



Sudan University of Science & Technology
College of Graduate Studies
College of Languages
English Language Department



**Investigating the Problems of Understanding Some Multi-Word-Expressions
Encountered by Sudanese Undergraduates with Special Reference to Literary
Texts**

**(A Case Study of 4th Level Students of English Language at Various Sudanese
Universities)**

تقصي مشكلات فهم العبارات المتعددة المفردات بالتركيز على مرجعية النصوص الأدبية التي يواجهها
الطلاب السودانيون الجامعيون

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English Language (Applied Linguistics)**

Submitted by:

Mohammed Suliman Abdulrahman Fadl

Supervised by:

Dr. Abdalla Yassin Abdalla

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Name of Candidate:

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Degree Examined for: Ph.D. in English (Applied Linguistics)

Approved by:

1. External Examiner

Name: *Dr. Ahmed Mukhlis Elmeri Osman*

Signature: *[Signature]* Date: *05/11/2019 A.D.*

2. Internal Examiner

Name: *Midmond A. Ahmed*

Signature: *[Signature]* Date: *5/11/2019*

3. Supervisor

Name: *Dr. Abdalla Yassin Abdalla*

Signature: *[Signature]* Date: *5/11/2019*

Quranic Verse

(11) O you who have believed, when you are told, "Space yourselves" in assemblies, then make space; Allāh will make space for you.[1645] And when you are told, "Arise,"[1646] then arise; Allāh will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allāh is Aware of what you do.

Surah: Almojadala Verse No. (11)

آية قرآنية

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ
انشُرُوا فَانشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ).

صدق الله العظيم

سورة المجادلة الآية (11)

Dedication

To my dear parents, sincere wife and beloved children, rest of the extended family, to teachers, colleagues and friends.

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The researcher is very grateful to all of the students who were the participants of this study. They were from three Sudanese universities. Without their effort it would have been impossible to conduct data for the purpose of this dissertation.

Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the problem of understanding idiomatic expressions (IEs) encountered by Sudanese EFL undergraduates in literary texts. The method that is used in this investigatory study is the analytic descriptive method. For data collection, the researcher designed a test and a questionnaire which have been distributed to 100 students. In order to select a representative sample the researcher has chosen the respondents from three universities namely: Sudan University of Science and Technology, Omdurman Islamic University and Ahfad University. However, 80% has been divided between the former two universities and 20% is allocated to the later one. Furthermore, the study aims at recommending some strategies that Sudanese EFL undergraduates could utilize in order to overcome the problems that face them in comprehending IEs in literary texts. The researcher postulated three hypotheses that non-compositionality and semantic and syntactic fixedness are some of the factors behind these escalating difficulties, IEs constitute difficulties for Sudanese EFL undergraduates in comprehending literary texts to a large extent. Finally, Sudanese EFL undergraduates do not use any strategies for dealing with IEs. The results show that non-compositionality, semantic and syntactic fixedness constitutes difficulties to those students in understanding IEs to a large extent. In addition, they do not utilize any strategy for decoding IEs. In order to overcome these problems IEs should be given a considerable attention in literary courses. Sudanese EFL learners should utilize some strategies for learning IEs such as Mnemonics. Finally, a great deal of attention should be given to the characteristics of IEs; non-compositionality, semantic and syntactic fixedness.

Abstract: [Arabic Version]

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي مشكلات فهم المتلازمات اللفظية التي يواجهها الطلاب السودانيين الجامعيين في النصوص الأدبية الإنجليزية. استخدم الباحث الطريقة الوصفية التحليلية للحصول على بيانات لتحقيق أغراض هذه الدراسة، تم توزيعه اختباراً واستبياناً على 100 طالب. من أجل اختيار عينة تمثيلية، اختار الباحث المجيبين من ثلاث جامعات: جامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا، جامعة أم درمان الإسلامية وجامعة الأحفاد. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، تم تقسيم 80% بين الجامعتين السابقين و 20% خصصت لجامعة الأحفاد. علاوة على ذلك. تهدف الدراسة إلى معرفة المعوقات التي يواجهها الطلاب السودانيين في فهم المتلازمات اللفظية في النصوص الأدبية الانجليزية و كيفية التغلب عليها باستعمال بعض الإستراتيجيات التي تعينهم على فهمها. أدلى الباحث بثلاث فرضيات مفادها أن عدم التكوينية والثبات الدلالي والنحوي هي بعض العوامل الكامنة وراء هذه الصعوبات. وتعيق هذه العوامل فهم الطلاب لهذه المتلازمات اللفظية إلى حد كبير. قل ما يستخدم طلاب البكالوريوس اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية إستراتيجيات للتعامل مع المتلازمات اللفظية. أظهرت النتائج أن الثبات والدلالي والنحوي يشكلان صعوبات لهؤلاء الطلاب في فهم المتلازمات اللفظية إلى حد كبير. للتغلب على هذه المشكلات، ينبغي على متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية استخدام بعض الإستراتيجيات لتعلم العبارات الاصطلاحية. وأخيراً ينبغي تخصيص بعض الفصول من كتب الأدب لتدريس الطلاب طبيعية هذه المتلازمات اللفظية و كيفية التعامل معها مع الوضع في الاعتبار الثبات الدلالي والنحوي لهذه المتلازمات اللفظية.

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List of Abbreviation/s

No.	The Term/s	The Abbreviation/s
1	Idiomatic Expressions	IEs
2	Multiword Expressions	MWEs
3	Fixed Expressions	FEs
4	Multiword Items	MI s
5	Compound Idioms	CI s
6	Verb Object Idioms	VOI s
7	Prepositional Phrases	PP s

Chapter One

Introduction

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

An idiomatic expression (IE) is a vocabulary item which consists of a sequence of two or more words (a word being simply an orthographic unit). They are the result of lexical processes of fossilization and word formation rather than grammatical rules (Norbert Schmitt, 1997). Based upon this definition, an IE is a group of words, strung together to formulate a certain meaning; depending on semantics rather than structure. This is the point where L2 learners encounter problems related to comprehension because IEs are not dealt with as single words but rather as a lexical chunk in addition to the indirect meaning that they are characterized by. Phrasal verbs, idioms, proverbs, fixed expressions, collocations and prefabs are examples of IEs. These lexical items are indispensable part from most English literary texts that L2 learners encounter. Suppose that students experience some difficulties in understanding literary texts and other academic texts at level of basic/root words, it is inevitable for them then to experience difficulties in comprehending IEs in these English literary texts, because IEs are longer, semantically and structurally more complex than base/root words. This raised difficulty may be due to pronounceability, orthography, length, inflectional or derivational complexity, synformy and meaning multiplicity. (Norbert Schmitt, Michael McCarthy, 1997:48). Inferably, M.W.Es may constitute hurdles for EFL learners in understanding English Literary texts because some of them are characterized by idiomaticity, fixedness, institutionalization and non-compositionality. These in turn, place another burden upon EFL learners.

1.2 Statement of the Study Problem

Having taught English language for more than eight years to Sudanese EFL learners, the researcher has realized that IEs constitute hurdles for L2 learners in understanding English literary texts. Understanding an English literary text does not solely mean scrolling up and down the text, but knowing the vocabulary and IEs by which the text is composed. It seems to be a huge burden is placed upon Sudanese EFL learners not only because of inflectional or derivational complexity, synformy and meaning multiplicity at single word level, but in addition to these, IEs are characterized by ideational meaning, fixedness, institutionalization, and non-compositionality. By this token, Sudanese EFL learners should know adequate knowledge and strategies to meet the proficiency needed in comprehending English literary texts. Hence, this study will attempt to investigate the problem of understanding multi-word expression encountered by Sudanese undergraduates with special reference to literary texts.

1.3 Questions of the Study

1. What are the factors that make IEs difficult to be comprehended when encountered in literary texts?
2. To what extent do IEs constitute hurdles to Sudanese EFL university students in comprehending English literary texts
3. What are the adequate word knowledge and vocabulary learning strategies do Sudanese undergraduates should have to know to meet the proficiency needed in comprehending English literary texts?

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses are postulated:

1. Idiomaticity, fixedness, institutionalization and non-compositionality are some of the factors behind the difficulties that EFL learners encounter in comprehending English language literary texts.
2. IEs constitute hurdles to Sudanese EFL undergraduates in understanding English literary texts to a large extent.
3. Recognition, mnemonics and contextualization are some of the word knowledge and vocabulary learning strategies that EFL learners do not know to comprehend IEs in literary texts.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate to what extent IEs constitute hurdles for Sudanese EFL undergraduates in understanding English literary texts.
2. To detect the factors behind these difficulties that face Sudanese EFL undergraduates in comprehending English literary texts.
3. To highlight some strategies for overcoming these difficulties in understanding English literary texts encountered by Sudanese EFL learners.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study derives its importance from the fact that it addresses a live problem of L2 learners in understanding IEs. Furthermore, not so many researches have been carried out in this field i.e. vocabulary and more specifically IEs in Sudan, so this adds to the importance of this study. As literary texts are always almost not encoded at the level of semantics and the covert meaning of words, the L2 learners have to develop their proficiency to an adequate level of pragmatics where the

meaning of sentences exceed the level of semantics. This study tries as much as possible to highlight some of the ways and strategies that L2 learners find them very helpful to decode and understand literary text. This important field has been left ignorant for a long time, so the researcher find out that there should be something done to rise the students' and teachers' awareness about the important role that IEs play in comprehending literary texts and simultaneously substitute a huge part of the context. In addition to this, they can be used to flashback a lot of actions happened in the past, and they can give the reader a signal or a hint to what will or may happen in the future. From this point, MWEs can be described as economical and metaphorical form of expressions. In order to reinforce these ideas, (McCarthy: 1990, viii) has stated that "No matter how well the students learn the grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in an L2 cannot happen in any meaningful way".

Accordingly, this linguist believes that vocabulary including MWEs which is the foundation upon which other language components are built. Generally, a word is a group of morphemes strung together to formulate a certain meaning. Unlikely, MWEs are groups of words strung together to form a certain meaning which is totally different from the meaning of these individual words.

1.7 Research Methodology

In this research a test and a questionnaire will be used to collect data for the purpose of the study. The test will be designed carefully to fulfill the objectives of the study as well as it will be given to a representative number of students from different Sudanese universities specifically Sudan University of Science and Technology, Omdurman Islamic University and Ahfad University for Women. The

reason behind choosing these universities is that Sudan University of Science and Technology represents what is so called co-education where males and female students study together in one classroom. While, Omdurman Islamic University is where males are taught alone away from their counterparts and Ahfad University for Women represents the reverse. The test is aiming at showing the factors that make IEs problematic to Sudanese EFL learners. And what are the best ways to comprehend IEs when encountered in English literary texts e.g. contextualization which means to comprehend IEs according to the context where they are used. Finally, it intends to test the level of recognition of IEs in literary texts. The research adapts the analytical method of which the data will be collected via a test and the questionnaire will be analyzed by (SPSS) and the resultant data will be discussed. The questionnaire functions as a supplement to the test and it aims at reviewing teacher's views about IEs. To make sure that the test and the questionnaire are authentic and valid; they will be given to a specialist to check their validity and authenticity before they are used.

