) received a list of techniques (treatment) to help guess the meaning of English idioms. The techniques were presented by the teacher in three different sessions. Thirty participants in English 101 section two served as a control group and did not receive any instructions about the techniques of guessing the meaning of idioms. Both groups completed a pre-test and a post-test. The scores in the tests determined the participants' efficiency in guessing the meaning of idioms from the authentic texts in the test and measured the effectiveness of instructions given to help students understand the meaning of idioms more accurately.

Purpose of the Study
The overall purpose of the study was to explore the strategies of EFL students use on guessing the meanings of idioms on English learning contexts both in oral and written submissions. The study also investigated how best EFL students are on guessing the meaning of idioms and can improve idiomatic vocabularies in the language learning processes to both English teachers and students. Further, the study began to identify the criteria of idiom and idiom-guessing aspects so that the identified EFL students will be able to guess and become familiar with frequently used idioms and their desired contexts.

Participants
The study participants were 60 Omani students from naturally formed groups who attended and completed Academic English 101 in the summer semester of 2014 as a university requirement course at Dhofar University (DU). Gender of participants was not controlled in this study. The subjects who completed Academic English 101 in the summer semester of 2014 at Dhofar University (DU) was made up of both males and females and reflected the gender ratios of other Dhofar University classes. Age of participants was not controlled in this study. Racial origins and ethnicity of participants could not be controlled in this study. All participants speak Arabic fluently. Some students speak other languages, but the number of languages students speak is not controlled in the current study.

Independent Variable: Direct Instruction
Direct Instruction (DI) is based on behavioral psychology and the work of American professor B.F. Skinner. Direct Instruction focuses on content-rich curriculum that introduces a subject via a stimulus expecting a particular response from the student.

It requires the teacher to use operant conditioning (reinforcing the desired response by a stimulus) and behavior modification techniques. In a DI classroom, the teacher must follow a prescribed set of lesson plans, sometimes in script form, and use certain cues such as clapping, with the intent to incite a certain reaction, such as unison chanting by the students. "Many studies- both in the classroom and in the laboratory under experimental conditions- have shown that instruction in which the teacher actively presents information to students and supports individual learning processes is more effective than instruction in which the teacher's only role is to provide those external conditions that make individual and social learning success possible" (Weinert & Helmke, p.138).

In this study, I introduced the targeted idioms to both the control group and the experimental group. In the control group the idioms were taught in a traditional lecture style where teacher talks and students either take notes with limited or no interaction with the teacher. All the idioms in this study were taught to the control group in this way. On the other hand, participants in the experimental group were introduced to idioms via Direct Instruction method. In this class idioms were taught using pictures, videos and telling stories of the origin of some idioms like *break a leg*.

Research Design

This quasi-experimental study tested the ability of EFL students on understanding the meanings of idioms in English learning contexts of written submissions. Participants included students enrolled in English101 sections 80 and 85 at Dhofar University in the summer of 2014. Students in one of the sections received direct instructions related to idiom understanding and the other section did not. Because students are not randomly assigned to different sections of the class, this quasi-experimental design is appropriate.

The pre-test, two-group comparative efficacy study design is displayed in the following notation:

| Group 1 | X_1 | O_1 | Y_1 | O_2 |
| Group 2 | X_1 | O_1 | Y_2 | O2 |

Group 1. Students (n = 30) who completed the treatment

Group 2. Students (n = 30) who did not complete the treatment

X_1 = **study constant:** All students participated in and completed Academic English 101 in the summer semester of 2014 as a university requirement course at Dhofar University (DU).

Y_1 = **study independent variable condition:** Students participated in and completed Academic English 101 with direct instruction on using idioms in the English language.

Y_2 = **study independent variable condition:** Students participated in and completed Academic English 101 with traditional instruction.

O_1 = **study pretest dependent measures:** Inference Task (Abdullah & Jackson, 1999) consisting of reading and comprehending excerpts extracted from authentic written text containing an underlined idiom.

O_2 = **study posttest dependent measures:** Inference Task (Abdullah & Jackson, 1999) consisting of reading and comprehending excerpts extracted from authentic written text containing an underlined idiom. Posttest presented different items than pretest.

Research Questions

The following pretest-posttest research questions were developed and used to analyze the significance of the intervention strategies for students who participated in the intervention instruction compared to students who did not participate in the intervention instruction.

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores on the Inference (idiom) Task for EFL students who completed English 101 and did or did not receive direct instruction related to idiom understanding?

Analysis: Research Question 1 was analyzed using a repeated measure two-way ANOVA to examine the significance of difference between students' beginning inference test scores compared to their ending inference test scores following completion of English 101 utilizing different instructional models. Because multiple statistical tests were conducted, a one-tailed .05 alpha level was employed to help control for Type I errors.

