



Sudan University of Science & Technology

College of Graduate Studies

College of Languages



**Investigating the Difficulties Encountered by Sudanese (EFL)
Learners in Using and Understanding Idiomatic Expressions in
Written Texts.**

(A case study of a qualifying year's students at SUST)

تقصي الصعوبات التي تواجه دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية في استخدام
وفهم التعابير الإصطلاحية في النصوص المكتوبة.

A thesis Submitted in the Fulfilment of the Requirements for Master
Degree in English Language (Applied Linguistics).

Submitted by: Abdelrahman Idriss Abdelrahman Idriss

Supervised by: Dr. Abbas Mukhtar Mohamed Badawi

September, 2019

أية قرآنية
(Quranic Verse)

قَالَ تَعَالَى:

﴿ أَذْهَبَ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ﴿٢٥﴾
وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ﴿٢٦﴾ وَأَحْلِلْ عُقْدَةَ مِنِّ لِسَانِي ﴿٢٧﴾ يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي ﴿٢٨﴾ ﴾

صدق الله العظيم

سورة طه الاية (24-28)

Dedication

This study is dedicated to:

My beloved parents,

My dear brothers,

My beloved sisters,

And

My dear friends.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who have, knowingly or otherwise, helped to shape the ideas that have gone into writing this thesis.

First of all, I am particularly grateful to my supervisor Dr. Abbas Mukhtar who provided me with so much clear-sighted help and creative guidance at all stages during the writing of this thesis. I would also like to express my appreciation to the English-Department teaching staff at SUST for refereeing the study's test. More specifically, I am indebted to Dr. Hillary Marino and Assist-Prof. Abdul Kareem Kakum for their invaluable and constructive comments in the study's tool.

Finally, I would like to express my heart-felt thanks to the qualifying year's students at SUST/ College of Languages for their cooperation and kindness for performing the study's test at the best of their abilities.

ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the difficulties encountered by Sudanese (EFL) learners in using and understanding idiomatic expressions in written texts. This study adopts the descriptive method of research. The researcher designs a test on idioms for the qualifying year's students at SUST, College of Languages, Department of English. The test was administered to (30) students who have been chosen randomly to represent the study's sample. As for the data analysis, the researcher uses a computer programme known as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings of the study reveal that, idiomatic expressions pose many difficulties to Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University and that (i.e. the students) were totally unaware of the meaning of idiomatic expressions in context, besides their inability to use the contextual clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar idiomatic expressions. Based on these findings, the researcher recommends that formulaic language, in particularly idiomatic expressions should be given a considerable attention when designing and teaching English language syllabus and they (i.e. idiomatic expressions) must be taught in context rather than in isolation and their meanings must be taken as a whole not

ABSTRACT (Arabic version)

مستخلص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي الصعوبات التي تواجه السودانيين دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية في استخدام وفهم العبارات الإصطلاحية في النصوص المكتوبة. وقد تبنت هذه الدراسة المنهج الوصفي للبحث، حيث قام الباحث بإعداد إختبار عن العبارات الإصطلاحية لطلاب المستوى التمهيدي في جامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا، كلية اللغات، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية. وقد أجري الإختبار لعدد ثلاثين عينة من الطلاب تم إختيارهم عشوائياً. أما فيما يتعلق بتحليل البيانات وحسابها فقد إستخدم الباحث برنامجاً في الحاسب الآلي يعرف ب الحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم الإجتماعية. وتوصلت نتائج الدراسة إلى أن العبارات الإصطلاحية تشكل عدة صعوبات للسودانيين دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة السودان وأن الطلاب غير مدركين تماماً لمعنى هذه العبارات، علاوة على عدم مقدرتهم لإستخدام مفاتيح السياق لتخمين معني العبارات الإصطلاحية الغير مألوفة. وبناءً على نتائج الدراسة، يوصي الباحث بإعطاء العبارات الإصلاحية إهتماماً معتبراً في إعداد وتدريب منهج اللغة الإنجليزية وأن هذه العبارات يجب أن تدرس في شكل سياق بدلاً عن تدريسها على إنفراد.

Table of contents

No	Title/s	Page
	Quranic verse	I
	Dedication	II
	Acknowledgement	III
	Abstract (English version)	IV
	Abstract (Arabic version)	V
	Table of Contents	VI
	List of Tables	VIII
	List of Figures	IX
	CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1-1	Overview	1
1-2	Statement of the Research Problem	3
1-3	Objectives of the Study	3
1-4	Questions of the Study	4
1-5	Hypotheses of the Study	4
1-6	Significance of the Study	5
1-7	Methodology of the Study	5
1-8	Limitations of the Study	5
1-9	Definitions of Some Related Terms	6
	CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW & PREVIOUS STUDIES	
2-0	Part One: Introduction	7
2-1	Different Views on the Definition of Idioms	8
2-2	Types of Idioms	11
2-3	The Nature and Classification of Idioms	14
2-4	Characteristics of Idioms	17
2-4-1	Syntactic Characteristics of Idioms	18
2-4-2	Semantic Characteristics of Idioms	21
2-5	The Importance of Idioms to (EFL) Learners	23
2-6	Difficulties Behind Understanding Idiomatic Expressions	25
2-7	Classes of Models for Idioms' Comprehension	26
2-8	The Effect of Context on (EFL) Learners' Comprehension of Idioms	29
2-2	Part Two: Previous Studies on Idioms	30
2-2-1	Previous Study Number One	30

2-2-2	Previous Study Number Two	31
2-2-3	Previous Study Number Three	31
2-2-4	Previous Study Number Four	32
	CHAPTER THREE: METODOLOGY	
3-0	Introduction	34
3-1	Population of the Study	34
3-2	Sample of the Study	34
3-3	The instrument for Data Collection	35
3-4	Procedures of Data Collection	35
3-5	Validity and Reliability of the Study's Test	35
3-6	Validity of the Study	36
3-7	Reliability of the Study	37
	CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, REASULTS, and DISCUSSION	
4-0	Introduction	39
4-1	The Analysis of the Test	39
4-2	The Responses of the Test	39
4-3	Statistical Reliability and Validity of the Test	40
4-4	Reliability Statistics	40
4-5	Students' Test	41
4-6	Discussion of the Results	45
4-7	Verification of the Study's Hypotheses	46
4-7-1	Hypothesis One	47
4-7-2	Hypothesis Two	47
4-7-3	Hypothesis Three	47
	CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, and SUGGESTION for FURTHER STUDIES	
5-0	Introduction	48
5-1	Findings	48
5-2	Recommendations	48
5-3	Suggestion for Further studies	49
	References	50
	Appendixes	

List of tables

Table (4-1) the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' according to question one.....	41
Table (4-2) the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' according to question two.....	42
Table (4-3) the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' according to question three.....	43
Table (4-4) the total results of the study's test.....	43
Table (4-5) one sample T.TEST for the questions of the study.....	44

List of Figures

Figure (4-1) the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to question one.....	41
Figure (4-2) the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to question one.....	42
Figure (4-3) the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to question one.....	43
Figure (4-4) the total results of the study's test.....	44

Chapter One

Introduction

Chapter One

Introduction

1-1: Overview:

Although the significance of vocabulary and of lexical phrases, or language ‘chunks’ in language learning has been acknowledged, idioms have yet been neglected. The characteristics of idioms have been discussed as have been processing and storing them in the memory. Studies on idioms have, however, concentrated on native speakers. Yet, idioms are frequently used in everyday language, particularly in the media. Therefore, some knowledge and awareness of idioms is important to (EFL) learners especially at a more advanced level.

So, because the words (morphemes) of a language are arbitrary (not predictable by rule), they must be listed in a mental lexicon. The lexicon is a repository of the words (or morphemes) of a language and their meanings (Victoria, et al: 151). Languages also contain many phrases whose meanings are not predictable on the basis of the meanings of the individual words. These phrases typically start out as metaphors and are repeated so often that they become fixture in the language. Such expressions are called idioms or idiomatic phrases. Idioms, grammatically as well as semantically, have special characteristics. They must be entered into the lexicon or mental dictionary as single items with their meanings specified, and learners must learn the special restrictions on their use in sentences.

Like all languages, English is the language that is full of idioms and it’s widely used by native speakers of the language both in their written and spoken languages and they (i.e. native speakers) tend to use idiomatic expressions spontaneously without thinking of the figurative meaning.

Therefore, it's inevitable for (EFL) learners to face some difficulties in understanding idiomatic expressions because they don't know what the image or nature of idiom are based on.

The very definition of an idiom has varied, and even today, there is no consensus as to what an idiom is: for some researchers, idioms include different types of fixed expressions, such as greetings or collocations, whereas others draw stricter lines. However; idioms are defined according to different syntactic and semantic aspects, but most definitions take an idiom as a phrase that generally has a fixed structure and non-literal meaning. For this reason most (EFL) learners faced problems when they deal with them. They cannot treat them the same way they deal with other types of fixed expressions, simply because idioms undergo syntactic operations. As for the semantic aspect of idioms, the difficulty has to do with their non-compositionality as their meaning is not directly related to the meaning of the words that constitute them.

To sum up, the definition of idiom depends very much upon what are considered to be the most salient features of an idiom. In earlier years, when language studies in general were more interested in structures than meaning, idioms studies, too, focused on the form of idioms and form was also the basis of an idiom's definition. Idioms were seen as frozen, multi-word expressions that tolerated little or no (structural) variation. They were also considered dead, that is, there was no link to be detected between their meaning and origin. More recent studies affected by functionalists views in linguistics, have approached idioms differently: instead of focusing on the structure, their emphasis has been on the meaning (s) of an idiom. It has been shown that idioms' meanings are far more arbitrary although the link between the literal and metaphorical meaning may not always be obvious. In this study, metaphoricity is taken

to be the most important feature of an idiom, as idioms are very much alive also tolerates both lexical and grammatical changes.