1.8 Limits of the Study

This study is concerned with the investigation of the problem of understanding MWEs, i.e. idioms, proverbs and fixed expressions encountered by Sudanese EFL learners of Sudan University of Science and Technology, Omdurman Islamic University and Ahfad University for Women, faculty of Arts English Language and Literature Department, level four. The reason behind choosing students of level four is that by now they are exposed to a lot of literary texts, for instance, African literature, American literature, poetry...etc. . On the other hand, the reason behind selecting idioms, proverbs and fixed collocations is that they are the most challenging kinds of IEs, because they are characterized by fixedness and non-compositionality.

1.9 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter the researcher has addressed various parts of this research. It includes the statement of the problem, hypotheses, questions, objectives, methodology, limits/significance of the study and terminologies.

1.10 Definition of Terms

Multiword Expressions: Are groups of words which function as one single lexical item.

Proverbs: Are saying often give wisdom and advice about a situation, e.g. a stitch in time saves nine.

Idioms: A lexical item which meaning cannot be understood from the component words, e.g. to drive someone against the bends; to exasperate someone.

Fixed Collocation: Refers to the syntagmatic relationship between words which co-occur in discourse. Collocations vary in the strength from frozen and absolute as in the idiom *kick the bucket* through strong and restricted as in *blonde hair* to weak *nice hat*.

Non-compositionality: Refers to the fact that some words and phrases meaning is not composed out of the bases and proposition or particles, for instance, *on the other hand*.

Fixedness: When a group of words are used as frozen part i.e. without any forwarding or back warding to its components.

Orthography: Refers to the writing system of the language, how the words are written and spelled.

Pronounceability: As the name suggest it is the ability to pronounce words accurately, but it also refers to the fact that some words are characterized by pronunciation difficulty while others are at ease.

Phrasal Verbs: Are combination of verbs and adverbials or propositional particles.

Synformy: When two words look alike in terms of pronunciation or orthography.

Institutionalization: Is the degree to which a multiword item conventionalized in the language.

Lexical Chunk: A group of words which one should treats as a single lexical item.

Word Knowledge: Is the information about orthographical and phonological form, meanings, grammatical behavior, association, collocation, frequency and register.

Mnemonic Devices: Any of a number or memory techniques used to enhance retention of words, including the keyword method, grouping words together and imagery. In other words, doing something strange about a word that makes it memorable.

Contextualization: Is used to refer to the fact that vocabulary should be picked from context and used in context as well.

Frequency: Refers to the frequent use of words whether in writing or conversation.

Ideational Meaning: Is the meaning of a word, phrase, sentence or MWE of which its meaning depends not on the literary meaning, but it is rather based on the meaning and the ideas the writer wants to convey.

Chapter Two

Literature Review and Previous Studies

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Previous Studies

2.1 Introduction

This chapter involves a significant scale of literature review and related previous studies. Moreover, this part of the study is concerned with multi-word expressions in general and idiomatic expressions (IEs) in particular. It puts into consideration the characteristics of IEs and the strategies of learning them. Furthermore, it sheds the light on other related topics to IEs: semantic status of IEs, specific grammatical and syntactic features, metaphor and metonymy, conceptual metaphor, conceptual adjustment and denotation of idiomatic strings, IEs conceptual metaphors and cultural background of idioms. Types of idioms and collocations are also explained in details. Finally, it sheds the light on several previous studies, comprising Sudanese and international ones.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Multiword item, idiomatic expression, fixed expression, lexical chunk, phraseological expression, these terms are used alternatively to refer to what is so called Multiword expressions. They are defined differently by a lot of linguists, but the holistic picture of what is an IE can be generated from the combination of these various definitions.

According to (KristelProost, 2007)an IE “is a combination of words with non-compositional semantics. In other words, a combination whose meaning or syntax cannot be modeled by applying general grammar rules to combine the meaning”. Non-compositionality makes IEs a hard nut to crack for Sudanese EFL learners, because of the fact that the meaning of a IE is not represented by the items by which it is composed. For instance, *feel over the moon*, is a highly IE which means *to feel extremely happy*.

However, there is no logical relationship between the words *feel*, *over*, *the*, *moon* and *happiness* nor any of these words give a hint to mean *pleasure*. The difficulty of comprehending these items by Sudanese undergraduates stems out firstly from this point. Another important point that has been highlighted by Kristel in this definition is the complexity of the grammar that is used in forming these lexical chunks, which in turn adds to the difficulty in comprehension. The researcher will later address this point of grammatical complexity in this chapter.

Another interesting definition of an IE is that it is “*a specialized lexical unit composed of two or more typographic words, and whose meaning cannot be directly inferred by a non-expert from its parts on the concept it describes*”. (Carlos Ramish, 2012). The meaning is represented indirectly as this linguist stated; therefore, non-experts like Sudanese undergraduates may not be able to comprehend the meaning of these lexicalized chunks. Unlike Kristel, Carlos stated

very clearly that L2 learners and any non-native speaker who is exposed to these IEs for the first time may not be able to comprehend them. This difficulty results from semantic and syntactic complexity of these phraseological expressions.

According to Norbert and Michael “*IEs have three criteria that differentiate them from other kinds of strings; institutionalization, fixedness and non-compositionality*”. Referring to the first criterion, it is the degree of which an IE conventionalized in the language; does it recur? Is it regularly considered by a language community as being a unit? (Norbert Schmitt, Michael MacCarthy, 1997). Furthermore, they added that the term lexicalization is often used alternatively with institutionalization, i.e. they have the same meaning and they should not be confused with the term frequency, which refers to how often a word is used.

The second criterion is fixedness; to which degree an IE is frozen as a sequence of words. *Does it inflect? Do its component words inflect in predictable or particular way?* For instance, the prepositional phrase *on the other hand* does not accept either forwarding or backwarding to its items. Moreover, we cannot give its meaning in a form of word to word translation, but in a form of unified meaning, this is what known as non-compositionality. E.g. *John kicked the bucket*. This instance cannot be understood even though a Sudanese EFL learner knows the meaning of *kick*; a verb of action meaning to hit someone or something and the

common noun *bucket*; a container with an open top and a handle, often used for carrying liquids, as CALD defines may not be able to comprehend this IE. Simply, because this IE, *kick the bucket* is a non-compositional unit, which means *to die* or *to pass away*, i.e. the meaning of this IE is not composed out of the words themselves. As a researcher, I believe that the idea of non-compositionality and fixedness should be given more attention, so that, Sudanese undergraduates understand this unusual nature of IEs. If these students or lecturers ignore these characteristics, they will probably result in lots of misunderstanding and misuse as well.

Another interesting and important fact that these two linguists have mentioned is that “*non-compositionality can be syntactic, semantic or pragmatic in nature. They must be recognized, learned, decoded and encoded as holistic units*”. So, according to these linguists the resultant non-compositionality or non-literal meaning can be either syntactic or semantic. Therefore Sudanese undergraduates should bear in mind that beside the fixedness in IEs which the researcher has mentioned previously that most of these IEs should not be dealt with according to their literal meaning, i.e. the meaning that can be found in dictionaries. However, there is something that should not be forgotten, i.e. IEs recognition. According to my own teaching, some Sudanese EFL learners recognize IEs, but they seem be unaware about how to deal with them. To clarify more, they always almost ask me

about their meaning when they encounter them. This is may not be the same case with English language native speakers who recognize and comprehend such kind of IEs spontaneously. Those EFL learners often face some difficulties comprehending these strange collocational items. In sum, Sudanese EFL learners have to know that IEs are characterized by non-compositionality which can exist semantically or syntactically and fixedness as have been explained so far; before all these they should recognize these chunks when encountered. These are the primary things that have to be known to comprehend IEs.

2.2.1 Factors That Affect IEs Comprehension

There are many factors that affect IEs comprehension positively or negatively; they are: compositionality, non-compositionality, institutionalization, compositeness and fixedness. They may result in demonstrating a difficulty or easiness to EFL learners when they encounter them. These factors have been mentioned by different linguists. In this part the researcher is trying to draw attention to the factors that make these IEs a hard nut to crack.

2.2.1.1 Compositionality

Generally speaking, anything that deserves to be called a language must include meaningful expressions and state clearly the way of which complexity and meaning are related. The traditional view is that the relationship is fairly tight; the

meaning of a complex expression is fully determined by its structure and the meaning of its constituents. Once we comprehend the meaning of these constituents and how they are strung together in a sentence or a phrase we have to comprehend their meaning or the intended message. This is the idea of what is so-called compositionality. (Agata Savary et al., 2017)

Therefore, proponents (those who are for) of this idea typically emphasize the productivity and systematicity of our linguistic understanding. It is obviously true that we can understand a large perhaps infinite number of collections of complex expressions at the first time that we come across, and if we understand some complex expressions, we are likely as non-native speakers to understand others that can be obtained by recombining their constituents. Compositionality is undoubtedly accounted for these phenomena.

However, opponents (those who are against) of the idea of compositionality argued that there are some cases where the meaning of a large expression seems to depend on the intension of the speaker/writer (intentional meaning), in the linguistic environment, or on the setting in which the utterance takes place, (Anna Wierzbicka, 1988). For instance, when two students argue over something and one of them is saying to the other *take it*, the meaning here is not compositional at all, it is intentional, because *take it* here does not mean so, but it means *do not take it* so that no problem would be escalated.

As a researcher, I tend to agree with both views, the former which is the idea of compositionality and the latter which oppose this idea to some extent, but the question is, what about IEs where the meaning is totally non-compositional and the meaning and the structure are helpless. This is the kick of one of the most important part in this study which is non-compositionality.

2.2.1.2 Non-compositionality

The term non-compositionality is related to the principle of compositionality in linguistic processing, which claims that: The meaning of a sentence is determined by the meaning of its component parts and the manner in which they are arranged in syntactic structure. (Sylviane Granfer, Fanny Meunier, 2008). However, idiom processing is an exception to this principle. Idiomatic meanings cannot be understood by the literal meanings of its individual constituents. For example, the conventional, figurative interpretation of *out of the blue*, i.e. suddenly, cannot be determined through combining the literal meanings of its constituents. Thereof, non-compositionality is argued in many frameworks to be the 'essential defining feature. Similarly, Glucksberf states that, “what sets idioms apart from most other fixed expressions is their "non-logical" nature”, which means, the absence of any recognizable relationship between their linguistic meanings and their idiomatic meanings (Glucksberg, 2001)

As a result, the state of non-compositionality among idioms is thought to be the result of the gradual reduction in the meaningfulness of the words within idioms due to the fixedness. In some extreme cases, as the following linguists state, “*meaning reduction leads to the state of petrification or fossilization*” (Norbert Schmitt and Michael MacCarthy, 1997:17), in which the meaning of the whole IE is no longer traceable to the original meanings of its parts (e.g. *kick the bucket, shoot the breeze; to talk about things which are less important*). In other cases, however, partial meaning recovery might still be possible due to the literal constituents within the idioms (e.g. *stop someone in their tracks*, meaning stop someone *abruptly*, right where they are. In this mentioned case there is a sense of compositionality that help Sudanese EFL learners to understand some IEs.