Research Question 2: Is the frequency of errors in guessing idiom meaning on the Inference Task different by type of error?

Analysis: Research Question 2 was analyzed using error analysis for the strategies used by students who did and did not participate in the direct instruction intervention, regardless of whether the strategy used resulted in a correct response or not.

Data Collection

Data were collected using an Inference Task that was designed by Al-Hassan (2007). The test assesses a sample of language learners' efficiency at guessing the meaning of English idioms.

The collected data in the inference task were divided into two categories:

1. The participants' efficiency at guessing the meaning of unfamiliar idioms, reported by the number of correct, partially correct, and wrong guesses that the participants make in the inference task.
2. The set of strategies the participants used to guess the meaning of idioms as reported by the participants themselves through a multiple-choice questionnaire and a retrospective written report.

Instrument

The test (Inference Task) was designed by Al-Hassan (2007) in the University of Bahrain for his Master's thesis, *EFL Arab Students Guessing Idioms*. It was validated by six professors from the English Department in the University of Bahrain. The Inference Task consists of 18 short-reading excerpts, each extracted from an authentic written text. Each excerpt presents an underlined idiom (Abdullah & Jackson, 1999). After reading each text the participants:

1. Provided the meaning of the underlined idiom.
2. Reported in English or Arabic how they have tried to understand the meaning of the underlined idiom in each text.

To report on the strategies they have used to understand the meaning of each idiom, participants were required to choose one or more from seven options provided in a questionnaire. The questionnaire was provided under each text. If no option applies to the way in which they tried to comprehend the meaning of an idiom, participants could respond by writing their own report.

Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of direct instruction of English idioms on the comprehension of Omani university students. Idioms are extremely difficult to foreign language learners and those who teach English, because their meanings cannot be determined from the literal parts. Adding to the understanding of the strategies teachers may use to teach and students use to successfully avoid comprehension errors will benefit instruction and communication.

Research Question 1

Is there a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores on the inference task for EFL students who completed English 101 and did or did not receive direct instruction related to idiom understanding?

The means and standard deviations for pretest and posttest assessments for the two program groups are displayed in Table 1. Repeated measures two-·way ANOWA results showing the difference in the pretest and posttest scores for the two programs of the study are displayed in Table 2. As seen in Table 2, there was a significant main effect for time $F(1,58) = 4.66$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = 0.07$. There was no significant main effect for the groups $F(1,58) = 0.67$, $p = .67$, $\eta^2 = 0.003$. There was a significant interaction between time and group $F(1,58) = 5.03$, $p = 0.03$, $\eta^2 = 0.08$.

Pair Wise Comparisons indicated that on the pretest assessment there was no significant difference between the experimental ($M = 65.80$, $SD = 17.78$) and the control group ($M = 67.67$, $SD = 13.70$). Also, on the posttest assessment there was no significant difference between the experimental ($M = 72.63$, $SD = 13.31$) and the control group ($M = 67.53$, $SD = 17.76$). However, when comparing the individual groups over time, while there was no significant difference in the pretest scores ($M= 67.67$, $SD = 13.70$) and posttest scores ($M = 67.53$, $SD = 17.76$) for the control group, the posttest scores for the experimental group ($M = 72.63$, $SD = 13.31$) were statistically significantly higher than their pretest scores ($M = 65.80$, $SD = 17.78$), $p < .01$.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Inference Task

	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pretest	65.80	17.78	67.67	13.70
Posttest	72.63	13.31	67.53	17.76

Table 2
ANOVA for Inference Task

Source of Variation	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*	η^2
Within Subjects					
Time	1	336.68	4.66	.04	0.07
Time*Group	1	364.01	5.03	.03	.08
Error	58	72.32			
Between Subjects					
Group	1	78.41	0.18	.67	<.01
Error	58	425.78			

Research Question 2: Does the frequency of errors in guessing idiom meaning on the Inference Task differ by type of error?