Finally, as for its importance, idiomatic expressions can help (EFL) learners penetrate into the culture, customs and lifestyle of the target language.

1-2: Statement of the Problem:

This study concerns with investigating the difficulties encountered by Sudanese (EFL) learners in using and understanding the meaning of idiomatic expressions in written texts. There is no doubt that idioms are an important aspect in English Language; therefore it is necessary for the Sudanese (EFL) learners to have some knowledge of these expressions in order to understand native speakers easily, however idiomatic expressions can pose many difficulties to Sudanese (EFL) learners because their meanings are unpredictable. To many Sudanese (EFL) learners idioms are stumbling block in their way to master English; this is because the meaning of the words that make up an idiom does not match the intended meaning of the idiom. Thus, it is very significant to look at the reasons behind the difficulties of English idioms that Sudanese (EFL) learners encounter in written texts. So, in order to diagnose the above cited problem in the present study, the researcher will design a test consisting idiomatic expressions to have insight into the problems investigated.

1-3: Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to:

1-Investigate the difficulties encountered by Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University in understanding idiomatic expressions in written texts.

2-Discover the awareness of the Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University about the meaning of idiomatic expressions in context.

3-Find out whether Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University use context clues to guess the meaning of idiomatic expressions in written texts.

1-4: Questions of the Study:

This study addresses the following questions:

1-What are the difficulties that face Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University when they encounter idiomatic expressions in written texts?

2-To what extent do Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University can be fully aware of the meaning of idiomatic expressions in context?

3-To what extent do Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University use contextual clues to guess the meaning of idiomatic expressions in written texts?

1-5: Hypotheses of the Study:

The researcher assumes that Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University face difficulties in understanding the meaning of idiomatic expressions in written texts, these assumptions are as follow:

1-Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University face many difficulties when dealing with idiomatic expressions in written texts.

2-Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University are not fully aware of the meaning of idiomatic expressions in context.

3-Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University are unable to use the contextual clues to guess the meaning of idiomatic expressions in context.

1-6: Significance of the Study:

Since idioms are frequently used in spoken and written English, language learners must make an effort to master idioms, though complete mastery perhaps nearly impossible, therefore; being competent in understanding idiomatic expressions within a written texts require a good knowledge of the culture of the target language. As such, this study is extremely important because it addresses one of the most significant, but relatively neglected areas of language studies at Sudan University. As for its contribution to knowledge it is intended to increase one's understanding the nature of idiomatic expressions, more specifically, (EFL) learners at Sudan University.

1-7: Methodology of the Study:

This study is descriptive; the researcher uses the descriptive analytical method of research to conduct the present study. As for data collection, the researcher designs a test on idioms for the qualifying year's students at Sudan University, College of Languages, English- Department, where some of them will be chosen randomly to represent the sample of the study. As for data analysis, the researcher uses a computer programme known as (SPSS) method to reveal the results.

1-8: Limitations of the Study:

This study is limited to investigate the difficulties encountered by Sudanese (EFL) learners in using and understanding the meaning of idiomatic expressions in written texts. The sample will exclusively be drawn from the qualifying year's students at Sudan University of Science and Technology, College of Languages, Department of English in the year 2018-2019.

2-3: Definition of Some Terms:

It is worth mentioning here that all the examples of idioms given in chapter two in his study have been italicized and underlined, whereas the terms have been shown in asterisk.

Compositionality: relates to meaning, it refers to the degree to which the phrasal meaning, once known, can be analyzed in terms of the contribution of the idioms part.

Conventionality: refers to the degree to which idiomatic meanings are not predictable based upon knowledge of the word components in isolation, and knowledge of the conventions of a particular language environment.

Transparency: refers to the degree to which the original motivation of these phrases is immediately accessible.

Frozensness/ Fixedness: is a reference to the ways in which idioms allow neither permutation nor paradigmatic replacement nor addition or deletion of elements.

Institutionalization: refers to the degree of recognition a particular phrase meets in a speech community. Idioms are widely recognized and familiar.

Chapter Two

Literature Review & Previous Studies

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2-0.Introduction:

Idiomatic expressions have long played an important role in the English Language. In fact, the use of idioms is so widespread that an understanding of these expressions is essential to successful communication, whether in listening, speaking, reading or writing. They (i.e. idioms) are something special about any language and they build up some distinctive features which differentiate one language from another. They are not separate part of the language which can choose either to use or omit, but they form a significant part of the general vocabulary of English. Idioms appear in any language, and English has thousands of them. They are often confusing, because the meaning of the whole group of words taken together has little and often nothing to do with the meanings of the words taken separately. However, one of the interesting things about idioms is that they are anomalous to language. It is therefore, break the normal rules. They do this in two main areas in linguistics, semantically with regard to their meanings and syntactically have to do with their structures. Thus, this chapter attempts to broadly cover these two main aspects.

According to what is being mentioned above, this chapter will be divided into two parts. The first part attempts to account for the theoretical framework of the study that deals with the general features of idioms, their definition, types, classification and characteristics. In addition to that, the importance of idioms to (EFL) learners, the difficulties behind understanding idioms, enhancing the comprehension of idioms and the effect of context on (EFL) learners' understanding of idioms will be

shown. The second part, on the other hand, highlights some related previous studies on idioms.

2-1. Different Views on the Definition of Idioms:

Idioms constitute a significant lexical component of every language. However, the concept of what an idiom is varies considerably from one scholar to another. Scholars fall into two groups regarding the definition of idioms: those who support a broad definition of idioms and those in favor of a narrower definition (Lin, 2008, P. 23). The broad view of idioms includes fixed phrases, clichés, formulaic speeches, proverbs, slang expressions and single polysomic words. An example of an idiom under the broad definition is the phrase *weighs a decision*, which will not qualify as an idiom under the narrow view because the meaning is rather transparent. Thus, the narrow term or the restricted concept of idioms refers to fixed or opaque expressions such as *spill the beans*.

Hocket (1958) fosters the broad definition of idioms. He defines an idiom as any part of language whose meaning cannot be deduced from its structure, including even small elements such as morphemes. He claims that one cannot infer the meaning of these morphemes from their structure. Other scholars, like Katz and Postal (1963), define an idiom as any linguistic structure whose meaning is not the compositional meaning of its component. According to their definition, from the researcher's point of view, idioms can be divided into two types: *Lexical idioms*, which consist of polymorphic words and *phrase idioms*, which are made up of multiple words. In simple terms, the first type includes single words such as nouns, verbs and adjectives, whereas the second type is made of phrases, clauses and sentences. For the purpose of this study the narrow definition of idioms will be adopted.

Idioms are defined according to different syntactic and semantic aspects but, most definitions take an idiom as a phrase that generally has a fixed structure and non-literal meaning. For this reason most (EFL) learners face many difficulties when they deal with them. They don't treat idioms the same way they deal with other types of fixed expressions, simply because idioms undergo syntactic operations. As for the semantic aspect of idioms, the difficulty has to do with their non-compositionality as their meaning is not directly related to the meaning of the words that constitute them.

Most definitions of idioms focused on the fixedness of their structure and non-compositionality of their meaning. As a matter of fact, these definitions were not basically differing in their form. As for (Van Devoort, et al: 284) an idiom is an expression whose overall meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of its parts.

An idiom is also “a construction whose meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of its constituents” Glucksberg (2001:60).

This definition is not essentially different from the definition mentioned so far. Both of them concentrated on the fixedness of an idiom and that (i.e. an idiom) is frozen and their syntactic structure is fixed and it is difficult to undergo syntactic operation; furthermore, the resulting meaning is not the same as the meaning of its parts. The example of *kick the bucket* means (die) could best demonstrate these definitions. Semantically, we could not be able to get the meaning from the individual words, but only as a whole and syntactically it is extremely restricted, so (*kick the buckets*) is not allowed.

A definition given in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009, P. 870) states that an idiom is “a group of words that has a special

meaning that is different from the ordinary meaning of each separate word”. It furthermore, explains that idioms make use of mental pictures in order to provide an image of what is being said. For example, one might say (I’m so hungry that I could eat a horse) giving the listener a quiet powerful idea about just how hungry one is.

Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English, Vol2: (1983) is the only dictionary that explicitly admits and discusses the problem with defining an idiom. In general *Oxford* seems to approach idioms differently from the above mentioned dictionary. It provides the literal meaning (if it exists) in addition to figurative one. It states that “an idiom is a combination of two or more words which function as a unit of meaning”.

The last definition of an idiom is (McCarthy, 1998: P. 129), he defines the word idiom as “a string of more than one word whose syntactic and lexical form is to a greater or lesser degree fixed and whose semantic and pragmatic functions are opaque and specialized also to a greater or lesser degree”.

This definition has some features in common with *Oxford* and differs from all the previous definitions according to the researcher’s point of view in that, it is very inclusive and characterizes both the form and functions of the idiomatic phrase. Whereas those definitions they only provides information about the semantic and syntactic structure of idioms, that is to say, their form. An example of string where all elements are fixed is the expression Rough and Ready, the expression must be uttered with that particular word-order and with one single tone unit; it is meaning is extremely fixed and largely non-negotiable.

We can sum up this section by saying that, there are certain recurrent themes or features in all the definitions of idioms: compositionality*,

institutionalization*, and degree of frozenness/fixedness*. So, it is necessarily giving each one of these features some glosses by the end of this chapter.