Non-compositionality is sometimes found to be difficult to decide according to some linguists. “*Even highly opaque idioms are often more transparent from a diachronic point of view*” (Frank Boers, 2007: 8). *Kick the bucket*, for instance, might have stemmed from an old method of slaughtering pigs, which forms the idiom transparent meaning through its metaphorical extension. Nevertheless, this etymology is not widely accessible to the modern language user. The opacity or otherwise of this idiom, as a result, might depend on the individual's subjective judgment and familiarity with its origin.

I think this is an interesting point that has been mentioned by Frank, but this petrification or fossilization of meaning as the two previous linguists named, make IEs a kind of illogical sets to Sudanese EFL learners to learn. On the other hand, it is true that gaining familiarity with IE's origin would help EFL learners do comprehend them, but the question is do all MWEs have a story to tell about their origin?

2.2.1.3 Institutionalization

The third thing that sets IEs apart from other literal strings is what is so called institutionalization. It has been defined as “*Institutionalization is the conventionalization and recognition of multi-word expressions in different contexts*” (Pascual Cantos, 2018: 87). He further argued that, for IEs to be conventionalized in a language is an interesting idea and it distinguishes them from the others, but there should be a kind of logical strings that connect these MWIs with their literal meaning so that they become comprehensible to L2 or to be recognizable at least.

Linguistically, institutionalization describes the process by which a standard construction becomes more current and is reproduced as a memorized sequence because of its specific meaning or pragmatic function. Due to its subjectivity, institutionalization is difficult to determine and measure, (ibid). As this linguist stated the difficulty of determining and measuring these strings, Sudanese L2

learners should exert as much effort as possible to expose themselves to these units and learn them as inextricably intertwined sets. They have to bear in mind the first discussed point in the thesis which explained that these sets are characterized by what is so called non-compositionality.

2.2.1.4 Compositeness

Idioms, as a subset of MWEs, are subject to this criterion of compositeness. Idioms are almost globally defined as institutionalized *group of words* with set meanings that cannot be calculated by adding up the separate meanings of the parts. Generally, it is argued that compositeness does not necessarily refer to combinations of *words*. (Sepideh Alavi, Aboozar Rajapoor, 2014), they went further to include what is so called suffixes and prefixes, for instance, (boyish, whitish, yellowish, childish...etc) as a type of IEs, but not (*dogish**).

As a researcher, I expect Sudanese L2 learners to commit such kind of errors/mistakes because they are reluctant to generalization, but they are not expected to misunderstand them because their meaning is compositional. To clarify more, the alternation or the addition of the suffix (ish) does not change the meaning of these words or IEs as they have been named by the previous two linguists; the literal or dictionary meaning is still present. Furthermore, Idioms are regarded as any combination of two or more morphemes whose compound meaning is not compositionally derived from the meanings of the connected

morphemes (ibid). In an even broader view of idioms, compositeness includes morphemes as well as extended clauses and exchanges such as poems, novels into the realm of idioms. This implies that most of the composite units in English language are regarded as IE by those linguists.

2.2.1.5 Fixedness

It was often argued that idioms in particular and MWUs in general were quite stable in form across much of their range of occurrence according to (Anna Dabrowska: 2018). Occasionally, some idioms were found to have variations, but these variations were regular and predictable by native speakers (ibid). However, opponents of this idea argued that fixedness is the exact characteristic of IEs. Some idioms are almost entirely invariable while some others are more flexible. Some evidence about the flexibility of idioms in discourse has proven fallacious view of idioms as being fixed (Moon, 1998). He suggested that the stability of idioms is not to be assumed because it changes over time. This stability, consequently, is not to be seen as lexical fixedness but *conceptual fixedness* instead. From a cognitive linguistic point of view, he also explains idioms as having *established configurations/order* instead of fixed lexical forms.

To regard an idiom as opaque or as primarily a fixed phrase is therefore simple. More specifically, they are seen as a complex of semantic and symbolic relationships that have become conventionalized and have been made into an

established configuration. It can then be claimed that this is likely to be true, suppose that this configuration of relationships might be recognized even when a hyphen changes the normal shape of an idiom, or when its component words are divided up and used in grammatical constructions such that they do not form a connected sequence: an idiom may be recognized as a unit that is to some degree independent of a specific clear morphemic arrangement.

A conceptual approach is therefore proposed to be capable of revealing more about the nature of fixedness than traditional models of semantic and syntactic variability have done (Cameron, 1999). Nevertheless, he argues that the nature of idiomatic fixedness is not purely lexical and is not purely conceptual, either. For example, this IE *in the nude* which means naked and *in the raw* which also carry the same meaning or in other words they are synonymous accepted the idea of variation which is opposite to the idea of fixedness.

Accordingly, I partially support the latter idea of idiomatic flexibility. However, these examples *in the mud/in the wind path* look like the previous examples, but in fact they are not IEs. Once again the researcher expects that L2 learners to commit some erroneous formulation of IEs as the expected error that they may make when comprehending IEs because of what is so called fixedness. Referring the former idea, some IEs are regarded as frozen chunks that do not accept any change, for instance, *kick the bucket* cannot be rewritten as *kick the cup*

and remain with the same idiomatic meaning as in the previous example. If this happens immediately the idiomatic meaning is lost.

2.2.2 Degrees of Idiomaticity

As it has been stated earlier, the invariability and metaphorical meaning represent usual features of an IE; however, these two terms are very general in their basic sense and they need to be specified to some extent. What is and what is not an idiomatic depends on the degree of idiomaticity. It is difficult to some extent however, to decide whether a word or a sequence of words is opaque, (Barbara Partee, 2004). According to this linguist, the degree of opaqueness of the individual idioms may be measurable. The measurements have resulted in the creation of the term “degrees of idiomaticity”, since one can make up a story, make up a fire or make up one’s face. In other words, idiomaticity (the quality of being idiomatic) is a matter of degree or scale. Consequently, some of the phrases may occur in both literal and idiomatic context. Other phrases cannot be used literary in any context, as they have no literal meaning, thus they can be used only idiomatically, e.g. *until/till the kingdom comes* which means for an indefinite time, (Longman Dictionary of English Idioms, 1979).

In sum, some IEs are described by a high level of idiomaticity while others have mild degree of idiomaticity. It could be challenging to Sudanese EFL learners to fully understand highly IEs like *out of the blue*. On the other hand, the other

mild IEs like *make up your mind*, and so on are a little bit easier to comprehend than the former. Anyhow, it is another burden that Sudanese EFL learners have to bear in mind when encountering IEs.

2.2.3 Semantic View of IEs

Idioms include collocations of a special kind, if we take for example, *let the cat out of the bag* we do not only obtain the collocation of this example, but we have the fact that the meaning of this formulated phrase is not clear. “*Opaque meaning is not connected with meaning of the individual words, however it is sometimes (though not always) nearer to the meaning of a single word*” (Palmer, 1976: 80). This is similar to what Norbert Schmitt and Michael MacCarthy have claimed about the *opacity and petrification* of meaning in IEs with reference to 2.2.1.2 Non-compositionality. Not only this, shading the light on what is so called fixedness, Moon stated clearly that IEs are *opaque* because they are related to an established configuration, 2.2.1.5 Fixedness. Anyway, the researcher believes that the opacity in both meaning and structure make MWEs unique and hard nuts to crack by Sudanese EFL learners, but once again, the more exposure and knowledge they have about these strings the more easier it gets when dealing with these IEs.

Furthermore, the metaphorical meaning and certain kinds of invariableness of an idiom are related to each other. This can be illustrated by these two well-

known phrases *give up the ghost* and *spill the beans*. The meanings are: *to die* and *to reveal something; make something known*. These meanings have only very little in common in comparison with the literal meanings of the words which form the phrases, and thus the substitution of words that are even close in meaning cannot be performed in them. Mona argued about the uniqueness of idioms for a particular language; she claimed that “*idioms are usually special to one language and cannot be translated in a form of word to word translation*”(Mona, 2011).

Therefore, only languages that have or share the same IEs can accept the translation or there could be an equivalent present there, otherwise the IE should be explained, because it will make no sense if translated. For instance, if we substitute the noun *ghost* in the sentence, *the man gave up the ghost* by other nouns which are closely related to the general meaning of the idiom such as *the man gave up the apparition* or *the man released the ghost*, the idiomatic meaning disappears and the phrase becomes more literal, resulting in misunderstanding or misinterpretation. It is even impossible to replace a noun in an idiomatic phrase by a pronoun, as it is typical of nouns with literal meaning, since the idiomatic meaning will be lost again (Longman Dictionary of English Idioms, 1979). To exemplify this, instead of *do not let the cat out of the bag* we cannot substitute the noun *cat* with even the pronoun *it*, so that the IE becomes * *do not let it out of the bag*. Again, the IE will lose its idiomaticity and it becomes misleading.

According to Jack Richards et al, in most cases, it appears vain to search for meaning of individual constituents of an idiom, as the constituent parts do not possess any meaning. The whole meaning of a phrasal unit is related to the phrase and not to its constituent parts. Therefore, idioms are regarded as single units from the semantic point of view. (Jack Richards et al , 1985, cited in Bilingual Lexicograph from a Communicative Perspective, Heming Yong and Jing Peng, 2007)

To sum up the previous discussion, it seems that, from a semantic perspective, idioms function in sentences as single words on behalf of their invariability and their metaphorical meaning which is attached to the whole phrase and not to the individual items which formulate the idiom. So L2 learners should deal with IEs as unitary semantic and structural units.

2.2.4 Specific Grammatical and Syntactic Features

“Idioms have some peculiar grammatical properties, which can be attributed either to the fact that their constituents have no meaning or to the fact that such meaning is not independently active” (Miguel Fuster, Antonia Sanchez 2008:17).

It is clear that even where an idiom functions semantically like a single unit it does not necessarily function like a word grammatically. For example, *the idiom keep a straight face* which means *to remain serious* will not form past tense by

adding (ed) to the end of the phrases **keep a straight faced*, though it will function in a sentence as a verb, e.g. She couldn't keep a straight face while she was telling the story. The whole phrase functions as a usual sequence of grammatical words, so that the past tense form is *kept a straight face*. However, there are a large number of grammatical restraints. Plenty of idioms are formed by a verb and a noun, but although the verb may be transformed in the past tense, the number of the noun has to remain untouched.