The total number of errors found in the essays studied was 214. Most errors were in substance, followed by syntax, grammar, lexis, and semantic errors as noted in Figure 1.
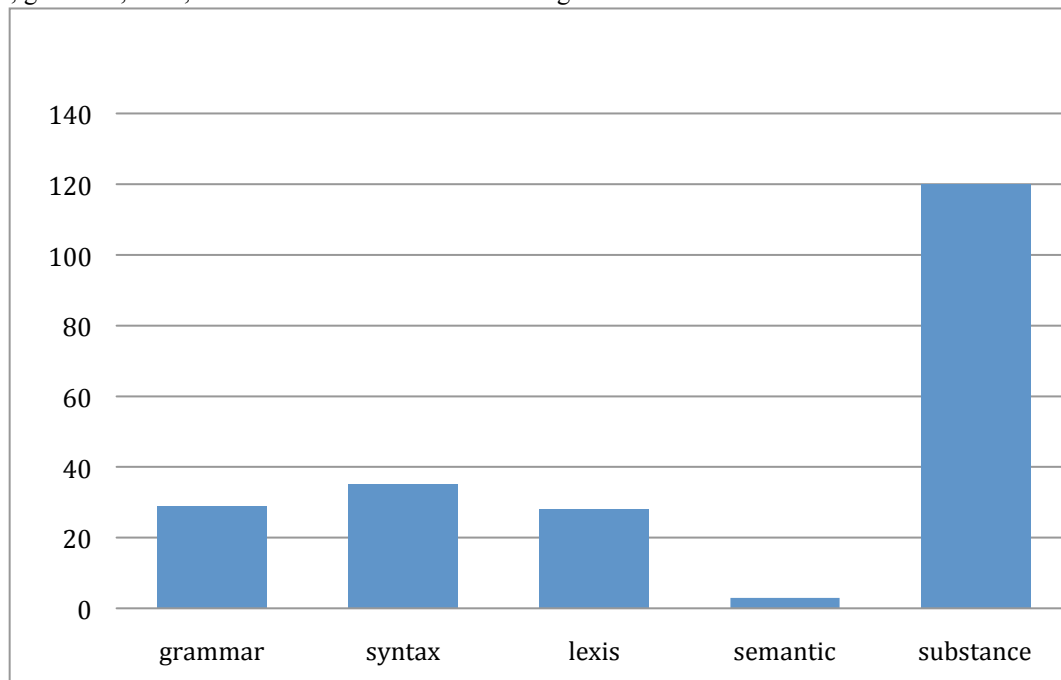

Figure 1: **Frequency of error types on Inference Task**

Table 3 shows error number and percentage for Transfer vs. Developmental errors for each of the categories. The total percentage of Transfer/Interlingua errors was 35.9%. The total percentage obtained for the Developmental/Intralingua errors was marked at 64.1%. From the obtained data you can see the highest transfer percentage was in the semantic 100% followed by lexis 73%. Developmental errors are by far the most common. The data obtained shows that the transfer /intralingua errors added up to 77 whereas the developmental/intralingua added up to 137 respectively. The result reveals that the students usually commit errors associated with negative L1 transfer. Relatively, their biggest challenge that accrues to the errors is attributed to developmental/intralingua circumstances.

As an idiom is a figure of speech or an expression where the words together have a meaning that is not the same as the common meanings of the individual words, this can make colloquialisms hard for ESL undergraduates and learners to get it. The following are some of the sentences that were used for pretest and posttest in the research:

- The parents did not realize that their son was *pulling their leg* when they arrived early at home.
- The head teacher told the students that *the ball was in their court* when they were doing their exams.
- The company manager did not realize that they had *bit off more than they could chew* after they signed the second construction contract yet they did not have the necessary resources.
- The fall of the tree on the road was *a blessing in disguise* to Mrs. Kimani because it prevented the looters from taking many household items after they broke in her house.
- The new tractor *cost* the locals *an arm and a leg,* after it broke down while in the farm.
- The mayor *hit the nail on the head* when spoke to the people about the leaking sewage in the area.
- Jane at last *let the cat out the bag* after she was interrogated by her parents about the reasons she was not happy to be left alone at home.
- Most children in their young age *miss the boat* as far as their talents are concerned and have to make choices most because of peer pressure.
- Children in the school would go for hiking on mountains in other continents *once in a blue moon*.
- The young engineers claimed that to set up the new steam turbine was *a piece of cake*, yet it took them longer than they had in mind.
- The staff strike was *a hot potato* in the news, and everyone was talking about it.

- *At the drop of a hat* the rescue team arrived at the scene to take care of the casualties.
- The board of directors *went back to the drawing board* when their initial plan to cab the new products policy failed to work.
- The scout lost their direction when they were returning to their camp and to *add insult to the injury* it rained heavily.

Table 3
Errors on Inference Task

Type of Error	grammar	syntax	lexis	semantic	substance
Transfer					
Frequency	14	16	19	5	25
Percentage	48.2	45.7	73	100	20.8
Developmental					
Frequency	15	19	7	0	95
Percentage	51.8	54.3	27	0	79.2

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to investigate the most commonly used strategies that Omani EFL students use to understand the meaning of English language idioms. The study also looked at the most common mistakes EFL student make when trying to understand unfamiliar English idioms.