2-2.Types of Idioms:

As observed from the last definition, idioms can occur in a wide variety of forms and it usefully allows us to incorporate within the term a wide range of fixed expressions. The most commonly forms in which idiom occur is the *clause-idioms*: of the type verb+ complement, e.g. hit the sack which means (go to bed) and idiomatic phrasal verbs, e.g. take (someone) off that means (to mimic). These two forms are the most frequent in spoken and written languages. Nevertheless, idioms might be in other forms that include:

1-*Prepositional expressions*: e.g. in two shakes of lamb's tail(meaning to do something very quickly)

2-*Binomials and trinomials*: usually irreversible combinations with (and) or other conjunctions whose order may vary from language to language, e.g. black and white film , idioms of this kind cause great difficulties for (EFL) learners to guess their meaning because they consist of two words linked with (and), and the order of words are very fixed.

3-*Frozen similes*: usually identified by the removability of the first (as), e.g. (as) keen as mustard, (as) cold as charity.

4-*Possessive 's phrases*: e.g. a king's ransom.

5-*Opaque nominal compounds*: e.g. blackmail, the back of beyond.

6-*Idiomatic speech routines, gambits and discourse markers*: idioms of this kind are very frequent in conversational data: e.g. by the way, mind you.

7-*Cultural allusions*: this includes a wide range of quotations, slogans, catch phrases and proverbs; they are all identifiable to those who share the cultural context. E.g. to be or not to be, every clouds has a silver lining.

Allusions are not actually figurative, but rather examples of metonymy. Likewise, sayings and conversational phrases are not figurative. They belong to the sphere of idiomatic expressions, but they are not purely idioms.

Longman Dictionary of English Idioms (1992): lists various types of idioms, they are as follows:

1-*Traditional idioms*: they are almost full sentences; they only need subject to be added. E.g. spill the beans, give up the ghost.

2-*Idioms in which actions stand for emotions or feelings*: this kind of idioms often cause trouble to (EFL) learners, because they are not literal and same action may denote in English quiet something else than it does in some other language. E.g. hang one's head, throw up one's hands/arms.

3-*Pairs of words*: these idioms function as particular types of speech and their order often fixed. E.g. it is raining cats and dogs.

4-*Similes*: e.g. dead as a doornail, work like a horse.

It is worth mentioning here that, the *Longman Dictionary of English Idioms* lists other sub-types of idiomatic expressions that include: allusion, sayings and typical conversational phrases that are not considered to be purely idioms, according to researcher's perspective.

All the types mentioned above constitute the various forms in which idiomatic expressions might occur. In the next paragraph the researcher is going to shed more lights on the type of idiom which referred to as *phrasal verbs*, they are chosen because; they are the most frequent among the other types of idioms and they very common in English language.

Phrasal verbs are similar to idioms in the fixedness feature. They consist of sequences of words, which have to be considered as single lexemes. When we hear the phrasal verb “put off” we understand it as a single semantic unit, and it has a single verb word equivalent which is “postpone”. Phrasal verbs can be simply defined as” a combination of verb plus a particle the meaning of which might not be predicted from the meaning of the parts of this combination. The particle that collocates with the verb is either (an adverb or a preposition). Let us have a look at the following two sentences, as an example:

1-She looks after her sister’s kids. (Meaning take care of) “After” is an adverb.

2-We would better hurry. Time is running out. (Meaning to be finished) “Out” is a preposition.

Although such combinations form a massive category, but they are well specified in structural terms more specifically in terms of grammatical collocation as structures of a paired verb particle. The particles attached to the verbs are structure words and thus constitute a closed system. The verbs on the other hand, belong to an open class but some, (Palmer 1976: P.76) such as put, take, get and make combine freely. As a matter of fact, these combinations (i.e. phrasal verbs) are good examples of collocation restrictions of idiomatic expressions.

Palmer (1976: *ibid*), comes up with another type of idiom which he calls *partial idioms*, where one of the words has its usual meaning; the other has a meaning that is peculiar to the particular sequence. Thus, red hair refers to hair, but not hair is red in strict color terms. Therefore, it can be seen that even partial idioms can be a matter of degree and may in some cases be little than more than a matter of collocation restrictions. Finally, there are the derivatives, where words formed by the use of suffixes, which differ from the grammatical formations in that they are not regular, either in formation or semantics. Thus, we can contrast boy//boyish with purely grammatical boy//boys. Furthermore, readable is more restricted in meaning than (able) to be read, and that there are other restrictions with other words ending with –able such as commendable, irreplaceable, incomparable, decidable.....etc.

2-3.The Nature and Classification of Idioms:

As well as naming these different types of idioms, attempts have been made to classify the idioms in a variety of ways including semantically, syntactically, and functionally. For the purpose of this study the functional classifications of idioms will be excluded. Since idioms are complicated to define, the task of classifying them in watertight categories seems to be a mission impossible. Idioms have been divided into classes according to different properties they have and classified according to different criteria. Glucksberg, et al (2001: P.33-74), proposes a classification of idioms based on the degree of compositionality and semantic transparency. The first criterion (i.e. compositionality) adopts the assumption that idioms are automatically processed, so the linguistic meaning of the constituent contributes to the meaning of the idiom. In contrast, the meaning of non-compositional idiom cannot be inferred from the meaning of its constituents. This

classification according to the researcher's point of view lacks the syntactic structure of idioms.

ODCIE2 (1985), classifies idioms according to their syntactic properties. His classification falls under three headings: phrase idioms, subject less idioms and sentence idioms. Under each of these classifications there are sub-divisions that are shown as follows:

1-Phrasal idioms (the most commonly occurring phrase pattern)

Phrase	Idiom	Meaning
Noun phrase	<i>A crashing bore</i>	Someone who irritates his listeners with uninteresting talk.
Adjectival phrase	<i>Free with one's money</i>	Over-ready to offer something not welcome by someone else.
Prepositional phrase	<i>In the nick of time</i>	At precisely the right moment.
Adverbial phrase	<i>As often as not</i>	Fairly frequently

2-Subjectless clause idioms (verbal idioms)

Form	Idiom	Meaning
V + complement	<i>Go berserk</i>	To become very angry.
V + direct object	<i>Ease someone's mind</i>	Give someone relief from worry, fear, or guilt.
V + direct object + complement	<i>Paint the town red</i>	To celebrate in rowdy, wild manner, especially in public places.
V + indirect object + direct object	<i>Do somebody credit</i>	To bring honor or repute upon someone.
V + direct object + adjunct	<i>Take something amiss</i>	To feel offended by something.

3-Sentence idioms: this was exemplified with *proverbs* such as (a bird in a hand is worth two in the bush).

In this classification idioms are taken as grammatical patterns, the semantic meanings are wholly put aside. The aforementioned classification is in favor of McCarthy's (1998: P.132), divisions of

idioms. He made a syntactic classification of English idioms according to their possible combination, as noted above in the section of idiom's type.

Moon (1996) classifies idioms based on the spectrum of idiomaticity as follows:

1-*Transparent idioms*: Are those idioms which are easy to understand and their meaning can be derived from the meaning of their constituents' parts. E.g. back and forth, fight a losing battle.

2-*Semi-transparent idioms*: These are idioms that usually have metaphorical meaning and their constituent parts have a little role in comprehending the whole meaning of the expression. E.g. shake hands, break ice, bumper to bumper.

3-*semi-opaque idioms*: These are group of idioms whose figurative meaning is not related to the meanings of their constituent words. In other words, the idiomatic expression is separated in two parts; a part with literal meaning, and the other part with a figurative meaning. E.g. burn one's boat, to know the rope.

4-*Opaque idioms*: These are the most difficult type of idioms, because the literal meanings of their parts have little to do with the actual sense of idioms; that is, the meaning of an opaque idiom cannot be derived from the meanings of its individual parts because there are items which have cultural references. E.g. kick the bucket, red herring, bite the bullet.

We can conclude this section with Cacciari and Glucksberg (1991), classification of idioms. These two scholars categorize idiomatic expressions into:

1-Analysable transparent: break the ice, spill the beans.

2-Non-analysable: by and large.

3-Figurative idioms: *under the microscope*.

4-Analysable-opaque: *kick the bucket*.

2-4.Characteristics of Idioms:

This section deals with some of syntactic and semantic characteristics that idioms have and attempts to look at some linguistic knowledge that might help us to understand why idioms have such anomalous features. In vocabulary studies idioms have been approached from different perspectives, the focus of attention varying from the frozenness (idioms structure) to metaphoricity and the degree of literalness (idioms meaning). These studies took idioms to be dead frozen metaphors that carry arbitrary meaning whose metaphorical nature had been forgotten. Frozenness, in turn, referred to the fixedness of idioms' form, in other words, idioms have very limited tolerance of transformations and variations. But, these views have been re-examined and challenged during the past few years, Lakoff et al, (1987, P.485). On the contrary, the more recent studies considered idioms as far from dead, that is, the relationship between the literal and figurative meanings can often be detected at least in the etymology of an expression, Nippold et al (1992). In this study, the terms figurativeness and metaphoricity are used as synonyms, because metaphoricity is one of the most frequently mentioned feature of idioms. Nearly all studies treat this characteristic as a fundamental attribute of an idiom. However, as has been mentioned in the previous section, there are different degrees of figurativeness, that is, how easily the meaning of an idiom can be detected or guessed; there are transparent, semi-transparent, semi-opaque, and opaque idioms. Therefore, the main aim of the following two sections is find how the different characteristics of English idioms affect (EFL) learners' interpretation.

2-4-1.Syntactic Characteristics of Idioms:

One of the most important syntactic features of idioms is that they have fixed patterns or structures. These patterns assume a variety of forms. Some idioms undergo certain syntactic structure while others do not. This can be seen in the case of passivation, that is, the syntactic restrictions of an idiom. This can be exemplified in the following examples, where the idioms accept the rule of passivation.