Besides the grammatical restrictions, syntactic restrictions occur as well. The syntactic restrictions are predominantly represented by passive forms, as some idioms have passive while others do not. A transitive verb phrase usually can be transformed from the active voice into passive one. However, in some cases of idioms, the presence of a transitive verb does not imply that the idiom can be changed into the passive form. For example, the IEs *give up the ghost* and *kick the bucket* involve transitive verbs (give up, kick), still none of them can be transformed into the passive form **the bucket was kicked*. If so happened, the idiomatic sense and meaning will vanish.

Almost all idiomatic phrases are incapable of accepting some grammatical operations which can be easily performed by any other literal phrases. The restrictions to these operations vary from idiom to idiom. Some (idioms) are more restricted or "frozen" while others are flexible. (Fernando 1996, cited in

Rethinking Idiomaticity, Swan. Wulff, 2008:12). Therefore, this grammatical restriction may result on committing a lot of mistakes by L2 learners comprehending or using IEs.

2.2.5 Metaphor and Metonymy

Metaphor can be described as a word or a set of words which is based on similarity but sometime the ground of comparison cannot be directly seen, as in the simile, e.g. *as thin as rake*. The notion of metonymy is based on substitution of a word referring to an attribute for a word referring to the thing meant, e.g. a part and a whole, a higher and a lower category, a thing and its place, cause and result etc., (Gerard Steen, 2010: 25-26). This definition is helpful in exploring the connection between metaphors and metonymies on one side, and idioms on the other, at least to some extent. There is a feature that characterizes both metonymies and metaphors – the semantic shift.

Metaphor and metonymy are viewed as cognitive mechanisms that are related to the domain/s of knowledge to an idiomatic meaning in an indirect way” (Kivecses, Szabo, 1996:16). Once again as Gerard Steen, this linguist believes that the connection between the IE and the thing that is referred to as indirect. As a researcher, I believe that this indirect relationship may result in some difficulties in comprehending IEs by L2 learners because of the fact that native speakers have a spontaneous sense about English, unlike non-native speaker to comprehend such

kind of twisted meaning. For instance in the previous example, *as thin as rake* EFL learners may become capable of decoding the meaning of this IE if they have a prior knowledge of what is *a rake* is. CALD defines the word *rake* as a garden tool with a long handle and long pointed metal parts sticking out in a row at the bottom, used for making the earth level or for collecting leaves, etc. In addition to this, EFL learners should have the mental cognitive ability that enables them to link the description of someone being thin as the thinness of the rake.

Metaphors and metonymies have been seen playing an important part in the formation of idioms and this view can be further explained with the idea of conceptual metaphor.

2.2.6 Conceptual Metaphor

Kıvecses and Szabo view conceptual metaphor as a set of mappings, correspondences between two domains – the source and the target. In other words, a conceptual metaphor includes two fields of knowledge and the relationship between them can be described by words i.e. that one domain is or equals the other. One domain is typically expressed by words which have some physical qualities, while the other is represented by words that have an absolute abstractness in their meanings. The former is called the source domain and the latter is the target domain. Commonly, the source domain is used to provide insight to the target domain. (Kıvecses, Szabo, 1996)

Noticeably, they are part of the common conceptual apparatus shared by members of a culture. They are systematic, i.e. has fixed correspondence between the structures of the domain to be understood. For instance, death and the structure domain in terms of which we understand it as departure. Therefore, EFL learners can use such kind of knowledge to assist them on decoding MWEs when encountered.

2.2.7 Conceptual Adjustment and Denotation of Idiomatic Strings

Referring to metaphors, one important reason why we produce idiom variants is to communicate a concept or a message which we use in our thought. However, unlike metaphors, EFL learners may communicate this concept by modifying a certain idiom which has a stable conceptual representation in memory. (Fanny Meunier, Sylviane Granger, 2008)

For example, in arriving to a relevant interpretation in, *to pull some political strings*, which denotes a subset of the situations denoted by the concept *pull strings*, it denotes situations in which one uses some politicians as assistants to make them launch some influence on an action, so that to gain some benefit from it. According to the researcher, L2 learners may exert a lot of effort to deal with IEs, but as the meaning of most IEs is not so transparent, EFL learners are still expected to commit some errors in understanding these strings. With a lot of exposure to these items those learners may succeed in fully comprehending what is

so called IEs, because sometime the meaning is intentional as it has been stated so far.

2.2.8 IEs and Conceptual Metaphors

According to some traditional views, idioms are regarded as a matter of language alone, that is, they are taken to be items of lexicon that are independent of any conceptual system. This traditional view is based on the assumption that the constituent parts of an idiom do not affect the overall meaning significantly.

On contrary, this idea is fallacious. It should be noticed, that in this case, the linguistic meaning is isolated from the human conceptual meaning and the knowledge which the speakers of a particular language share. The researcher believes as many linguists do, that metaphor, denotation, opacity, non-compositionality, compositeness, fixedness and institutionalization are inextricably intertwined with IEs. They are inseparable from each other; they go hand on hand.

However, plenty of metaphors, on which idioms are based, have been formed during the historical development of a particular language, they just have not arisen arbitrarily e.g. the *salt of the earth* which means *any good trusted person* and *blue blood*. To put the idea of conceptual metaphor and the formulation of idiomatic expressions very clear, those who lived in the medieval European era belief that royalty and nobility had blue blood in that the elite had enough power and wealth, that they could afford to let urban poor do their tough work , since the

aristocrats were able to stay inside and avoid long working hours in the fields and sunlight, they were often so whitish and pale, that their blue veins appeared under their translucent skin, thus people who lived at that time believe that those elites have blue blood. As a result of their belief the IE *have blue blood* is formulated. (Paul Anthony, 2014)

Though, one may find an idiom where the historical development of its metaphorical meaning cannot be recognized, for instance, *a fine kettle of fish* which meanings *encountering a very difficult and annoying situation* has no historical background as the IE *have/has blue blood*.

However, the latter example may be regarded as an exception, since the origin of metaphorical meaning in most idioms can be reasoned from the historical perspective at least to some extent, as the metaphors referred to the human conceptual system. Consequently, the historical development may give us some hints about the possible meaning of an idiom as well. When we take into consideration the conceptual metaphor and the mentioned historical development, we can see that idioms, based on these metaphors, are not only part of the lexicon, but they are also products of the human conceptual system (Peter Jordens, 2002).

Therefore, an idiom represents an expression with a meaning that is not just special to its constituents; however, the meaning of an idiom is based on our

general knowledge of the world as well. In other words, idioms (or at least the majority of them) are conceptual, and not linguistic, in nature.

If this is the case, the knowledge provides motivation for the overall idiomatic meaning and therefore the meanings of idioms can be regarded as motivated and not arbitrary. This view is inconsistent with some of the definitions that have been introduced so far, in the beginning which claim that idioms are arbitrary pairings of words (each with a meaning) and a special overall meaning. However, we have to distinguish motivation from prediction. When meaning of an idiom is motivated it does not correspond with the argument that the meaning of idioms is fully predictable.

In other words, motivation is not equal to prediction, since prediction is a much weaker in notion than motivation. From time to time, idioms may lack conceptual motivation for their meaning e.g. *kick the bucket*. Unfortunately, but understandably, expressions like *kick the bucket* or *a fine kettle of fish* are the most frequent examples of idiomatic expressions in the traditional view.

The idea of motivated meaning is closely related to the occurrence of certain words in number of idioms. The former idea can be regarded as a cognitive mechanism that links domains of knowledge to idiomatic meaning. The researcher has already mentioned that metaphors and metonymies represent these cognitive

mechanisms. Another type of cognitive mechanism that can be added is the conventional knowledge.

All these conventional mechanisms may affect the general meaning of an idiom (i.e. what concept it has to do with). However, typically it is the conceptual metaphor with its target domain that determines the overall meaning of idioms in most cases. Furthermore, Walter Gruyter believes that the meaning of idioms can be even introduced in more accurate way through the ontological mappings which are the correspondences between basic entities and events in the source domain and entities and events in the target domain. For instance, the meaning of the idiom *spit fire* is related to the word *anger* and the idiom is based on the existence of the conceptual metaphor *anger is fire*. The more precise meaning of the idiom, which corresponds with *being very angry*, depends on the mapping, i.e. the *intensity of anger* is represented in the *intensity of fire*. The source domain is (fire) and the target domain is (anger).

Despite the fact that many linguists claimed how conceptual metaphors can determine meaning of idioms and it can be noticed, that sometimes the meaning can be recognized quite precisely; however, several idioms lack any conceptual meaning in general and thus their meanings can hardly be directly seen. Therefore, it should not be forgotten what has been uttered in the beginning, that idioms are often specific to a particular language, i.e. they do not have the direct

equivalents in other languages. As a particular language is a part of a particular culture, the familiarity with the culture, where the language is used, can be another useful hint to determine the meaning of idioms. This will lead us to the importance of having cultural background about MWEs.

2.2.9 Cultural Background

Walter argues that proverbs, idioms, metaphors, jokes and text such as newspaper headlines, advertisements and some names for shops involve language uses which heavily rely on the culture of that language. In other words, when we try to interpret them (and for correct interpretation, we need to be familiar with some specific frames of their cultural reference. Since without the suitable cultural knowledge our interpretation of meaning becomes an erroneous even if they sound correct, (Walter Gruyter, 2015). Obviously, the effort which is needed to interpret the meanings of particular MWEs may vary according to the opacity of them. The more opaque they are, the more difficult it gets to interpret them and the vice versa. The subject of opacity has been dealt with in 2.1.3 Semantic Status of Idioms, and has been referred to then as degrees of idiomaticity.

To sum up, when interpreting meanings of an IE that belong to a particular language we need to use the relevant conventional knowledge that is applied in the area where the language is used.

2.2.10 Idioms

One of the most demanding kinds of IEs is idioms which mean expressions which have a meaning that is not obvious from the individual words (Sadasiva Rau, 2006). In other words, the meaning is not literal, but it is non-compositional. The IE to *drive someone round the bend* has two content words *drive* and *bend* which are not used in their literal meaning. However, it may sound strange to EFL learners that how the word *drives* comes to collocate with person. This kind of strange collocation is useful in some way to EFL learner in order to be able to recognize what is an IE and what is not. (Ibid)

Idioms are defined according to different syntactic and semantic criteria but some definitions take an idiom as a phrase that generally has a fixed structure and a non-literal meaning. This anomalous nature of idioms is the cause of many of the problems that L2 learners encounter when they deal with idioms. They cannot treat idioms the same way they treat other types of fixed expressions simply because idioms allow syntactic operations only very scarcely. As for the semantic aspect of idioms, the difficulty relates to their non-compositionality as their meaning is not directly relates to the meaning of the words that constitute them as it has been referred previously in 2.2.1.2 Non-compositionality.