Conclusions

Research Question 1: A: Direct instruction of students resulted in significant improvement of student performance on the Inference Task, as demonstrated in Figure **B:** Those who did not receive direct instruction did not improve significantly.
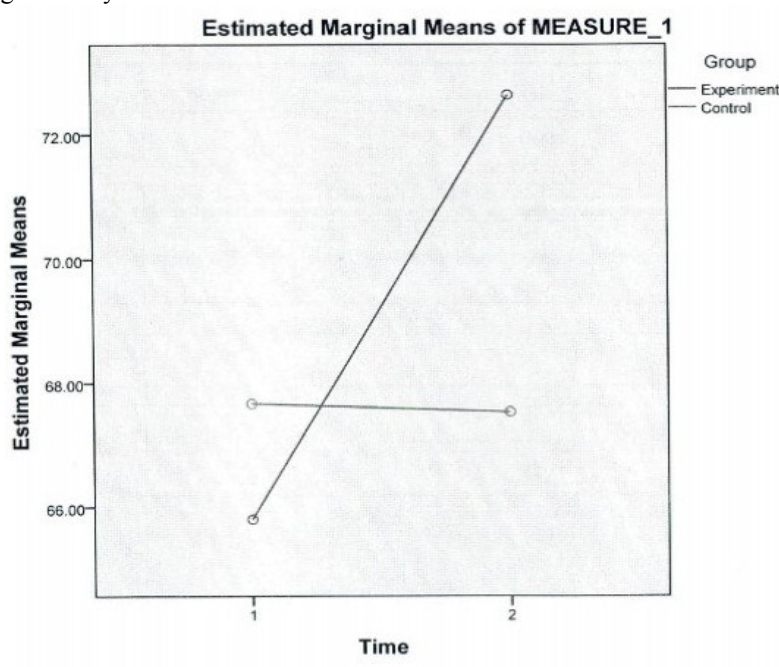

Figure B: Pretest/Posttest Results on Inference Task for Experimental (direct instruction) and Control (no direct instruction) Students

Research Question 2: Error analysis provides some insight into the methods students utilize to comprehend idioms, as well as to common patterns of errors. Some examples of negative L1 transfer errors are shown below with general patterns and types of idioms as displayed in Appendix A.

Grammatical errors:

      a.   She would like to emulate to her grandfather's footsteps (*follow in his footsteps)*. This a great challenge to the Arabic translation since preposition may have several translations. So this leads to poor use of prepositions when it comes to the English language learning.

      b.   Pride is? Character that can be acquired in a person's mind and preserve its omission of the article in Arabic language.

      c.   I always wonder what God has planned for me, what's my destiny?

      d.   Calling others kids to come

In example c and d the adjectives agreement errors in English are profound due to the fact of the Arabic adjective noun agreement for cases.

Syntactic errors: It is commonly the omission of principle words in the spoken language. This is denoted by, for example, the repetition of the word "and" as expressed in the sentence below denoted by 'wa' in Arabic.

      a.   I wanted to meet them <u>and</u> talk with them <u>and</u> resolve my issues <u>and</u> bring peace again.

The cases denoted in the sentences below is colloquial Arabic:

      b.   What we wish to become?

      c.   I have a lot of students in my college that are profane. (colloquial Arabic)

      d.   That, I have been exercising since a long time ago.

      e.   ...most children when they wake up (also colloquial)

In Arabic, personal pronouns are often added to verbs, which is a major challenge.

Lexical Errors: The following sentences have lexical errors. They all exhibit a common problem that the learners exhibit in the long run as they adapt to English language fluency from the Arabic dialect.

      a.   If I smash a pet it would lose trust with me and *stay on* irritating me while feeding it.(colloquial)

      b.   Some plants are nice ornamentals to have, when they have the right condition and medication.

      c.   They should have agronomists around them in case they get diseased or any strong fungi struck them.

      d.   Plants are always sensitive to big temperature.

      e.   *For me* accomplishing these tasks makes me enjoy very much.

      f.   Every woman must excel to ability.

      g.   During my leisure time I will practice to improve on my piano skill.

Semantic Errors: (Literal translation) The semantic errors result from the literal translation of sentences or a couple of statements from the original Arabic language without putting into consideration the real structure they should acquire when written in English. The following sentences have a common problem:

      a.   By fulfilling these tasks I will insure myself an outstanding life

      b.   These servers works my thoughts

Substance: (Mechanics) errors, when there is no capitalization of the Arabic alphabet words and very different punctuation conventions in the whole conversation:

      a.   <u>i</u> am the last born in our family of seven

      b.   when I finished my first degree I went for masters in<u> south africa.</u>

      c.   When we trust in our minds we forget<u>god.</u>

      d.   <u>Unitedstates.</u>

      e.   <u>emirates.</u>

No distinction is made between upper and lower case as indicated in scholarly work of several philosophers.