-John spills the beans to the audience (meaning divulge).

The beans have been spelled to the audience by John.

-They put off their work later instead of doing it now (meaning postpone).

The work has been put off until later by them.

On the other hand, there are some idioms don't follow the above mentioned rule. The following two sentences include idioms but they don't accept passivation and keep their sense of idiomaticity at the same time.

-The lawyer's fees will make a dent in our finances (meaning reduce).

-They always hit the sack before mid-night (meaning go to bed).

Another syntactic feature of idioms can be shown in the idiomatic expression beat around the bush (meaning to intentionally omit the main points of something), this idiom cannot be substituted with near synonym; therefore, (hit around the bush) is not acceptable also, we cannot change the definite article(the) to the indefinite articles(a or an). Furthermore, it isn't possible to make the word (bush) plural.

As regards the syntactic restrictions of idioms, Palmer, (1976, P.80-82) gave detailed explanations that can be exemplified in the following points:

1-Substitution: we cannot replace any words in idioms even if those words are synonyms, that is, one cannot substitute the adjective (long) with (tall) despite the fact that they have nearly the same meaning.

2-Deletion: deleting any word from an idiomatic expression would change its meaning or its idiomatic sense. E.g. omitting the adjective (sweet) from the expression: have a sweet tooth would alter the meaning.

3-Addition: adding the adverb (very) to the adjective (red) in red herring affects its figurative meaning.

4-Modification: any change in the grammatical structure of an idiom will alter its meaning. E.g. the expression stock, barrel, and lock are not idiomatic expression because the order of the words in the expression lock, stock, and barrel has been changed.

5-Comparative and superlative: adding the comparative and superlative suffixes (-er, -est. or more, most) to the adjectives in idiomatic expressions such as red herring changes the conventional sense of the idiom (a clue that is intended to be misleading).The syntactic characteristic of idioms can also be discussed in terms of their fixedness and flexibility. There are many idioms that accept syntactic operations without losing their idiomatic sense. These kinds of idioms are syntactically flexible. The structure of some idioms, on the other hand, is completely frozen and it is impossible to transform them into any other syntactic form, (Glusckberg, 2001: P. 72). Let us have a look at the following example:

-By and large (meaning generally) there are more similarities between various people of the world than there are differences. The idiomatic expression given in this sentence is syntactically non-analyzable and its syntactic flexibility is virtually nothing.

On the contrary, some other idiomatic expressions are syntactically analyzable and can undergo syntactic variations. For instance, the idiomatic expression, she left no stone unturned accepts an internal modification of a noun, that is part of an idiom without losing its idiomatic sense to become (she left no **legal** stone unturned).

The fact that some idioms underwent syntactic operations while others do not, this raised the question of whether idioms might differ from non-idiomatic expressions with respect to their syntactic flexibility. In this respect, Wasow, et al (1983) as they gave an important contribution in this area; argued that syntactic flexibility is tied to semantic transparency. In other words, if an idiom is semantically transparent that means it is syntactically flexible.

We can sum up by saying that; idioms differ in the extent to which they are analyzable. Some idiomatic expressions are almost completely compositional or analyzable and they can undergo certain syntactic operations, an example of such idioms is blow your sack, this idiom is analyzable in the sense that the word (blow) refers to suddenly releasing or expressing internal pressure from the stack or from the human mind. Whereas other idiomatic phrases are much non-analyzable, that is, it is difficult to undergo certain syntactic operation. An idiom exemplified this is the classical example of kick the bucket.

2-4-2.Semantic Characteristics of Idioms:

This section deals with some of the semantic characteristics that idioms have. It also, tries to give an idea about the semantic relations among the words in idiomatic phrases, that is, their meaning on which why idioms are semantically like a single word but, don't function like one. Furthermore, it is inherently known that idioms fall into a varying degree. According to Nurnberg, et al (1994: P.498), idioms may differ along three orthogonal semantic dimensions: conventionality*, compositionality*, and transparency*. These three terms are defined at the end of chapter one in this study.

As defined earlier in this chapter that “an idiom is an expression whose overall meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of its parts”. So, the question that will be raised by the researcher with regard to this definition is: Do the parts of an idiom have meaning, or only the entire idiom? In other words, are idioms had to be assigned internal semantic structure distributed among the words that make them up? Researchers differ on whether 1-the expression that form part of the idiom still have individual meaning or not, and 2-there exist a relation between the meaning of the idiom as a whole and the meaning of the parts. (Nicolas, et al: 251) argues that none of the parts of an idiom has meaning, but only idiom as a whole. (Schenk 1995: 253) agrees with Nicolas, he said that only the idiom as a whole can refer, and because the parts do not refer, there cannot be a relation between the parts and the whole. So, the researcher is in favor with the view of these two scholars.

With reference to the section about the classification of idioms, the meaning of idiomatic phrase can be discussed in terms of transparent and non-transparent idioms. When the meaning of an idiomatic expression directly corresponds to its syntactic structure, that is, its meaning can be

inferred from its parts, the idiom is said to be transparent. Non-transparent idioms, on the other hand, are those whose meaning cannot be inferred from the meaning of its individual parts. This meaning has a set of features that can be shown in the following two points:

-The words that constitute an idiomatic phrase can be denoting or non-denoting. A *denoting* word refers to a concrete entity or an abstract concept. A *non-denoting* bears no meaning assignment. Denoting words show literal meaning in non-idiomatic phrases and may show a non-literal one in an idiomatic expression. Non-denoting words, on the other hand, show meanings that all relate to their literal ones, that is, words that exclusively occur in fixed expressions. An idiom that demonstrates this can be shown in this example: the lawyers' fees will make a dent in our finances, which means to reduce its amount. Not surprisingly, the semantic structures of many common idioms are constituted by concrete *literal* actions that serve as a vehicle for abstract *figurative* mental state and events. The extent to which these two kinds of meaning, that is, the *concrete-literal* meaning and its stipulated *abstract-figurative* meaning are semantically related depends on the type of idiom involved (Van de voort, 1997: P.284). However, most scholars prefer the term figurative for the meaning of an idiom.

-Idioms are paraphrasable which means their meanings can be expressed by non-idiomatic phrases or words as shown in this sentence (John *made up his mind* to accept the new job), can be paraphrased to (John decided to accept the new job). An idiomatic phrase is also, replaceable by means of equivalence. E.g. kick the bucket equals pass away and die.

The criterion which accounts for the semantic characteristics of idioms is their transparency (Cacciari, et al: 1995, P.80). Idioms show a varying

degree of transparency and opacity; transparent idioms can be clear and often based on the literal meaning of the words that made them up. Even with the least transparent idioms the meaning is available by the means of guessing. Opaque idioms on the other hand, are the most difficult for (EFL) learners because they don't allow literal interpretation and their meaning do not assign to the meaning of the individual words that make them up.

Gibbs, et al (1989) state that idioms differ in compositionality and they distinguished three classes of compositionality. The first class consists of normally decomposable idioms, such as, *pop the question* (meaning to propose marriage). This idiom is normally analyzable because the parts (pop) and (the question) directly refer, respectively, to suddenly ask for a marriage proposal. The second class of idioms consists of abnormally decomposable idioms such as, *carry a torch for someone*. This idiom is abnormally analyzable, because (torch) in this idiom does not refer directly but rather metaphorically to warm feeling. The final class of idioms composes of non-decomposable idioms, an idiom such as *kick the bucket*, cannot be analyzed in such a way that the individual parts refer directly or indirectly to the individual parts of the act of dying.

2-5.The Importance of Idioms to (EFL) Learners:

Understanding the lexicon of English demands more than knowing the denotative meaning of words. It requires the learners (most specifically EFL learners), to have a recognition of the connotative meaning as well. In addition, they require to having an understanding of figurative language. Idioms fall into this final category. The focus of this section is to share the importance of idioms to (EFL) learners as part of their mastering English language. Because idioms share cultural and historical

information and broaden people's understanding and manipulation of a language.

As defined in (New Webster's Dictionary, 1993) an idiom is "a construction or expression having a meaning different from the literal meaning or not according to the usual patterns of the language". This definition best suits this section. Since idioms are pervasive, that is, they are used in formal and informal speech, in business, education and the media; (EFL) learners are expected to understand a variety of them, because they are advantageous and important as part of the shared knowledge among English speakers. Below is a quotation that cites the significant role idioms' play in (EFL) learners' curricula.

"Since idiomatic expressions are so frequently encountered in both spoken and written discourse, they require special attention in language program and should not be relegated to a position of secondary importance in the curriculum."(Copper, 1998)

Therefore, (EFL) learners' poor competence of English idioms can be attributed to the fact that the study of lexical in general and idioms in particular was neglected to a minor position in contrast to syntax which received a paramount attention.

The importance of idioms has been emphasized by linguists and language teachers in recent years, *Bromfield (2003)*, believes that increasing number of English idioms in the *Dictionary of American Idioms* is indicative of the essential role idioms play in daily language use. In this regard, *Moreno (2011)* refers to two main reasons for the importance of learning idioms: first, frequent use of idioms makes language learners fluent speakers and helps them to penetrate into culture, customs, and lifestyle of the target language. Secondly, cognitive linguistic studies

have demonstrated the crucial role of memory in learning fixed expressions such as idioms. Because the use of idioms and idiomatic English expressions are both characteristics of advanced (EFL) learners, thus the students' competence in this form of language needs to develop further not only on the recognition level but also on the production level.