The majority of definitions of idioms focus on the fixedness of their structure and the non-compositionality of their meaning. In fact these definitions do not essentially vary in their terms. For Kuiper & Allan, an idiom is a lexicalized phrase which is semantically non-compositional. In addition, is syntactic constituent undergone a semantic drift.” (Andreas Langlotz, 2006). This semantic drift results in a new meaning of the phrase. It acquires this new meaning in a different way other vocabulary items acquire their meaning. An idiom is also a particular kind of unit; one that is fixed and semantically opaque or metaphorical, or, traditionally not the sum of its parts (Roberto Heredia and Anna Cieslicka, 2015). Another broader definition of an idiom involves more than the irregularities of the relationship between the syntactic structure of the idiomatic structure and its semantic representation. (Peter Andrew, 1996)

2.2.10.1 Types of Idioms

There are diverse kinds of idioms that differ in structure as well as meaning and functions. According to Norbert Schmitt and Michael McCarthy, there are six kinds of idioms, i.e. verb plus object IEs, prepositional phrases, compound Idioms, binominal idioms, simile, conversational phrase and sayings/maxims.

2.2.10.2 Verb plus Object IEs

Idioms are of many types, that is to say verb object idioms. Some examples of VOIs are; *ram something down someone's throat* which means to impose one's ideas/views on someone, as in this example, *ok, so you believe in magicians' ideas, you don't have to ram them down everybody's throat*. This IE is structurally simple, consisting of a verb plus object; with no grammatical fixedness. To clarify more, it can be used in a form of different tenses, for example, the mentioned example used the simple present tense, while in this instance, *for years, I have had his irrelevant ideas rammed down my throat*; the present perfect is used.

Another vital point is that, the items of this idiom can be moved forward or backward as illustrated in the previous two instances. Semantically, the whole items of the expression give no hint to determine the meaning, except the word *ram* which has many meanings, but a suitable one here as CALD defines; *to push something with force*. However, EFL learners should bear in mind that sometimes there is semantic restriction; *ram something down someone's throat* is only used to describe ideas/views and nothing else. **The manager rammed the work down our throat*, although this sounds right, but it is not so.

There are many idioms of this kind; *draw the line at something* which means, *refuse to behave in a certain way because you think it is wrong as in I do use some strong language sometimes, but I draw the line at using offensive words*.

Another interesting example is, *have a second thought*; change your mind or to begin to feel spectacle about something, as in *I'm having second thoughts about accepting that job offer, the payment is not satisfactory and the environment is not well prepared.*

2.2.10.3 Prepositional Phrases

These kinds of idioms are formed out of a proposition plus a noun phrase, e.g. *in the dark* as in the example of some workers who complain about their boss; *why our boss always keeps us in the dark about changes until the last minute*, which means he does not inform them about the changes until time is over. Unlike VOI, IPPs have a serious fixedness, accept no any forward or backward of neither items nor any insertion of a new lexical item/s. Nothing can be placed between the preposition and the noun phrase nor the article and the noun. Similarly, prepositional phrases have no polysemous meaning. The meaning is completely metaphorical, but since there is a context, EFL learners may infer the meaning from it. For EFL learners to decode the meaning of this idiom, they should use their own schemata; world knowledge. The picture of someone *in a dark place*, infers the idea of someone who does not know what is around him/her. The meaning is ideational rather than literal. By the way, this is compatible with what Palmer has mentions so far, that most idioms have metaphorical meaning.

2.2.10.4 Compound Idioms

Compound idioms consist of two or more than two items as *a kick in the teeth*; *an insult or an unfair act*. Structurally, this CI is formed out of a noun phrase *a kick*; determiner plus noun and a prepositional phrase *in the teeth*; preposition plus noun phrase. Typically, like the previous genre of idioms, CIs are characterized by strong fixedness; no any item/s can be forwarded or back warded. Shedding the light on the semantics angle, the meaning is non-compositional, because of the fact that the whole lexical items of this CI give no clue to determine the meaning or even generate some alternative possible meaning. But once again, since there is context, the meaning can be inferred from there.

Another interesting instance is *not giving her the new job was a real kick in the teeth for her*. Looking at this example, one may infer that *a kick in the teeth* is at least something bad/negative, since the initial part of the sentence is negative *not giving her the new job*. CIs and IPPs have an approximately the same length, unlike VOIs which are lengthy comparatively to CIs and IPPs. Other examples of this kind are *a stumbling block*; *an obstacle*, as in, *their wrong believes are always a stumbling block for the work*. *State-of-the-art*; *most modern/most technically advanced*, as in, *he always has a state-of-the-art computer and the latest camera*. Some of CIs are hyphenated while others are not.

2.2.10.5 Binominal Idioms

BIs are composed of two words, often with the conjuncture *and*; *high and mighty*, as in *she always acts so high and mighty*; arrogant. The structure is simple, two adjectives conjoined by *and* with solid fixedness. However, the meaning of this IE seems to be more economical than the IE itself. To put it very clear, instead of saying, *she always acts so high and mighty*, one could have said she always looks arrogant.

2.2.10.6 Simile

Simile IEs contain *as* plus adjective plus *as* plus noun as in *she is as blind as a bat without her glass*; *can hardly see*. There should be a logical relationship between the adjective and the noun. The bat has a typical weak sight during daylight; relevant to describe her being without a glass. Furthermore, such kind of personification is common in English. For instance, in his book (*Things Fall Apart*) the African writer Chinua Achebe used simile, in describing Okonkwo's character; "Okonkwo is as slippery as a fish in water"; once again, speed is a typical characteristic of fish in water. The researcher would like to bring back into light a very important point which has been mentioned so far by Kivecses and Szabo in 2.1.6 conceptual metaphor, of which they claim that there should be strings of mapping between the source domain and the target domain. This is a very vital

point and it is the ultimate way to understand MWEs in general and simile in particular. In the two previous exemplifications the source domains are the blindness of bats during the daylight because they are nocturnal and the high speed of fish in the water while the target domains are the weak vision of that lady/girl and the speed of Okonkwo in wrestling.

The researcher believes that by keeping the structure of simile in consideration EFL learners may become capable of comprehending and producing a great deal of simile. Examples of simile type that can be generated are: Mohammed is as strong as a lion/horse. X is as envious as a scorpion. The lecture room is as noisy as bees etc.

2.2.10.7 Conversational Phrases

Conversational as in *hi Mick, long time no see; I haven't seen you for a long time*. As earlier mentioned that IEs are characterized by institutionalization; societies often conventionalize some economical and easy expressions to be used in their everyday conversation. Lots of items are omitted; the subject pronoun *I*, verb group *have* plus the past *participle in the main verb*, the object pronoun *you*, the preposition *for* and the determiner *a*. Although all these items are omitted still the meaning is comprehensible. However, such kind of reduction should happen at a level of recoverable items not content words. For example, the content lexical

noun phrase *long time*, and the verb group *no see* are not erased because they express the main intended meaning.

2.2.10.8 Sayings/Maxims

In this type of IEs the meaning to some extent is compositional. For instance, *every little helps; even a small contribution is helpful*. Some idioms are used for describing situations when they go well or wrong or even to solve a difficulty. Some examples are *something work like a dream; succeed in a perfect way. Went/ran like clockwork; work/go smoothly with no difficulty, falling into place; at the point of starting to work well*.

On one hand, idioms that describe things when they go wrong like *oh no! that's all we needed!*, the most important part of this idiom is what is before the exclamation mark if the first introjections and negative words are deleted then at the first glance one may understand that this idiom is used for expressing good situation. Another explanatory example is *that is the last thing I wanted to hear?* Although there is no negative word, but still the idiom gives us a sense of something went wrong. In addition, *it is a real nightmare* there is a relationship between the meaning of the idiom and the dictionary definition of the word nightmare; *a very upsetting dream, i.e. something wrong/upsetting. What a pain!* It

is generalized idiom, used in different situations. *It's the calm before the storm*; when things are quiet, but you have a doubt that they may change.

However, some idioms are needed for expressing resolving a difficulty. For example, *it's nothing*; *it's just a storm in a teacup*; is used metaphorically to mean a lot of fuss which would soon be forgotten or faded away. Cause and effect relationship is used in this idiom, i.e. the word *storm* from the first glance represents a huge problem but the rest of the idiom puts it at ease in *a teacup* not in a complex or a skyscraper which may result in much causalities but *a teacup* which costs worthless money. *That was a close call/thing*; it was almost a disaster but it turned out to be okay. The content words *close call/things* represent a problem and not a phone call. However, the verb to be is very important in understanding the meaning of the idiom, i.e. it was a problem in the past but not right now. *We solve the problem by the eleventh hour*; at the very last minute before a disaster might have occurred. The noun phrase *the eleventh minute* is used metaphorically to mean *the last minute*. *It was all brushed under the carpet*; something officially forgotten and never resolved; never mentioned again.

Some idioms help expressing likings and dislikings for instance, *only has/have eyes for x person is a verb-object idiom*; *Juliet only has eyes for Romeo*, which means is only attracted to. Referring to grammar in this instance, there should be subject-verb agreement. *Love someone to bits* is a VOI too. As in the

example, *Juliet loves Romeo to bits; loves very much*. The man/the woman of his/her dream this idiom can be used to refer to both genders. *Get on like a house in fire; become friends very easily...etc.* (Norbert Schmitt, Michael McCarthy, 1997)

2.2.11 Word Knowledge

Generally, there is a very strong relationship between vocabulary and language use. Nation states clearly that “*Vocabulary knowledge enables language use; language use enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge and language use and so on*”, Nation,2009: 32). This linguist stated clearly the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use and the reverse. Generally speaking, vocabulary is the backbone of any language and is inseparable from any of the four skills. Thus, there are many types of word knowledge that EFL learners should know, in order to be more familiar with words orthographical and phonological form, meanings, grammatical behavior, association, collocations, frequency and register. Knowing these kinds of word knowledge enable EFL learners to understand and MWEs from the context where they are used. As far as comprehension of IEs is concerned, the upcoming portion is devoted to collocations.

2.2.12 Collocations

Collocation is one of the most important parts of word knowledge which enables learners to best understand the meaning of the words from its surroundings. For example, this sentence which is taken from The Bank of English

Collocations *the bushes and trees were blowing in the wind, but the rain had stopped*; can be analyzed via different angles. But as far as this research is concerned with the comprehension of IEs, the semantics angle is significant. The word *bushes* best collocates with the word *trees* because *a bush* is a part of *a tree*. Likewise, the word *blowing* and *wind* best cope with each other. The use of the word *stopped* is more suitable than *ended*. The items by which the mentioned example constructed are inseparable and complementary to each other. By understanding which word collocates with which, EFL learners may become able to comprehend IEs when encountered.

However it is not as easy to account for collocations in highly IEs as other literal sentences as the previous exemplification. To put it very clear, the common IE *an arm and a leg* which means very expensive, in this example, this German car cost me an arm and a leg. All the elements of this sentence to most EFL learners have unusual collocation, because in the literal sense these words are illogical to collocate with each other, unless the IE *an arm and a leg* is known as an idiom that has its own idiomatic meaning and strong fixedness.