Reasons for Interlingua/Transfer Errors

Spelling: The main reason why the intralingua errors are of a great concern is simply because they pertain to spelling problems. The assumption that many instructors make of the L1 transfer being a major problem is not true since Arabic is extremely different from English.

    The general question of how bad or good English children are at spelling was investigated by the National Foundation for Educational Research (Brooks, 1997). They looked at essays written by 1492 post primary school students based in England of the ages between 11 and 15 years. The first thing was to measure how many mistakes a student made in the first ten word of an essay. Surprisingly, only two out of ten had no mistakes in their essays

    Then two out of ten had five or more mistakes. This was around 20% of the total students tested at the age of 11years who had no mistakes. The percentage increased with those with mistake to greater than 50%. When it reached the age of 15 years, the percentage of those with no mistakes rose to 40% by having four out of 10

students having no mistakes. One out of ten had five or more mistakes.

There is a relative improvement of the vocabulary between the ages of 11 and 15 years. It is still noted that there are a few minorities who still have severe mistakes even at the age of fifteen years. They have a serious written communication which many scholars term it as being handicapped I your vocabulary.

According to a certain classified research conducted by Cook (1999) and Al Oudat (2017). It gave the following spelling mistakes:

- insertion of extra letters, such as the <l> added to'untill'
- omission of letters, such as the <r> missing from'occuring';
- substitution of different letters, such as <a> instead of <i> in'definate';
- transposition of two letters, such as <ei> for <ie> in'freind';
- grapheme substitution involving more than two letters but only a single cause, for example when an equivalent according to sound correspondence rules is substituted for the usual form, as in 'thort' for 'thought'" (Cook, 1999).The indicator that the student learning English as their second language have major spelling mistakes but still others can say that our students are not the only ones to make so many spelling mistakes.

Punctuation: Many students experience serious punctuation problems as they transit from their native language or even transfer, or develop the art English as a second language in their studies. These are some examples showing the problem students have experienced in this study in punctuations:

1. Placing a full stop before the sentence is completed instead of comma:
   By finishing my studies. I will have gained my momentum to starting moving for
   the rest of my life(error)
2. Placing a comma in the wrong position like in this sentence:
   In life one, has to acquire very basic knowledge, skills and techniques in order to acquire stability and firmness on his own and win life.
3. Using a question mark in the wrong position:
   Personally? I believe in winning so long as I have the guts to go on in any task am undertaking.
4. The problem of using a semi colon in wrong function:
   I long for that day I will see; Arabic countries free of war and corruption from the rich European countries.

Spoken and written errors: Since the errors committed by the students were recorded on custom made sheets and then analyzed it was found that most students had an influence of over twelve native languages. The native Arabic languages (L1) had a very huge impact on the specific idioms that were transferred direct to the English language (L2). These directly transferred idioms from the Arabic language to English language has a high reflection of the Arabic culture and the nature of the environment they have been set up in. The data recorded reflected that out of the total errors committed by the students, 70% of the errors were lexical errors, about 25% were committed in the written exams and finally the meaning, 45% was committed by students in speaking examinations.

Some common errors committed in written exams (Alkarazoun, 2015 and Zoughoul & Hussein, 2001) are as follows:

a. *Clear and without any dust on it*. (This is an idiom used to express or indicate something that is pure and irreproachable).

b. *Time is like a sword if you don't cut it, it will cut y*ou (this is a translation meant to mean this English idiom—*Time and tide waits no man*).

Errors made while speaking the English language by non-native students are as follows:

a. *Any service, father?* (Showing the urge to offer hospitality to the father, or requesting for a favor to offer a service the father or may also mean to bring something to him.

b. *When a camel falls, its knives increase* (this is an idiom that means many people around you can take advantage of your weaknesses, or people will take advantage of those who exhibit signs of their weakness.)

c. *When the camel will make hajj (pilgrimage) on its hump, we will all be Christians.* (This idiom is a simple expression of something that can never happen in life or it seems too impossible that the probability of it happening is very minimal.)

The sentences express the need for the instructors to put a lot of effort in transitioning from the L1 language to the L2 form.

In this study, most of the errors were committed by students with pre-intermediate level of English. After taking the test in the beginners' level, which did not include idiomatic expression but based on the proficiency examinations, almost 50% of the students showed no sign of the errors involved with it. This is so because the students tried to express themselves in an idiomatic language, hence reducing the risk of committing interlingual

transfer errors. On the other hand, the 5% who are intermediate or even above intermediate level and were fluent in speaking, had no difficulty in writing exams with sound linguistic forms. It is also noted that only in few cases positive transfer of the idiomatic expression and collocation was expressed.