2-6. Difficulties Behind Understanding Idiomatic Expressions:

Idioms are without a doubt one of the most daunting aspects of the English language, an area riddled with complexities and inconsistencies. They have also been in a state of flux for pretty much its entire existence. For native speakers, as well as for those learning them as a new language ((I.e. (EFL) learners)), idioms present a very serious challenge to speaking and writing both accurately and effectively. Thus, this section is going to highlight some of the difficulties that encounter the (EFL) learners while understanding idiomatic expressions. Idioms are difficult to learn for so many reasons, one of the main reasons according to the researcher's point of view is that idioms are not literal; they do not mean what they say. The easiest are those which have exact counterparts in the (EFL) learners' mother tongue language, and the most difficult ones are those which have no counterparts and whose meaning cannot be derived from the conjoined meaning of their constituents.

In the same vein, Irujo (2001) in her article on learning and teaching idioms, states that second language idioms are very difficult to learn and comprehend because they aren't literal and do not mean what they say. In addition, she attributes the difficulty of idioms' comprehension to the following:

First, idioms are frequently omitted in the speech addressed to second language learners. Native speakers tend to use simple, concrete, everyday vocabulary when they address (EFL) learners.

Second, idioms vary in formality from slang and colloquialisms to those which can be used in formal situations.

Third, many second language materials either ignore entirely or relegate them to the “other expressions” section of vocabulary lists, without providing exercises for learning them.

Furthermore, one of the main blocks of second language idioms’ comprehension is that, idioms are often unpredictable in meaning, that is, their meaning cannot always be derived from the literal meanings of the constituent parts. This can best be exemplified by the different characteristics idioms shown in the fourth section in this chapter. As noted earlier in that section, there are various factors that affect the comprehension and interpretation of idioms such as their, variability or transformability, literalness, decomposability, and flexibility.

2-7.Classes of Models for Idioms’ Comprehension:

Owing to the significant role idioms’ play in second language acquisition and the difficulties (EFL) experience in the comprehension processes, finding a way to enhance their learning is of high importance. So, considering all the various difficulties that can be encountered in deciphering idioms’ meaning, it is perhaps not surprising that a number of models and theories have cropped up, aiming to show how the language users, including the (EFL) learners comprehend idioms’ meaning. Therefore, this section is going to shed lights on two classes of models in idioms’ comprehension and the factors that can facilitate the comprehension process.

According to Clucksberg (1993), two main classes of models have been proposed for idioms' comprehension:

(1)The direct look up model: The model treats idioms as being expressions that have meaning that are stipulated arbitrarily, understood simply by retrieving the meaning of an idiom as a whole. An instance of such idioms is: *by and large* and *kick the bucket*. Furthermore, this model refers to the act of mentally "looking up" the meaning of the idiomatic expressions using a mental lexicon of some sort.

(2)The compositional model: In this model the learner of a language understands the meaning of idiomatic expressions through linguistic processing, along with making use of his/her pragmatic knowledge of discourse contexts. An idiom represents this model is *carrying coals to Newcastle*, this idiom does not have an arbitrary meaning, but referring rather to actual historical fact.

However; there seems to be no consensus and accepted truth among scholars and researchers when it comes to which model is the correct one.

Cain et al (2005), demonstrate that, there are three factors in idiom comprehension; *transparency*, *familiarity*, and *context*. They state that idioms that are presented in texts are easier to understand than those which are presented in isolation. As stated by Nippold and Taylor (1995), *transparency* is the degree of agreement between the literal and figurative meanings of an idiom; that is, the meaning of a transparent idiom matches well with the image it depicts. Idioms like "*go by the book*" is highly transparent because it's literal meaning (to follow directions in a book exactly) is closely associated with its non-literal meaning (to closely follow rules and regulations). But the expression "*beat around the bush*"

is not transparent, because its literal meaning is not related to its figurative meaning that means (reluctance to talk about a topic).

The concept of transparency can also be discussed in terms of decomposition. This concept states that idioms are at least partly decomposable, and learners can intuitively understand the way the components of the idiom contribute to its whole meaning and this notion can determine the syntactic behavior of the idioms. The more an idiom seems analyzable and hence transparent, the more likely that idiom will be treated as syntactically flexible (Gibbs & Nyack, 1989). Moreover, these two scholars found out that decomposable idioms are more flexible and are processed faster than non-decomposable and rigid ones. (Swinney&Calter, 1979), on the other hand, did not find any time difference in the comprehension of flexible and non-flexible idioms.

The other main factor that influencing the comprehension of idioms is *familiarity*; this refers to the frequency of occurrence of an idiom in the language. An idiom such as *call it a day* is frequently used in English, while an idiom like *get your wires crossed* is rarely used. The findings of (Nippold& Tyler: *ibid*), showed that high-familiarity idioms were easier to understand than those of low-familiarity. This best matches the researcher's view point that says the frequency of exposure enhances (EFL) learners' comprehension of idiomatic expressions.

The final major factor that influencing idioms comprehension is *context*. Idiomatic expressions are understood in relation to the context in which they are used. As a result, the skills used to process and understand language in context are thought to be important for the development of idioms comprehension (Levorato&Cacciari: 1995).

Many studies are done to enhance the process of learning idioms were with regard to the three major factors transparency, familiarity, and context. And because of the vital role context plays in understanding the meaning of words, the following section is going to highlight the effect of context in understanding the meaning of idiomatic expressions.

2-8.The Effect of Context on (EFL) Learners' Comprehension of Idioms:

There has been a lot of debate about the role the linguistic context plays in the recognition and comprehension of lexical items, whether be single words, idioms, phrases, sayings or whatever. The role of context becomes more important with ambiguous idioms which are in general more difficult than opaque expressions. However, the context may assist in understanding an unfamiliar of idiomatic expressions but it may equally lead astray. Using contextual clues to infer the meaning of unknown words is an effective strategy which helps learners acquire skills and aids vocabulary learning (Dunmore: 1989). In addition, using contextual pragmatic clues seems to have a considerable effect on second language idioms' comprehension, particularly in understanding opaque idioms whose meaning cannot be guessed from the individual word meanings.

As (Swinney&Cutler: 1979), stated that most idioms have the feature of ambiguity. This means that idioms which are grammatically well formed have an acceptable literal meaning as well as figurative meaning. So, the comprehension of such idioms will be problematic. Furthermore, contextual clues can also influence the interpretation of an ambiguous sentence with literal and non-literal meanings. And that most of the studies done in the area of using contextual clues in second language idioms' comprehension have found out that guessing the meaning of an idiomatic expression from context is an effective strategy and is

recurrently used in inferring the meaning of all multi-word units including idiomatic expressions.

Part Two: 2-2.Previous Studies on Idioms:

In this section, the researcher is going to include all the previous studies and the published papers that are related to the current study.

2-2-1: Abdulla Elkheir, Sudan University of Science & Technology, (2012). The above mentioned researcher conducted a study entitled: **An Investigation into Difficulties of Understanding and Using English Idioms Facing Sudanese Students Majoring in English Language (Ph.D. thesis).**

In this study the researcher attempts to examine the difficulties which experienced by Sudanese students majoring in English Language in understanding and using English idioms. The researcher adopts the descriptive analytical method to conduct this study; he designs a test for the students at fourth level and a questionnaire for ELT teachers to obtain the required data.

The thesis provides a general description of the semantic, the syntactic and the lexical properties of idioms as well as the collocational restrictions that govern the idiomatic structure, besides, the researcher tries to show the status of idioms in language in general and in the Sudanese English Language syllabuses in particular. He also examines some of the most popular approaches and methods for learning and teaching English idioms.

The findings of this study reveal low abilities of Sudanese students in recognizing English idioms and the researcher attributes these problems to the negligence of idioms in English Language curricula.

Based on these findings, the researcher recommends that syllabus designers at Sudan University of Science & Technology should give utmost importance to idioms in particular and language chunks in general.

2-2-2: Motaz Abdulgader Morgan, Sudan University of Science & Technology, (2016).

The aforementioned researcher conducted an (M.A thesis) entitled: **The Impact of Phrasal Verbs and Idiomatic Expressions on Promoting the Linguistic Competence of (EFL) Learners.**

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions on promoting the linguistic competence of EFL learner. The researcher who conducted the study has adopted the descriptive analytical method with dual tools; a questionnaire and a test for third year students at SUST. After the data being analyzed through SPSS, the researcher came up with the following findings: most of teaching activities at SUST neglect using phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions, students are much weaker in idioms than phrasal verbs.

Based on these findings the researcher recommends that: EFL learners are required to be well familiarized with language chunks and teachers should give their students enough time to practice phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions.

2-2-3: Mohammed Amir Anwar Mohammed, SUST, (2017).

The above mentioned researcher conducted an (M.A thesis) entitled: **The Role of Teaching Idiomatic Expressions in Developing Basic Level Pupils' Linguistic Competence.**

This study aims to investigate the perspective of EFL teachers on idioms in language teaching and learning. The researcher looked into three major points that make idioms such an obstacle to the English learners, these

three points were: 1-the difficulties of idioms including comprehension and usage 2-language connection with culture 3-methods of teaching idioms.

The purpose of this study is to prove how the idiomatic expressions are instrumental in consolidating the basic level pupils' linguistic competence. The sample was exclusively drawn from Smart International School and the data of the study has been collected by using written interview (survey). The researcher asked the participants to write about their own perspective in teaching English idiomatic expressions and the role of them in teaching EFL learners. The researcher uses SPSS to analyze the data.

The results of the study revealed that idioms are very important and they play a significant role in language teaching and learning. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that: idioms are an important aspect of language and should not be skipped from language curricula and that there is a strong relationship between idioms and culture. The researcher also suggested that teachers should adopt effective ways in teaching idioms.

2-2-4: Fatimah S. Alshiraida, Assist. Instr. Department of English, Al-Turah University College, Al-USTATH Magazine, No 210, Volume Two, 2014.