2.2.13 Students' Collocational Awareness

Ruben Chacon stated that collocations are the strongest force that enables EFL learners to comprehend texts. With limited time for exercises in lectures

teachers can only teach some of the most common types of collocation systematically. However, vocabulary learning techniques are more important than teaching individual words, because of the fact that words are strung together to formulate meaningful phrases at least and then full sentences. Native speaker can easily recognize, formulate and use collocations spontaneously, unlike non-native speakers who often struggle to do so. What teachers have to do is to make students aware of collocation as a vital key for learning. In a simple level, teachers should encourage students to deal with IEs as a chunk not as individual words. (Ruben Chacon, 2010)

2.2.14 Collocations and Arbitrariness

The first and most obvious reason why collocation is important is because the way words combine in collocations is fundamental to all language use. The lexicon is not arbitrary according to Nadja. We do not speak or write as if language were one huge substitution table with vocabulary items merely filling slots in grammatical structures. To some extent, vocabulary choice is predictable. When a speaker thinks of drinking, s/he may use a common verb such as *have*. The listener's expectations predict a large number of possibilities: *tea, coffee, milk, mineral water, orange, juice*, even *tequila*, but there would be no expectations of *engine oil, shampoo, sulphuric acid*, the latter liquids are drunk by accident, but

linguistically they aren't 'probable' in the way that the former are. This is in the case of collocation of simple language. (Nadja Nesselhauf, 2005)

In contrary, idioms, proverbs and phrasal verbs as well, where the meaning is non-compositional are characterized by unusual collocations. Therefore, these lexical chunks should be dealt with in a different way because of the fact that the meaning of these MWIs is always almost non-compositional. EFL learners have to know an adequate knowledge about their formulation, origin, use and characteristics.

2.2.15 The Role of Memory in Storing IEs

It is obvious that every native speaker have a vast store of fixed expressions, much bigger store of collocations, ready for use when required. Obviously, single words are stored in the memory individually. Unlike storing these single words, Edward believes that IEs are stored in the memory as frozen blocks. The researcher agrees strongly with this, because of the fact that so far IEs are described by having a kind of fixedness. Therefore, it is logical to claim that they are stored as frozen blocks, (Binder Smith, 2013). On the other hand, there are some IEs which are characterized by having flexibility. In this case, one could infer that they are stored in the memory as single words. What the language learners are exposed to from the earliest stages is crucial. Good quality input should lead to good quality retrieval

and the vice versa, i.e. impoverished input will lead to impoverished retrieval.
(ibid)

2.2.16 Fluency

Collocation allows us to think more quickly and communicate more efficiently as Sabine claimed. Native speakers can only speak as well as comprehend IEs at the speed they do because they are calling on a vast repertoire of ready-made language, immediately available from their mental lexicons. Similarly, they can listen at the speed of speech and read quickly because they are constantly recognizing MWUs rather than processing everything word-by-word. One of the main reasons that make L2 learners find decoding texts difficult is not because of the density of new words only, but the density of unrecognized collocations as well. The main difference between native and non-native speakers is that the former have come across more English complex texts and so can recognize and produce these ready-made chunks, which enable them to process and produce language at a much faster and easier rate. (Sabine Bartsch, 2004)

2.2.17 Grammatical Collocations

A grammatical collocation is a phrase consisting of a dominant word (noun, adjective or verb) and a preposition or grammatical structure. Such as an infinitive or a clause, for instance, decide on –not "decide at", accuse (somebody) of – not

"accuse on". Typical grammatical collocations are verb patterns with infinitive or –ing form. According to Cristina grammatical collocations fall into the following combinations: noun + preposition, noun + to – infinitive, adjective + that-clause, and 19 verb patterns.

It is always an oversimplification to divide language up into categories when all the elements of natural language use are interdependent. So, IEs are grammatical and the following examples illustrate this.

2.1 Grammaticality of Idiomatic Expressions:

Don't	let the cat out of the bag./?
They	
She is just	
If you hadn't	
Why did Mary	

(Cristina Mouron, 2006: 95)

2.2.18 Storing Collocations

It is generally known that memorizing first-language definitions of given target-language vocabulary does not develop proficiency in second language acquisition. In a study discussing how to make passive vocabulary active, Wu stated that, ironically, most Spanish students learn the English words by spelling them and remembering their Spanish counterparts. (Sergi Toner, Elisenda Bernal, 2017). However, these linguists argue that this is not the ideal way to learn vocabulary items, because of the fact that those Spanish learners learn these vocabulary items individually without knowing their collocation. This problem could have been avoided if those learners picked out vocabulary items from contexts so that these items would be stored with their collocations. In addition, this method is claimed to improve comprehension and production. Alan argues that exposure to large numbers of words probably leads to the expansion of passive vocabulary, this passive vocabulary will remain inactive unless learners can consciously and systematically know a word, namely, to be able to use it in speech and writing form, to pronounce it recognizably, to spell it correctly, to use correct collocations, to be aware of connotations and to use them appropriately. (Alan Davies, 2001).

An organized lexical notebook is essential for all students. Deciding where to put an item, writing it down and looking at it again along with other similar items is all part of the constant revisiting of language which is part of the learning process. Students' lexical notebooks do not need to be glossy professionally-produced products. We do not know how we store language in our mental lexicons. We do know that we store it in patterns of different kinds which allow us to retrieve it instantly. Storing lexis in an organized way in a notebook so that they can be revised and retrieved quickly is not only beneficial to EFL learners but it is helpful in storing them as well. (ibid)

2.2.19 Types of Collocations

According to Felicity O'Dell and Michael MacCarthy collocations are divided into many kinds. The most important and common types of these collocations are: Adjectives and Nouns, Nouns and Verbs, Noun Plus Noun, Verb with Prepositional Expressions, Verbs and Adverbs and Adverbs and Adjectives.

2.2.19.1 Adjectives and Nouns

Collocations are of many types; it is very important for EFL learners to know that there are certain adjectives which collocate with certain nouns, for instance, fast car/food, but not quick car/food; a quick meal/glance and not fast meal/glance. In English native speakers know and use these collocations spontaneously, but for EFL learners they should expose themselves to more literal

reading to sound more natural in comprehending and using these collocations in the appropriate way.

2.2.19.2 Nouns and Verbs

The other type of collocation is nouns and verbs. In order to express an improvement in the economy some verbs are used to convey this message. For instance, *the economy of Brexit boomed*. In this example the verb boomed is used when the intension is to express the improvement of economy. Moreover, the verb *boomed* best collocates with the noun *economy*. However, if the intension is to say that Brexit increased the number of its employees and added new branches, the verb *expand* and *grow* are used. So the example can be formulated in this way, *The company has grown and now more than fifty employees are employed, as a result the company has expanded and now has more branches in downtowns*. When undergraduates know such kind of collocation knowledge they can be able to use them naturally.

2.2.19.3 Noun plus Noun

In collocations that contain noun plus noun often *(a)* and *(of)* are used subsequently. The letter *(a)* is often used with the first noun while the preposition *(of)* is used with the second one. The following example illustrates this. As the employer has been given a formal warning, he felt *a surge of anger*. Other good

exemplifications can be: He has *a sense of pride* as his son achieved the highest degree in the class. I felt a pang of nostalgia when I heard that my parents are travelling to Egypt.

2.2.19.4 Verb with Prepositional Expressions

Some verbs collocate with prepositional expressions as in; she swelled *with pride* when she heard that a business man will tie the knot with her, which means looking extremely happy. Another interesting example of verb prepositional expression collocation is, he *filled with horror*, when he knew that he will be arrested, so he *burst into tears*. The preposition often followed by a noun. However, different nouns take different preposition. As in the previous examples the preposition *with* collocates with the nouns *pride* and *horror*, but not *tear*. All the three nouns are used metaphorically i.e. inferably if undergraduates are asked to jot down some words that collocate with the verb *burst*; they may write *bomb*, *tank of fuel*, *cylinder of gas*, etc. However, such kind of description is so typical, because of the fact that a bomb or cylinder of gas burst quickly, suddenly and violently. So the verb *burst* is used metaphorically to refer to someone who starts crying suddenly and quickly.

2.2.19.5 Verbs and Adverbs

Adverbs may describe a manner, a time or a place of an action. In verbs and adverbs collocation there is no fixedness like the previous type of collocation in which the verb, preposition and noun come subsequently. However, the position of the adverb can be changed as in these two exemplifications, *she pulled steadily on the rope and helped him to climb down safely* and *she pulled on the rope steadily and helped him to climb down safely*. In the first sentence, the adverb came after the verb immediately, while in the second one the adverb came after the object. So the fixedness here is a little bit mild.

2.2.19.6 Adverbs and Adjectives

Some adverbs and adjectives often collocate with each other. For example, what is surprising is that the poor man happily married. In this example the adverb happily collocates with married, rather than married happily, although such structure is possible as in the adverb plus verb collocation; contrary to the other mentioned types of collocations. (Felicity O'Dell and Michael McCarthy, 2001: 18)

2.2.20 Compound Words

Compound words come under the umbrella of what is so-called MWE. Many words in English literary texts are compounds. Laurie stated that these compounds can be formulated out of two or more than two words, which constitute one solid semantic unit; a very important part of what is so-called word-formation process. For instance; *state-of-the-art*, *car park*, *arm chair*, *sedan chair*, *garden flower*, *prime minister*, *rubber-stamp*, *short-circuit*, *long haired*, *three-legged*, *powder blue* etc.

These examples are telling us that a compound word can be formed out of noun plus noun as in *car park*, adjective plus another one as in *long-haired*, noun plus an adjective as in *three-legged* and a noun plus an adjective as in *powder blue*. Compound words are not made out of two words only, but they can be formulated out of three words as well, as in *three legged-chair*. Moreover, these words can be hyphenated or not as the previous examples have shown. Unlike non-compositional strings, i.e. phrasal verbs and idioms, the meaning here is compositional to some extent; can be comprehended from the words themselves. One should bear in mind that compound words are not vulnerable to any forward or backward process; they are characterized by strong fixedness. (Laurie Bauer, 1983)

Anyhow, the researcher believes that compound words are a little bit easy to comprehend comparatively with other strings of MWEs. The resultant difficulty in comprehending them seems to stem out of the fact that some of them are also characterized by non-compositionality as in the previous example; *state of the art*.

2.2.21 Proverbs

Proverbs are other kind of MWE that are characterized by non-compositionality, fixedness as well as have cultural aspects. Unlike collocations which are often compositional and have mild fixedness except the ones that have strong fixedness according to Martin.