Tenses: Arabic speakers may use simple past tense instead of using present simple tense (El-Badarin,1983; El Sayed, 1983; Kambal, 1980; Mukattash, 1978, 1986; Meziani, 1984; Scott & Tucker, 1974). An example is, "The earth rotated from east to west." They also have a problem with tense sequence (El-Badarin, 1982, EI:SaYed, 1983; Kambal, 1980; Mukattash 1978, 1986; Scott & Tucker, 1974) as in, "I ate yesterday and go direct to the hall."

In the case where the Arabic speakers fail to use the right form of the language, they use the non-progressive instead of using the progressive aspect: "They aren't cause difficulties to us." (El-Badarin, 1983; Mukattash, 1986). The auxiliary deletion may also be deleted in several forms of sentences when forming compound or complex sentences. For example, "We punish him unless he works harder," (Noor, 1987). Also, the set types of errors are experienced when forming questions, as in, "You speak English?" (Asfoor, 1978).

Verb agreement: Another major problem exhibited in the documented data shows that the students have difficulty in subject verb agreement in expressing the idiomatic expressions. The underlying reason is that most of the Arabic natives thought that 'who' is always singular, and this has led to the over use of it in wrong contexts. (Tushyeh (1988). Examples of this are:

i. "The men who is talking to each other are friends." (Tushyeh, 1988)

ii. "The men whom are talking are friends." (Tushyeh, 1988)

There is also in some cases the errors arising from the use of "all what" in place of using "all that"— "This is all what he know about this question paper" (Kharma, 1987).

Summary: As seen in the data collected it is clear that the students are committing these errors simply because of the inter-language influence of their first language, which in this study are the Arabic native languages. The results show the importance of these errors, and also it illustrates to us how the EFL teachers can actually utilize them by enhancing the students' language production precisely. When the lexical errors are analyzed, errors were projections of the immediate literal translation of the Arabic native languages (L1 native languages), but the transfer phenomenon or the developmental process. These errors are common due to the interference of most of their inter-language which in most cases gets expressed incorrectly semantically in the English language (the second language-L2). What stands out clearly from this study is that the students and the teachers can benefit from consistent and open discussion of these errors in classrooms.

The Interpretation and Translation of Idioms

One of the principle interpretation problems for interpreters is the interpretation of altered expressions, for example, idiomatic expression, since sayings (idioms) vary on the scale of idiom. Some of them can be unmistakable and some of them are not. Amid the interpretation of idiom, it is troublesome for the interpreter to perceive the meaning of an idiom because of the way that most idioms have a place in a particular society, and every one may have a unique cultural background.

Most figures of speech such as idioms oppose variety in form and some are more adaptable than other (e.g.: There was an excess of *buck passing*--which means declining to assume responsibility for something). Some writers called attention to that an individual capability in energetically utilizing the figures of speech (idioms) as well as fixed expressions in our language barely ever matches that of a local speaker. The normal issues that fixed expression and idioms posed in interpretation identify with two critical areas:

- The capacity to perceive and translate idioms effectively.

- The troubles included in rendering the different parts of meaning which an idiom passes on into the TL.

These two difficulties are a greatly more present on account of idioms than they are on account of fixed expressions.

As indicated by this study, the issues in interpreting an idiom is not about on which class an idiom is spotted on the scale of idiomacity .The common challenges in deciphering idioms are summarized as takes after:

1. A fixed expression or an idiom may have no equivalent in the language which has been targeted the way a language decides to express or not express different meaning cannot be predicted and just incidentally matches the way an alternate language chooses to express the equivalent meaning. This implies that one language may express a given meaning by use of a solitary word. An alternate language may express it by method for a transparent fixed expression. In another, it may be expressed by method for an idiom. Idioms and fixed expressions are similar to many single words; they can be particular in a given language. It has been clarified that the interpretations "when, say, which " are in a straightforward manner joined to English social behavioral examples and the interpreter putting the expression into French or German needs to battle with the issue of the non-presence of a comparable tradition in either TL society.

2. An idiom may have a comparable partner in the TL, yet its use in any context may be diverse. The two statements may have distinctive meaning for instance, or they may not be logically transferable.

3. An idiom may be put in use as in the source message in both its idiomatic and literal sense in theme and time.

Discussion

Idioms are pivotal and imperative parts of our everyday use of language, and each society has its figures of speech like the instance of expressions that make it hard once in a while for interpreters to evaluate them. In this manner, seeing how idioms function and how their meaning could be suggested would make their interpretation into an alternate language much simpler and clearer.

Interpretation poses many obstacles that the interpreters or understudies may experience, for example, linguistic, stylistic, and lexical issues. The interpreter endeavors to beat these obstacles keeping in mind the end goal to discover the equivalent, so that the TL content is as close as could be allowed to the SL content concerning its structure, style and meaning. To render an attractive interpretation, the interpreter must obtain huge information about the linguistic, lexical and complex system of both the languages with a specific end goal to accomplish proportionality or a befitting understanding.