The aforementioned researcher conducted a research paper entitled: **The Impact of Teaching Idiomatic Expressions on the foreign Language Learners' Comprehension.**

In this paper, the researcher explained the role of idiomatic expressions in improving the comprehension of the foreign language learners, as these expressions are cultural specifics and can affect the understanding of the foreign language learners. Therefore, it is important that these

expressions should be introduced in foreign language textbooks and taught by the teachers of the foreign language. Idiomatic expressions should be taught in context and not in isolation because their figurative meaning is not obvious from the literal meaning of their individual constituents. Thus, this study aimed to find out whether teaching English idiomatic expressions improve the foreign language learners' comprehension in listening as well as reading skills and how this will enhance their fluency at speaking the foreign language.

Based on these findings, the researcher recommends that: Arab students who are learning English especially at the university level should be familiarized with the English Language specific idioms to improve their fluency in spoken English, and help them improve their reading comprehension.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Chapter Three

Methodology

3-0: Introduction:

This chapter gives an account for the research method adopted, the population and the sample of the study, the instrument and the procedures for data collection. It also describes how data are analyzed, and how validity and reliability of the study's tool are verified. As mentioned earlier, the present study is a descriptive; the researcher uses the statistical analytical method to conduct the study.

3-1: Population of the Study:

The targeted subjects of this is roughly (80) students who are currently taking preparatory courses for the M.A program. (30) Of them were selected randomly inside the class of the study to represent the other students. They, (i.e. the students) were males and females from Sudan University of Science & Technology, College of Languages, Department of English.

3-2: Sample of the Study:

The sample of this study was exclusively drawn from the qualifying year's students who are majoring in English; their whole number was (30), the researcher distributed (16) copies of the test in the first session, while the other (14) copies were given out a week after to the same sample to verify the reliability of the tool. The participants involved in this study had been leaning English for at least (13) years, starting from basic school and continuing through secondary school, and then to college. Therefore, their overall language competence was supposed to be

high, since they were homogenous in terms of learning experience and learning environment.

3-3: The Instrument for Data Collection:

The instrument used for data collection was a test of idioms. The test was made up of three questions, each question consists of (10) items and it was given in the form of a text that contains a variety of idiomatic expressions, where the participants were asked to read over the text and match up the underlined idiomatic expressions to their meaning. The second form of the test was taken the shape of multiple-choice questions, while the third form was in the shape of guessing the meaning of idiomatic expressions from the context. The test was exclusively chosen from English Vocabulary in Use (Michael McCarthy, 2002:P.199) and Practice with Idioms (Ronald E. Feare, 1980: P. xvii, 13, 27, 49,127) and that (i.e. the test) was statistically analyzed. In analyzing the data, the following statistical tests have been taken into account:

1-Reliability co-efficient, was used to check the reliability of the test used in this study.

2-Descriptive statistics, such as valid, frequencies, and percentages were used to account for the basic features of the data collected.

3-4: Procedures of Data Collection:

The researcher administered the test to the participants by the end of their normal class, after getting the permission from the lecturer and the students themselves. It was worth mentioning here that, the researcher has defined the term idiom theoretically and gave one clear example to ensure that the students understood the concept. After the test was given out to those who were attended the lecture, the aim of conducting the test was explained and the participants were asked to complete the task to the

best of their abilities. The time allowed for the test was one-hour. In fact, there were some instructions given by the researcher after the distribution of the test. These instructions were as follows: 1-Don't use, whether an electronic or a paper dictionary or any other reference to check the meaning of an idiom.

2-don't ask your neighbor for assistance.

3-5: Validity and Reliability of the Study's Test:

Validity and reliability are considered very significant aspects of tests instrument, because they ensure the quality of the tool used to measure students' knowledge of any thing and they are considered as the two main characteristics of tests. As for the present study, the two terms are used to ascertain the difficulties that face the (EFL) learners in comprehending the idiomatic expressions in written texts.

3-6: Validity of the Study:

Validity means: how does the researcher make sure that the content of the tool is valid; how it measures and what does it intend to measure. In other words, it refers to the result of the test not to the test itself. A test is considered to be valid if it tests what it is supposed to test. To put it in a form of idiomatic expression, does the research tool allow the researcher to *hit the bull's eye* of the research objective? Hatch and Hussein (1982: 250) defined validity as “.....*the extent to which the results of the procedure serve the uses for which they were intended.....*” There are three main types of validity; content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity.

In order to verify the content validity of the test, the researcher shows the first draft of the test to the supervisor to check the relevance of the test's questions to the research hypotheses. Then, the researcher referred the second version of the test to four experts; they were all Ph.D. holders working in the College of Languages and Faculty of Education, English-Department. The researcher gave each one of these experts a copy of idiom test in order to give their opinions, comments, and recommendations about the tool's content, with regard to its suitability, reformation, and modification.

The experts made some grammatical and lexical corrections and two of them commented on the last question in the test which was given in the form of guessing the meaning of idioms from the context, they said, with regard to this question, there must be choices under the item in order to facilitate the answer to the participants. After the consultancy of these experts, the researcher referred to the supervisor to discuss the remarks given by these experts and he agreed with some of them to some extent. Finally, the researcher takes most of these remarks into account and incorporated them to the final version of the test which is to be found in the appendix.

3-7: Reliability of the Study:

Test reliability refers to the test's consistency and to "*the notions of consistency with which the test items are answered or individual's achievements remain relatively the same and can be determined through the test re-test method at two different times*" (Golafshami, 2003: P.598-599). That means the test should give the same or similar results if it is given to the same group of subjects on at least two different circumstances and the relationship between the two tests administration would be a high positive or negative correlation.

As far as the present study is concerned, the researcher divided the test copies into two different sessions to verify its reliability. It was first distributed to (16) students, and then administered once again to same subject a week later. The table below summarizes the reliability statistics of the test:

Cronbach-Alpha Co-efficient	Reliability	Test's question No
	.87	3

In order to analyze the data of the study, the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Studies (SPSS) and the Alpha-Cronbach is used to calculate the reliability co-efficient

Chapter Four

Data Analysis, Results, and Discussion

Chapter Four

Data analysis, Results, and Discussion

4-0: Introduction:

This study aims at investigating the difficulties encountered by Sudanese (EFL) learners in comprehending idiomatic expressions in written texts. The subject of the study was mainly drawn from Sudan University of Science & Technology, College of Languages, English-Department, qualifying year's students. So, in this chapter the researcher provides the data analysis of the study and discusses the results obtained from the students. Furthermore, the study hypotheses will be tested based on the results of the participants who involved in the present study.

4-1: The Analysis of the Test:

This study is a descriptive; the researcher uses the statistical method, known as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data obtained from the participants who involved in this study. In order to analyze the data, the following statistical tests have been considered.

1-Reliability co-efficient: was used to check the reliability of the test.

2-descriptive statistics which includes valid, frequencies, and percentage were used to describe the basic features of the data collected.

4-2: The Responses of the Test:

The responses to the diagnostic test of the 30 students were tabulated and computed. The following is an analytical interpretation and discussion of

the findings regarding different points related to the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Each statement in the test is analyzed statistically and discussed. The following tables and figures will support the discussion.

4-3: Statistical Reliability and Validity of the Students' Test:

The reliability coefficient was calculated for the measurement, which was used in the test using Alpha - Cronbach coefficient Equation as the following: For calculating the validity and the reliability of the test from the above equation, the researcher distributed the attest to respondents to calculate the reliability co-efficient using the Alpha-Cronbach coefficient the results have been shown in the following table. To ascertain the reliability of the test Cronbach's- Alpha measure was used. The reason behind using this measure, because it is more flexible and it is often the most appropriate reliability estimate for language testing research and language test development projects.

4-4: Reliability Statistics:

	Reliability	Number of questions
Cronbach's Alpha	.87	3

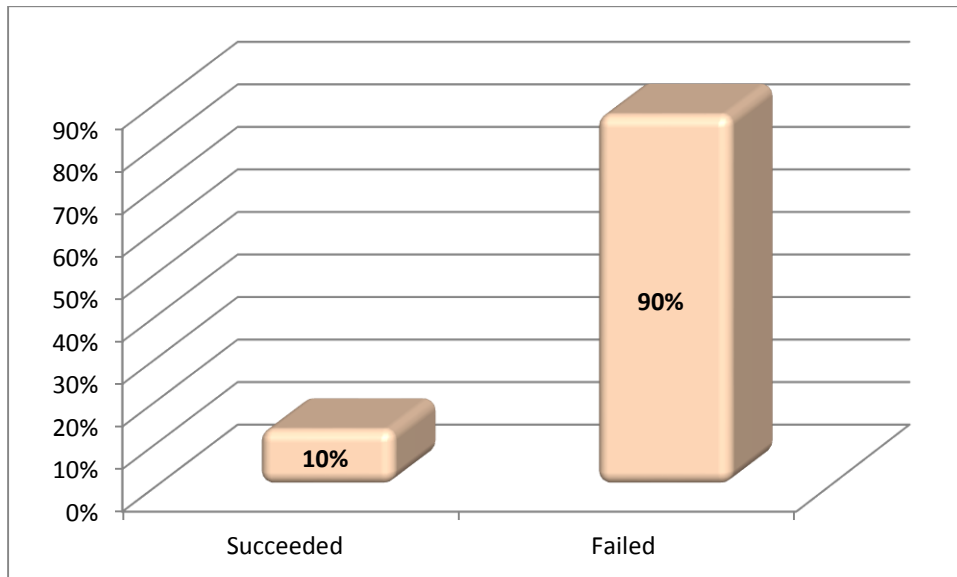
The test was the only tool used to collect data of the study. It was constructed and validated to investigate the difficulties encountered by (EFL) learners in comprehending idiomatic expressions in written texts in the 5th year at Sudan University of Science and Technology. The analysis of the data obtained from the subjects will be presented in tables and figures; each table or figure will be followed by a comment.