Don't count your chickens before they're hatched; do not anticipate the future too much or do not rely on things in the future before they happen. The meaning is absolutely metaphorical. Although there is a strong semantic relationship between the two content words *chickens* and *hatched*; the meaning still remain intransparent. The plural noun (*chickens*) is used metaphorically to refer to future achievements/earnings, while the verb *hatched* is used to mean succeeded. So, the proverb is read as follows, do not count your futuristic achievements before they're likely to be achieved. The two contractions give the proverb a sense of informality and make it typical for spoken language more than written.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket; do not invest all your efforts or attention in just one thing. The negation at the beginning is very essential, expressed through the negative word *don't* and not *shouldn't*. Demands and subject, while with *don't* the subject remains null. The meaning is non-compositional as the two content words *eggs* and *basket* are used in their non-literal meaning. They provide no hint or clue to the intended meaning. But since EFL learners should pick up lexicalized phrases from context and learn them, the context may help to infer the intended meaning or message.

Never judge a book by its cover; do not judge people/things by their outward appearance. The metaphorical use of the words *book* and *cover* expresses a typical feature of proverbs. The nouns *book* and *cover* refer to people or things and the other noun *cover* for appearance. However, this proverb has a similar meaning to *not every shine is gold*. The present simple is used constantly with negation in the whole previous exemplifications and these three examples too. *You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink*; you can try to persuade someone, but you cannot force them to apply or validate your ideas. *Never look a gift horse in the mouth*; never refuse good fortune when it is there in front of you and *one swallow doesn't make a summer*; one positive sign does not mean all will be well.

When the cats are away, the mice will play; people will take advantage of someone else's absence to behave more freely. The word *cat* is used

metaphorically instead of boss or someone who is responsible. While, the word *mice* is used to refer to *employees*. There is cause and effect relationship.

Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves; take care of small sums of money and they will become large ones. There is compositionality, as *pence* and *pounds* are used to refer to *sums*. The increase is expressed through the use of the noun *pence* which are less unit of money than *pounds*, i.e. it is not *take care of the pence and the pence will take care of themselves*. (Martin H. Manser, 2002)

2.2.22 Prefabs

A recent discovered string of MWE, are prefabs which are pre-constructed phrases, phraseological chunks, stereotyped collocation, or semi-structured devices. They are frequent and a part of our everyday conversation, so they are institutionalized. E.g. *the thing/fact/point is that reminds me, I'm a great believer in....etc.* However, they are easy to decode and are not as fixed as idioms and proverbs. They are generally called lexicalized sentence stems, readymade, complex units, and lexical phrases. Schmitt and McCarthy surprisingly called them prefabricated routines. (Norbert Schmitt, Michael McCarthy, 1997)

2.2.23 Factors that Affect Word Learnability

There are many factors that affect word learnability, i.e. pronounceability, orthography, length, derivational complexity and synformay according to Norbert Schmitt and Michael McCarthy.

2.2.23.1 Pronounceability

Generally, learners should know the right pronunciation of a new word. A good way is to look up a word in a dictionary and hear its pronunciation. For instance, the proverb in Things Fall Apart “Eneke the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching.” So I have learnt to be *stingy* with my yams. The word *stingy* which is in italics, EFL learner may mispronounce it. They may think that the sound /dʒ/ is pronounce /g/ as in the word *sting*. Another example, of EFL learners encounter pronunciation difficulties is “*The principle put the cat among the pigeons when he informed the students that the excursion was cancelled*”. The word /pidʒin/ could cause pronunciation difficulties to foreign language learners.

2.2.23.2 Orthography

As knowing a new word requires the knowledge of how it is pronounced; the second thing is to know its orthographic form. This kind of knowledge is important

especially when a text comprehension demands a quick scan. Words generally have two forms spoken as it is discussed in word pronounce-ability and written, orthography. A word's pronounce-ability and orthography are related to one another.

Chinua Achebe describe the expenditure of Okonkwo for his extended family, as “pouring grains of corn into a bag full of holes” if EFL learners find it difficult to pronounce such kind of IE they are likely to commit mistakes in writing it because there is a strong relationship between the form of these IE and their pronunciation.

2.2.23.3 Length

Inferably, words which are long seem to be difficult. A monosyllabic word is much easier than a multi-syllabic one. Once again, Norbert Schmitt and Michael McCarthy believe that word's length had a strong effect on word recognition, at least in its written form. In recognition tasks candidates tend to commit more errors when a given text contains long words more than their counterparts. However, the resultant difficulty may gradually disappear as students' proficiency improves.

2.2.23.4 Morphology

The resultant difficulty in the irregularity of nouns and verbs is due to inflectional complexity. This is clear in some cases of irregular nouns and verbs

like *ox – oxen*, *criteria – criterion* etc. There is no certain rule that govern this inflection, contrary to regular nouns and verbs. The other problem that L2 learners may encounter is the fact that the prefixes *pre* and *ante* although they mean before but they cannot replace each other. There is no specific rule that tells us why we cannot say *antevew*. This is what is so called derivational complexity. Another example is, the bound morpheme *over* which has various meanings when used with different free morphemes. The word *overfly* which means on the top or across; unlike *overcook* which means too much, *overlook* to provide a view and *overhear*; to hear to something secretly. Moreover, in deceptive transparency which refers to the fact that L2 learners may think that a word is composed of meaningful morphemes but it is not. To exemplify this, in the case of the word *outline* a L2 learner may interpret it as out of the line but in fact it means to describe or show the main facts of something.

2.2.23.5 Symformy

L2 learners may become confused when the words *cancel/conceal* are used. This is what is referred to in linguistics as symformy, when two words look alike in terms of pronunciation or orthography. Such case may cause difficulty in comprehension and even production. Generally speaking, most of EFL learners strive to understand words which are used in an idiomatic way. The word *decide*

can be described as much easier than the word *make*, of course not in terms of length and orthography nor symmetry but from idiomaticity point of view. The word *make* can be changed into various idiomatic expressions by adding a preposition to it. For example, *make up* in this sentence; the beautiful lady makes up her face every morning; meaning to beautify, while the sentence, oh, let me make up my mind; to reflect for a while. The mystery is not only when different prepositions are added to the base word *make*, but the meaning changes even when the same preposition is used as the previous example illustrated this. Again these two linguists believe that idioms are the biggest obstacle to fluent comprehension. (Norbert Schmitt and Michael McCarthy, 1997)

2.2.24 Suggested Strategies for Learning Vocabulary and IEs

As far as the factors that affect word learnability have been mentioned, memory strategies for learning vocabulary and IEs should be given a great concern as well. There are many strategies that help EFL learners to recognize and remember a word or a IE. These strategies are pictures/imagery, related words, unrelated words, grouping and mnemonics.

Referring to the first strategy, a new word or IE can be better learnt through bearing its picture in mind instead of a definition or a sequence of words to define it. Or a word could be better and easily learnt through connecting it to a personal

experience if available. For instance, the word *waterfall*, EFL learners may keep it in mind by connecting it to a journey since their childhood to a place where they saw a waterfall, (Walter de Gruyter, 2010: 248-250). Likewise, a word can be learnt by linking it to an already known word. For example, waterfalls are related to mountains. Antonymy as in dead-live, synonymy as in, annoyed-irritated, hyponymy as in, hand-body. This is what is referred to as related words. (David Corson, 1995)

Contrary to this, a word may be learnt via linking it to other word which has no any relationship to the first word's meaning. E.g. three- tree, pig-big-peg etc. These words are not related semantically, but orthographically to some extent, such words are called in phonetics minimal pairs, (Jill Jegerski and Bill Vanpatten). Grouping is one of the most important ways to learn, recognize and recall a new word. This can be done spatially in a list or hierarchically as in stories. Instead of memorizing the whole story students can pick up content-words particularly dramatic verbs to remember the events. In other words, this is a typical way to assess reading comprehension. (ibid)

Finally, a very interesting way to better learn and memorize a word/phrase is to do what is so-called mnemonics to it. Mnemonics means doing something strange to make a word/phrase memorable, e.g. the word essential contains the past and the past participle of the word send inside it; so EFL learners do not need to memorize the whole words, but the beginning and the end only. Or the words, mnemonics itself, to make it memorable, just bear in mind that it starts with a silent letter (Virender Mehta, 2014)

2.3 Previous Studies

Anna T. (2011) conducted a study in the UK, The University of Nottingham entitled (Idiomatic Creativity: A pragmatic Model for Creative Idiomatic Uses in Authentic English Discourse). The study was a corpus-based investigation from a pragmatic point of view of the phenomenon of idiomatic creativity. Her essential aims were to provide inclusive empirical evidence of the mutual relationship between the different factors of idiomatic creativity that affect the comprehension of IEs when encountered in a context. The researcher argued that in psycholinguistics, it has been suggested that the semantic transparency of some idioms facilitates the creative understanding of them in discourse, but such hypothesis should be followed by an empirical study in that context to gain acceptance in the linguistic community. There for, he carried out a quantitative analysis of corpus data and statistical tests to validate the semantic transparency that assist comprehending IEs. He came up with the results that semantic transparent idiomatic expressions are easier to comprehend rather than the other counterparts. Furthermore, the researcher found out that contextualization plays a great role in comprehending IEs in English language discourse.

Tanaka.T carried out a study entitled (An Empirical Model of Multiword Expression Decomposability), the researcher based his study on latent semantic

analysis to know the relationship between IEs and their constituent words. He found out that the semantic relationship between most if not all English IEs is idiosyncratically represented. For instance, *spill the beans*; this IE which means to *reveal a secret* is a highly idiosyncratic IE because of the fact that there is no direct semantic relationship between this IE and its constituent i.e. *reveal* referred to as *spill* and *secret* referred to as *beans*. The literal meaning of *spill* and *beans* is too far from *reveal* and *secret*.

As a means to comprehend such kind of MWE, the researcher stated that the context can assist in comprehending such kind of IE. This kind of solution tends to agree with the previous mentioned study where Anna claimed that contextualization is so helpful for EFL learners to understand IEs. In addition, the researcher investigated another type of MWEs, i.e. simple decomposable MWEs for instance *traffic light*. In this instance, the meaning is direct, so they are not problematic. In sum, the researcher concluded that the context is essential for comprehending idiosyncratic IEs while simple decomposable one are not so problematic because of the fact that there is a direct relationship between these IEs and their constituents.

Rabie E. (2017) conducted a study at Sudan University of Science and Technology, entitled (An Investigation into the problems of Understanding and Using Idiomatic Expressions and collocations among University EFL Students

Majoring English Language), in this study the researcher investigated the obstacles of comprehending and using IEs and collocations when they are encountered by EFL Sudanese undergraduates. He adopted the descriptive analytical method. For conducting data for the purpose of the study a questionnaire was administered for forty ELT lecturers, in addition to, a test for a total of one hundred twenty candidates. The teachers were of course from different Sudanese universities and the purpose behind this is that they came across a wide range of courses that include intense MWEs. He found out that those undergraduates encounter problems understanding and using idiomatic expressions and collocations. Furthermore, it appeared that having adequate knowledge of IEs and collocations enhance undergraduates' receptive and productive skills. The researcher recommended that more attention should be paid to figurative language, besides that, teachers have to use various techniques for teaching IEs and collocations. Another important recommendation made by the researcher is that undergraduates should become aware about the importance of IEs and collocations for comprehending English literary texts. Finally, a lot of investigatory studies have to be carried out in order to know the effective techniques of teaching and learning IEs and collocations.