Strategies to avoid Arabic idiom errors: In analyzing the results, it is clear that the prepositions pose a great difficulty for all ESL students. Several prepositions in learning English language have seemingly the same functions. These problems lead to the students comparing the prepositions; yet they are not certain of correct use from sentences similar in the Arabic languages. They fail to understand that preposition have no direct link and correspondence from English to Arabic, or vice versa. It is true that one Arabic preposition may have varied translations in English language. On the other hand, it is clear that an English preposition may have various translations in the Arabic translations (Scott & Tucker, 1974). The errors brought about by the usage of the wrong prepositions will be varied according to the native Arabic dialect.

In translating and using of idioms of the Arabic origin to English, some abstract words used to refer to ideas, qualities or even attributes are being used without the article "the". The problem is that the omission of the article "the" when referring to the tributes, ideas, or qualities is that the structure of the idiom or sentence loses its sense and meaning since it belongs to everybody or everything. What causes this error is in the Arabic language such abstracts are preceded by a definite article that is of the same equivalence to article "the" in English language. This phenomenon will lead to the errors that correspond to the misuse of the article "the" (Diab, 1996).

When students have Lebanese origin, the adjective agreement errors will be common. These results from the fact that in Arabic, adjectives will agree with a number of nouns they modify. Students when using adjectives will have not note if they use the wrong modifier of the noun since in the native language it agrees (Diab, 1996).

The use of 'and' in the students of the Arabic origin is a major challenge. Items in a series, for instance, in English will be preceded by a comma after every item then at the end of the list the conjunction "and" will be used. In the Arabic language, the conjunction 'wa' is an equivalent to 'and' is used after the first item until the list is over (Diab, 1996). This causes the error of conjunctions in the development of L2 from L1.

From this study, it can be deduced that the most common strategy applied is paraphrasing, followed by literal translations and the semantic equivalence. The other common errors are omission and compensation, not forgetting the other strategies taking a lower significant importance. When literal translation occurs, it allows some of the English idioms to become part of the Arabic lexis.

Many of the translation are literal which renders them to sound foreign to the Arabic students. Once they sound foreign, they lose their sense to the Arabic reader. This will lead to the literal alteration to the form that will make sense to him, and hence becomes erroneous. The translators will then transform the idioms to the literal form as they can easily understand the purpose, reason for its prevalence, its impact in the translated text, and the effect it has on the Arabic language at large. A major improvement has to be witnessed when teaching students between the ages of 11 years and the ages of 15 years, though some students at the age of 15 years and above who still have relatively severe spelling problems. The spelling errors will lead the student not to have clear communication in a writing examination.

Carl (1998) states that, "Not only human is to error but there no other error if it is not done by human. Animals and birds do not error and if they error this is true to say that human are unique, so committing language errors is part of human uniqueness" (p. 75).

The Arab EFL learners adapt to the direct Interlingua transfer as an escape mechanism to substitute their low proficiency in English, due to their aspiration to achieve the idiomiticity from their success in learning English as a core unit in the study.

Teachers should examine the errors accrued by their students to understand on the best strategies to eliminate them. The errors will also provide wealth of information and pedagogical implications to the EFL teacher in class work. This use of the direct transfer by the students is a clear indicator of their social, culture and

the countries' background. When the teacher discusses those errors with his or her students, the teacher makes the students aware of either the positive transfers or the equivalences. The teacher will also understand the background also of any of those idiomatic expressions negatively transferred from the Arabic language to English language.

Implications for instructional practice: The following suggestions are made to approach an issue of the errors in the interlingual transfer. Special lesson(s) can be designed in a way that will solve these issues effectively with minimal challenges being felt.

1. All idiomatic expressions and proverbs in English may incorporate visual aids and some pictorials, which will automatically support specific common idioms as much as possible.

2. The teacher should design a daily plan to have idioms posted in the students' walls, as this is the idiom of the day. If this can be effectively done, it will catch attention of all learners, and they will strive to learn a new idiom each day.

3. To correctly translate Arabic idioms into English, the teacher must put into consideration the analysis of the positive or negative transfer. This will reduce the number of interlingual transfer errors.

4. Teachers must undertake a consistent dramatizing, defining, drawing, and discussing of the idioms within and outside class with the students. This will increase the precision in the day-to-day application of the idiom in both spoken and written work. It will also reduce the fear of using the wrong idiomatic expression.

5. If it can be possible, it would be very ideal if idioms are incorporated in cartoons and movies. These are the common areas a teacher will be able to address the students since it is an area of interest for the young people.