4-5: Students' Test

Question one: Read the following dialogue and try to guess the use of the underlined idiomatic expressions.

Table (4-1): the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' according to question (1)

Valid	Frequencies	Percentage
Succeeded	3	10%
Failed	27	90%
Total	30	100%

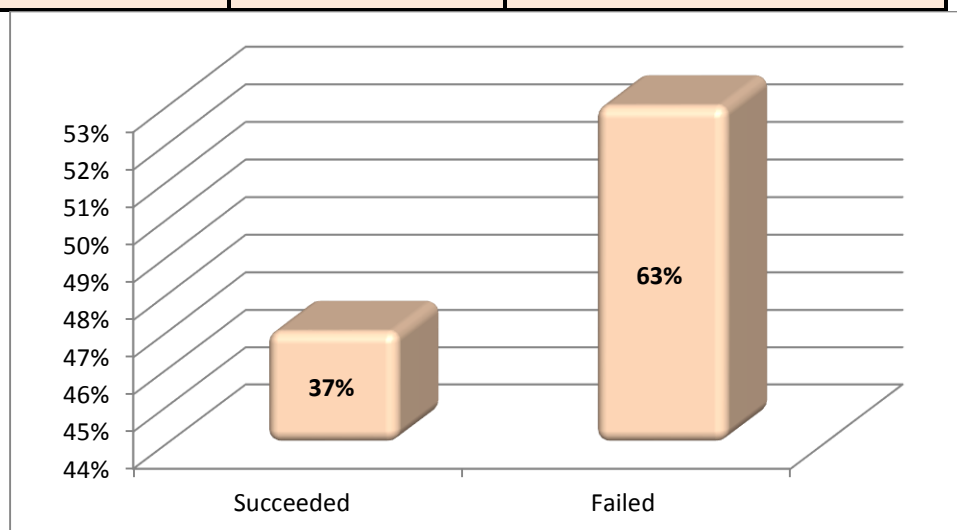


From the above table No (4-1) and figure No (4-1) it's shown that there are **(3)** students in the study's sample with percentage **(10%)** have Succeeded in the first question, and There are **(27)** participants with percentage **(90%)** were Failed to pass the question.

Question Two: Draw a circle around an idiomatic expression which has the best meaning in each of the context below.

Table (4-2): the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' according to question (2)

Valid	Frequencies	Percentage
Succeeded	11	37%
Failed	19	63%
Total	30	100%

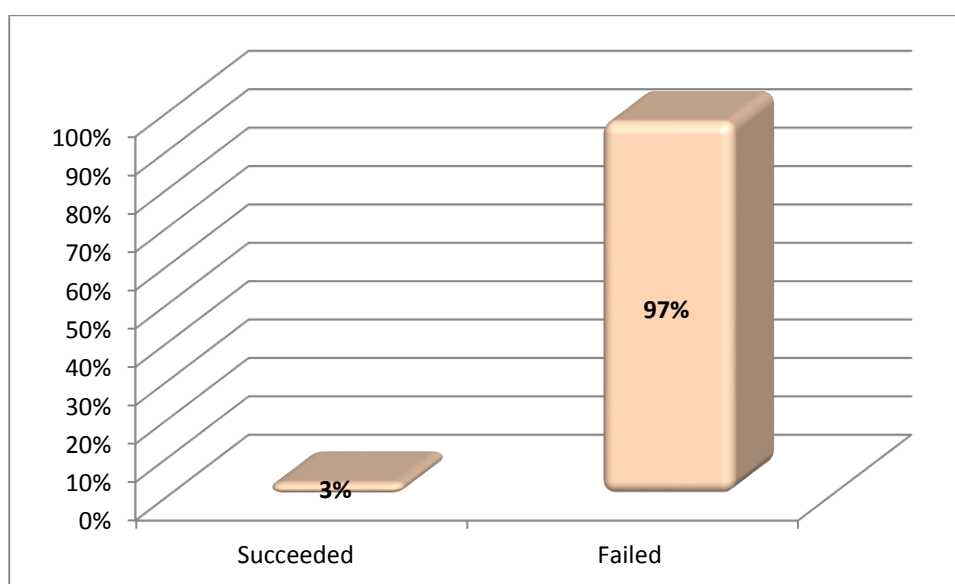


From the above table No (4-2) and figure No (4-2) it's shown that there are **(11)** students in the study's sample with percentage **(37%)** have Succeeded the question (2:2), and There are **(19)** participants with percentage **(63%)** were Failed to pass the question.

Question Three: Try to guess the meaning of each idiom as it is used in the following sentences. Underline the contextual clues as you are trying to guess the meaning.

Table (4-3): the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' according to question (3)

Valid	Frequencies	Percentage
Succeeded	1	3%
Failed	29	97%
Total	30	100%

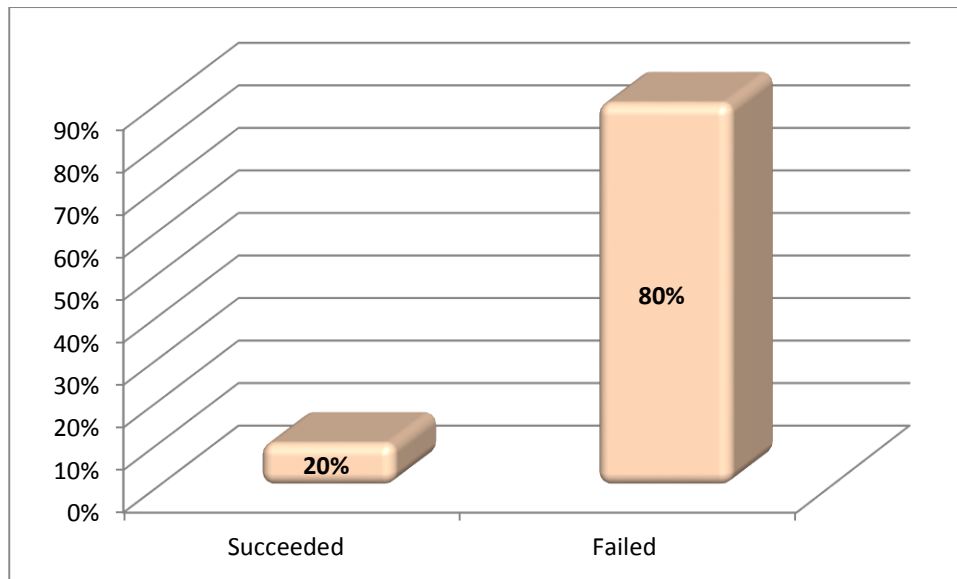


From the above table No (4-3) and figure No (4-3) it's shown that there is **(1)** student in the study's sample with percentage **(3%)** has Succeeded question (3), and There are **(29)** participants with percentage **(97%)** were Failed to pass the question

The total result of the study's test:

Table (4-4): the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to the whole questions of the test.

Valid	Frequencies	Percentage
Succeeded	6	20%
Failed	24	80%
Total	30	100%



From the above table No (4-4) and figure No (4-4) it's obvious that there are **(6)** students in the study's sample with percentage **(20%)** have Succeeded in the whole test and there are **(24)** subjects with percentage **(80%)** were Failed to pass the test.

Table (4-5) one sample T-TEST for the questions of the study.

Questions	N	mean	SD	t-value	DF	p-value
1	30	3.7	0.3	6.1	29	0.00
2	30	2.8	1.4	7.3	29	0.00
3	30	3.1	0.76	4.5	29	0.01

The calculated value of T – TEST for the significance of the differences for the respondent's answers in the question No (1) was (6.1) which is greater than the tabulated value of T – TEST at the degree of freedom (29) and the significant value level (0.05%) which was (2.34). This indicates that, there are no statistically significant differences at the level

(0.05 %) among the answers of the respondents. this mean that our hypothesis is verified.

The calculated value of T – TEST for the significance of the differences for the respondent's answers in the question No (2) was (7.3) which is greater than the tabulated value of T – TEST at the degree of freedom (29) and the significant value level (0.05%) which was (2.34). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (0.05 %) among the answers of the respondents. this mean that our hypothesis is confirmed.

The calculated value of T – TEST for the significance of the differences for the respondent's answers in the question No (3) was (4.5) which is greater than the tabulated value of T – TEST at the degree of freedom (29) and the significant value level (0.05%) which was (2.34). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (0.05 %) among the answers of the respondents. this mean that our hypothesis is verified.

4-6: Discussion of the results:

In this section the researcher wants to shed lights on the results obtained from subjects who involved in the present study and discuss them according to their performance in the test.

As shown in question No (1) in the test, the results confirmed that (EFL) learners at Sudan University face many difficulties in dealing with the meaning of idiomatic expressions in a written text; this is obviously seen in the students' performance regarding the first question in the test. Where the frequency and the percentage of the students who failed in this question was greater than those who passed it.

As far as the second question in the test was concerned, the results indicated that the meanings of idiomatic expressions are a complex issue and that (i.e. idioms) are fairly difficult for the Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University. On the other hand, idiomatic expressions are encountered in a wide range of spoken and written contexts; therefore, it is essential that Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University are at least aware of idioms and their metaphorical nature. However, it was demonstrated that one fourth of the students have the ability to guess the meaning of idiomatic expressions in context, those students scored at (37%), whereas those who failed in that question scored at (63%).

The results displayed in question No (3) in the test demonstrated that Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University are unable to use the contextual clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar idioms and they also failed to recognize idioms as wholes. There was only one participant who passed this question while the rest of the students failed to do so. This can be attributed to the lack of knowledge in using contextual clues to guess the meaning of figurative language in general, besides the tendency to seek assistance in the mother tongue also led to erroneous interpretation.

4-7: Verification of the Study's Hypotheses:

In this section the researcher will verify the study's hypotheses with reference to the results obtained from the students' performance in the test in order to see to what extent the hypotheses were confirmed or rejected. It is worth mentioning here that, this study was basically based on three objectives, in addition three hypotheses were generated and discussed in this study.

4-7-1: Hypothesis One:

It was assumed that Sudanese (EFL) learners at SUST face many difficulties in dealing with idiomatic expressions in written texts.

From the analysis of the study's tool, it was found out that this hypothesis was confirmed by the students' performance in the first question in the test.

4-7-2: Hypothesis Two:

It was hypothesized that Sudanese (EFL) learners at SUST are not fully aware of the meaning of idiomatic expressions in context.

The frequency and the percentage of the second question in the test were proved and confirmed this hypothesis.

4-7-3: Hypothesis Three:

It was speculated that Sudanese (EFL) learners at SUST are unable to use the contextual clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar idiomatic expressions in context.

The results obtained from the analysis of the third question in the test was confirmed this hypothesis.

Chapter Five

Findings, Recommendations, and Suggestion for Further Studies.

Chapter Five

Findings, Recommendations, and suggestion for Further Studies:

5-0: Introduction:

This chapter will wrap up the last pages of this study; it will give a short account for the major findings of the study, the recommendations as well as suggestions for further studies.

5-1: Findings:

Based on the results of the data analysis, the researcher concluded to the following findings:

- 1-Idiomatic expressions pose many difficulties to Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University in written texts.
- 2- Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University were totally unaware of the meaning of idiomatic expressions in context.
- 3- Sudanese (EFL) learners at Sudan University were unable to use the contextual clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar idioms.

5-2: Recommendations:

In the light of the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are postulated:

- 1-Formulaic language, more specifically idiomatic expressions should be given a special care when teaching English Language.
- 2-English syllabus designers at Sudan University must give a considerable attention to idioms.

3-Idiomatic expressions must be taught in context not in isolation and their meaning should be learnt as a whole not separately.

5-3: Suggestions for Further Studies:

The researcher does not claim comprehensiveness or thoroughness when conducted this study, thus he suggested more studies to be carried out in order to cover the whole aspects of this topic and in this regard, the researcher suggests the following:

1-More studies are needed to be conducted on the importance of idiomatic expressions to (EFL) learners.

2-Further studies are required to investigate the best ways of teaching and learning formulaic language in general and idiomatic expressions in particular to (EFL) learners.

References:

1-Abdallah Elkheir (2012), an investigation into difficulties of understanding and using English idioms encounter Sudanese students majoring in English language (Ph.D. thesis) SUST.

2-Adkins, (1968).Teaching idioms and figures of speech to non-native speakers of English. *The Modern language journal*, P. (53, 148, 152).

3-Asl, F.M (2013).The impact of context on learning English idioms in EFL classes.*TESOL journal*, vol. 37.

4-Cacciari, C; and Tabossi, (1988).The comprehension of idioms. *Journal of memory and language*. P. (27, 668, 683).

5-Chuang, Y. (2013).A study of the relationship between college EFL learners' vocabulary size and idiomatic reading comprehension. *NCUE Journal of Humanities*. P. (7, 59, 76).

6-Linda and Roger, (1992), *Dictionary of English Idioms and their origins*.

7-Jennifer, S. *English idioms and how to use them* (fifth edition), Oxford University Press.

8-Michael. M. (2002), *English Vocabulary in Use* (advance), Cambridge University Press.

9- Michael. M. (2002), *English Vocabulary in Use* (upper intermediate), Cambridge University Press.

10-Dickson, M. (2014), *English Idioms Theory*. Oxford University Press.

11-Glucksburg, Sam &Mcgloned (2001) *understanding figurative language: from metaphor to idioms*. New York: Oxford University Press.

12-Gradal: (1995) the types of idiomatic expressions. America. New York.

13-Grant, L., & Bauer, L. (2004). Criteria for re-defining idioms: Are we barking up the wrong tree? *Applied Linguistics*, 25, 83, 61.

14-Fatimah S-Alshiraida, Assist.Instr. Department of English, Al-Turah University College, Al-USTATH Magazine, No 210, Vol. 2, (2014). The impact of teaching idiomatic expressions on the foreign language learners' comprehension.

15-Idioms structural and psychological perspectives/ Edited by Martin Evert , et al (1995) Hillsdale, New Jersey Hove, UK.

16-Irugas (1986).Don't put your leg in your mouth: Transfer in the acquisition of idioms in a second language. *TESOL Quarterly*.

17-Irujo, S. (1986). A piece of cake: learning and teaching idioms. *ELT Journal*, (P. 40, 136, 242).

18-Mantyla: K. (May, 31, 2005). Idioms and language users. The effect of the characteristics of idioms on their recognition and interpretation by native and non-native speakers of English. University of Jyväskylä.

19-McCarthy, M (2002).English idiomatic in use. Cambridge University press.

20-Motaz Abdulgader Morgan, SUST, (2016): The impact of phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions on promoting the linguistic competence of (EFL) learners, (M.A thesis).

21-Mohammed. Amir Anwar Mohammed. SUST, (2017).The role of teaching idiomatic expressions in developing basic level pupils' linguistic competence.(M.A thesis).

22-Oxford idioms/ Dictionary for learners of English. Oxford University Press.

23-Ronald E. Practice with Idioms. American institute/ San Diego State University. Oxford University press.

24-Robert, J, (2014), essential idioms in English, USA.

25-Palmer, (1976), Semantics (second edition), Cambridge University Press.

26-Spilling the beans on understanding and memorizing idioms in conversation. Memory and cognition (P. 8,449, 456).

27-Michael, M. (1998). Spoken Language and Applied Linguistics. Cambridge University Press.

Appendixes

A test on Idioms:

Instruction: Answer all the questions.

Time allowed:

One hour

Dear students,

This test aims at collecting data about the difficulties encountered by (EFL) learners in comprehending idiomatic expressions in written texts. So, I kindly need your cooperation to attempt answering all the questions.

Q1 :(A) Read the following dialogue and write the use of the idiomatic expressions that are underlined in (B).

Fred: Guess what, Richard Smith's leaving!

Mary: Funnily enough, you're the third person who's said that today.

Fred: Are you going to apply for his job in the London office?

Mary: No, I don't think so.

Fred: Really? What's stopping you? If you ask me, you'd be perfect for the job.

Mary: Yes but I don't want to live in London.

Fred: You're kidding! Why not?

Mary: Well for one thing, my family and friends all live here and for another, I don't really like big cities. On top of that, I'd have to find somewhere to live in London and it's really expensive.

Fred: Yes, I take your point..... Still you'd be earning more and could afford to pay more on rent.

Mary: Believe me, I've thought about it and have decided against it.

Fred: Well, at the end of the day you know what's best for you.

Mary: You said it. I'm happy here, so that's that.

(B) Write each expression in that is underlined with its use.

(1) To give your opinion.

.....

(2) To show that you are surprised by what somebody said.

.....

(3) To give the first reason for something.

.....

(4) To give another, perhaps more important reason.

.....

(5) To say something that will surprise the other person.

.....

(6) To accept the truth of what the other person has said.

.....

(7) To put an end to a discussion or argument.

.....

(8) To emphasize that you agree completely.

.....

(9) To emphasize what you are about to say.

.....

(10) To show that you have considered all the various aspects of the question.

.....

Q2: Draw a circle round the letter of an idiomatic expression which has the best meaning in each of the context below.

(1)....., there are more similarities between various people of the world than there are differences.

- a-sooner or later b-by and large c-odds and ends

(2)Reaching a difficult agreement is a matter of.....

- a- part and parcel b-give and take c-odds and ends

(3)If you lie to someone as a joke, you **pull their**.....

- a- leg b-nose c-hair

(4)If something is very easy, it is **a piece of**.....

- a- pie b-cake c-chocolate

(5)My..... were very kind to me when I was seriously ill.

- a- heart and soul b-rand and file c-flesh and blood

(6)If you recognize a name or word, it's **a familiar**.....to it.

- a- ring b-sound c-noise

(7)Many problems in our serious discussion.

- a-showed up b-came up c-opened up

(8)If you give an important visitor a very special welcome, you **put out the red**

- a- flag b-carpet c-mat

(9)Someone who is unfriendly and never shows emotion is **a cold**.....

- a- frog b-stone c-fish

(10)Students usually dislike homework, because it is simply.....

a-pins and needles
dried

b-last straw

c-cut and

Q3: Try to guess the meaning of each idiom as it is used in the following sentences. Underline the words that helped you to guess the meaning.

(1) John **made up his mind** to accept the new job.

.....
.....

(2) It was the failure of the company that made the boss **flips his lips**.

.....
.....

(3) He **took advantage** of the summer vacation period to travel around the world.

.....
.....

(4) The lawyer's fees will **make a dent in** our finances.

.....
.....

(5) He **put off** his work until later, instead of doing it right now.

.....
.....

(6) I have been working so hard that I'm **looking forward to** a nice, relaxing vacation.

.....
.....

(7) Because he did a very poor job and came up with bad results, his boss felt that he hadn't **live up to his responsibilities**.

.....
.....

(8) Because of inflation, salaries can't **keep up with** the high cost of living.

.....
.....

(9)Everyone **looks up to** him because he is always so helpful.

.....
.....

(10)Everyone voted in the same way except Joes, he **took exception to**
our vote.

.....
.....