It is true that regardless of origin, language, culture, and race, all human being react in almost the similar way to specific factors of language (Haynes, 1993; Huckin & Bloch, 1993; Laufer, 2003). One of the factors of language is idiomatic expression.

When readers come to idiomatic or proverbial expression in English, some have a perfect match with Arabic proverbs or idiomatic expressions. The following examples are some of the proverbs the Arab students understand quite well and they can find easy reference as equivalences to their local ones. It does not matter whether it is literal translation or as original proper translation since they can easily find these:

*Don't count your chickens till they hatch. A
friend in need is a friend in deed.
Not all that glitters is gold."
There is no smoke without fire.
As you sow so shall you reap* (Huckin & Coady, 1999; Krashen, 1989).

In other times students come across English proverbs that have same meaning as those in the Arabic language, only that they have one word or two replaced. These students may not pay close attention when translating the proverbs into Arabic one since they may lack the right understanding of the environment the proverb was set due to difference in cultures. The students will then omit the proverb not Arabic since the English and Arabic cultures are so different.

It is then very advisable for teachers to provide translation for the proverbs that are similar in English and in Arabic yet are deviating in one or two words. This is very important so that the student can understand the environmental setting of the English idiomatic expression in the Arabic setting. The teachers can also provide similar proverbs but in the Arabic setting that are of equivalence to the underlined ones.

For example, the following proverbs that illustrate very well this situation of proverbs being similar except in few contradictions due to difference in the environmental setting:

Cats have nine lives--in the Arabic culture it is said that *a cat has seven lives*.
He who can steal one an egg can also steal an ox--while in the Arabic setting it
says *he who steals an egg steals a camel*.
Diamond cuts diamond while in the Arabic it goes as *iron cuts iron*.

The teachers and instructors should adopt a technique that will allow the use of simple English to explain the idioms. The measures they can take are to perform a thorough search for another proverb of the equivalence in the Arabic language to put emphasis on the form of proverb (idiom). The use of local Arabic language is significantly essential for it makes the students to easily understand the idiomatic expressions. The understanding will translate to the students using the idiomatic expression in the right way in the English language. In the right practice of language, the language of English is the richest in idiomatic expressions. It in fact incorporates almost all languages. The English language can easily be used to find equivalence of any idiomatic expression in any language so long as you know its meaning in the first language. The most important thing is that the provision of idiomatic expression in the native language helps in breaking the language barrier. It also brings familiarity with other cultures by using English as a bridge.

The other important cultural aspect that is brought up by almost all languages is collocation. Collocation is

the way through which words can combine in a certain language in order to produce a natural-sounding of the speech and written work. By knowing this, all teachers of English whether native or foreign speakers of the language should then bring their student to understanding the importance of collocation.

Collocation is very important for it is the basis of knowing how to write and speak natural English.

The basis of assessing the level of utilization of collocation among the students is by allowing them to find collocation of Arabic words in English. If they are unable to find the functional use of collocation by themselves then the teacher will take the initiative of helping them find it. The class becomes more lively and interesting when the teacher helps the student find Arabic collocation for English idioms. This act also helps the students to understand that both English and Arabic make good use of collocations.The other reason is that the student will understand the importance and need to look for the English collocation first for thorough and easy understanding.

Collocation is what brings life to a linguistic class since it is the energy to connect to sense and meaning of any linguistic art. It is true that teachers should use Arabic language to create collocation in class work. As one study discovered,

- 75% of the students majoring in English admitted the fact that teachers should use Arabic in providing meaning to the most difficult tasks and vocabulary in the class work
- 64% agree that teachers to use native dialect in comparing and contrasting grammatical concepts in both English and Arabic
- 74% agreed that teachers can use Arabic in giving some equivalence to English idioms
- 66% are for the fact that teachers can use Arabic only to explain when student do not understand anything in a given opinion 69% of the students accept that they are more interested in learning English if it has some similarities and differences with Arabic
- A small percentage think that using Arabic in their classroom has a positive effect in the process of learning English. (Journal of Advanced Social Research, 2012)

From the study, it can be deduced that the majority of the students have a great interest in learning English if Arabic is used as a buffer to the hard vocabulary. The use of Arabic in English class is preferred by most of the Arabic natives since they can easily identify with any idiomatic expression difficulty. Use of the native Arabic linguistic in English learning will reduce the number of direct interlingual transfer errors as the learners will be aware of the difference in the English and Arabic environments

This study is not final, or by no means comprehensive. Further research is then necessary to be conducted. This will enable researchers to compare the findings in this finished study with what they will generate from their study. It is also good to conduct this same study in very different setting in order to get diverse information across continents. It would also be very important for the one intending to carry out the research to perform it in different cultures, setting and most important on students with different first languages backgrounds.

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