Another interesting investigatory study carried out by Ali A. also at Sudan University of Science and Technology, entitled (Investigating the Sudanese

Undergraduates knowledge and Use of Collocation), the study shaded the light on the effect of knowledge and use of collocations for undergraduates. The descriptive analytical method was used as well. For conducting data for the purpose of the study the researcher used two separate questionnaires, one designed for teachers and the other is for students. The former includes fifteen statements to find out according to teachers' point of view the effective methods of teaching and learning collocations for undergraduates. Another essential point is that the questionnaire handled is that collocations are not given sufficient attention in some syllabus. The latter included two parts, the first has fifteen items that the students have to verify their Arabic equivalent for an already given list. While in the second one, the candidates were given nine collocational items that they have to choose the right option which represents the right meaning.

Hassan M. (2013) conducted a study in Libya at University of Sebha, entitled (Investigating the difficulties Faced in Understanding, and Strategies Used in Processing English Idioms by the Libyan Students). He investigated the difficulties in understanding IEs and the strategies used in processing English idioms. The subjects of the study contained forty Libyan university students who were chosen purposively, i.e. only proficient students took part in the study. He had analyzed the data and concluded with the findings that difficulties in comprehending IEs are due to the way I.E are introduced in the class, figurative

nature and low frequency. In addition, he found out that the best strategy for comprehending IEs is guessing from context as well as referring to L1 since the expression maybe found in both languages.

Alexandra U. (2012) conducted a study at Benson Idahosa University in Nigeria, entitled (Register Variation and the Multi-word items). The research focused mainly on how a text type can be distinguished according to the items sequence by which the text is encoded. Only one question is targeted i.e. are there genre-specific MWI? In order to fulfill this target, five different texts are investigated fictional writing, academic writing, religious, political and memorial speeches. The result shows that IEs can serve as a hint for knowing text variability. But the possibility of which MWE can occur or expected to occur in which text type is left as a recommendation for futuristic researches.

Anna S. and Norbert S. (2010) conducted a study at University of Nottingham, entitled (Native and Non-native Use of Multiword vs. One-verbs by both Native Speakers and Advanced Non-native Speakers). They adopted the descriptive analytical method of which a questionnaire of twenty-six multi-word verb pairs is used. The study revealed that surprisingly non-native speakers are less likely to use multi-word verbs than native speakers in informal spoken contexts. Moreover, the amount of exposure to native speaking environment did not have an effect on the likelihood of multiword verbs use. However, the same multiword

verbs used in the questionnaire showed that the one-word-verbs are often more frequent in both written and spoken discourses.

2.4 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter is concerned with the theoretical side of the problem of understanding IEs encountered by EFL Sudanese learners. Furthermore, it included seven previous studies, comprising national and international ones.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the description of the research methodology and it contains six sections. This part which is an introduction, the second section is about the approach that will be utilized in this research. The third part is for giving an informative background about the population; the fourth one is about the sample of the study, while the final part explains the tools that would be used in data collection and analysis.

3.2 Procedure/s of Data Collection

This research adopts an analytic descriptive method, since; this study is an investigation into the problem of idiomatic expressions (IEs) encountered by Sudanese undergraduates. The researcher believes that this is a suitable method for conducting and analyzing the data of this thesis, because of the fact that the aim here is to investigate the reasons behind the escalating difficulty that Sudanese EFL learners encounter, when they come across multi-word items IEs in various texts in general and literary ones in specific.

By using this method, there are three questions that the researcher seeks to find out; to what extent IEs constitute hurdles for EFL Sudanese learners. This is

essential because of the fact that always almost writers use these chunks to express their ideas and views instead of using simple language which may make the written product a little bit boring. However, this is very interesting, but in turn it may add to the complexity of the text which is already present by some of the unfamiliar items. Anyhow, there should be a balance struck between the use of these MWIs and the audience who will be exposed to these texts.

Furthermore, unlike literary words MWEs are characterized by some factors that make them a hard nut to be cracked, this is the second investigatory point in this thesis. These factors are represented in non-compositionality, fixedness, institutionalization, grammatical complexity, metaphorical use, etc. Finally, there are some adequate word knowledge and vocabulary learning strategies that Sudanese undergraduates should maintain in order to meet the proficiency needed in comprehending English texts. These needs will be highlighted as well.

3.3 The Population of the Study

The subjects who are chosen for carrying out this study are EFL Sudanese undergraduates; level four. They are from various universities: Sudan University of Science and Technology, Omdurman Islamic University and Ahfad University for Women. The majority of those students have studied English language since primary schools level six. The reason behind choosing this level is that IEs require

specialist knowledge; therefore, those learners are regarded as suitable. Furthermore, they have been exposed to a wide range of literary texts. The main courses that are shared by those candidates are African, British and American literature.

However, those who are from Ahfad University did not study these mentioned courses because they are majored in other fields, but they have studied a lot of literary texts in the pre-sessional course known as the (UPP) which stands for university preparatory program. These respondents will be selected randomly and tested.

3.4 The Sample of the Study

In order to maintain a representative sample the researcher will select 80 % of the respondents from Sudan University of Science and Technology and Omdurman Islamic University which will be divided between the two equally. On the other hand, Ahfad University will be given the smallest proportion, i.e. twenty percent only, because of the fact that their exposure to literary texts is so weak comparatively to those who studied English as specialization at the other two universities along the period of four years.

Furthermore, the forty percent that will be devoted to Omdurman Islamic University will of course be divided in to twenty for male students and the other

for their counterparts, because of the fact that co-education is not the fashion of the present days at this university, i.e. those respondents are taught at this university separately unlike Sudan University. Shedding the light on the candidates from Ahfad, the majority of them have studies at some international primary and secondary schools, where they studied some courses of literature and the series that were used there were well designed by international specialized syllabus designers, specifically Anna Phillips and Terry Phillips with Kevin Nicholas. In addition to these, some students are overseas. They come from diverse countries, for instance UK, United States who are native speakers of English, but they represent barely a handful number; while others come from other countries where English language is used as a medium of teaching e.g. Germany. Anyhow, the idea of selecting these students crept upon my mind since I was teaching in the UPP (University Preparatory Program). All these reasons make the students of Ahfad University valid respondents to be chosen. In conclusion the respondents from these three universities form a representative sample.

3.5 Tools of Data Collection

In order to collect data for the purpose of this study a test and a questionnaire will be utilized. The test will be distributed to students for collecting data about non-compositionality and fixedness in IEs; the questionnaire will be

used for collecting data about the same previous purposes and the possible strategies and the adequate vocabulary knowledge that EFL Sudanese learners should obtain in order to be able to decode IEs when encountered. The same candidates that would attend the test will also fill up the questionnaire. The reason behind this is to link the vocabulary strategies and the adequate vocabulary knowledge that they use in decoding IEs with their performance in the test. The questionnaire will partially account for their achievement in the test.

Shedding the light on the students' questionnaire, it contains fifteen statements each one has a purpose explained as follows. The first and the second statements are about non-compositionality and fixedness in IEs. While the third and the fourth ones are about collocations and the non-literal meaning in IEs specifically. The importance of having adequate vocabulary knowledge and dealing with IEs as single inseparable chunks are investigated in the fifth and the sixth statements. The seventh and the eighth ones are about the grammatical and syntactic fixedness in IEs. The rest of the statements are investigating the strategies the L2 learners use to comprehend IEs.

The last mean that is used here for conducting data is the test which comprises three main questions, but the last one is further divided into two sections [A] and [B]. For the sake of validity and reliability the three questions are formulated by the researcher based on multiple-choice-questions. This is done to a

void depending on the students' writing skills since the main aim is not to test their writing ability but rather their ability to deal with and comprehend IEs. Furthermore some candidates may know the right response, but they may become unable to express it via writing. Therefore, multiple-choice-questions will be suitable to conduct the data required for the purpose of this study. To avoid arbitrariness all of the IEs are contextualized, i.e. they are represented in sentences. More importantly the test is formulated according to the aims and the hypotheses of this study.

The first question includes ten items which all should be completed by choosing the right IE option from the box that fits the right place both semantically and grammatically. In addition, like the rest of the other two questions, this question is characterized by non-compositionality and fixedness. For the candidates in order to elicit the right response they have to know the meaning of the given IEs and try to place them in the right blanks. The number of the options and the blanks is the same. There should have been extra options used as distractors, but since already IEs are characterized by non-compositionality and fixedness no need to add more oil to the fire.

In the second question the candidates are provided with ten sentences each include an IE and they are given four options to choose the right option that appeals to stem of the question. In addition, the other three options function as

distractors. The number of the provided distractors should have been two only, but this gives the students a chance of fifty percent to guess the right response, therefore, they are increased to a worse four options, and that reduces the chance of finding out the right prompt to a worth twenty five percent. All of the IEs in this question are underlined and bolded, because of the fact that the main purpose here is not to test recognition of these phraseological chunks but to investigate what are so called non-compositionality and fixedness. More accurately, these options are chosen carefully, i.e. some of the distractors include literal meaning, e.g. stem number seven, now that she had **left the cat out of the bag**, she had no option but to confess. The provided distractors are: a. Revealed the secret, b. released the cat, c. Told the truth and d. let the cat go out. They are clearly not only semantically related to the stem but grammatically as well.

The final question on the other hand comprises two sections; [A] and [B]. On fact, the two sections are formulated out of a short story made out of two paragraphs. The first one is tailed in a form of multiple-choice-question like the previous question, i.e. question two. In addition, the same techniques of design are applied here. However, the difference between the two is that in this question the IEs are further contextualized, i.e. instead of separate sentences they are represented here in a paragraph. This will probably provide the respondents with a

real situation to further understand MWEs, because they can link the events to each other.

Another interesting point for the sake of validity and reliability the same IE that was used in question two item number three is repeated in question three sections [B] in a form of collocation. The same is done on the teachers' and students' questionnaires. This in turn reveals whether the candidates are taking this test seriously or not. Turning to section [B] it is about collocation with reference to IEs. All the phrases that the respondents have to complete are IEs.

To put it in a nut shell, in very serious exams like medicine marking is dealt with very decisively, i.e. committing a mistake results in dismissing a mark. If a candidate scored five right responses and five wrong ones, the result is null, because any mistake accounts for minus. However, this is not the same case in this study; it is only an investigatory study.

3.6 Tools of Data Analysis

So far the how the data will be collected has been mentioned in the previous part of this chapter. In addition to the approach that is adopted in this thesis. In this part the researcher will discuss how the collected data will be analyzed. Since this study is an investigatory study it adopts the descriptive analytic method. Therefore I have used a test and two questionnaires as they have been explained so far. The

test aims at conducting information about non-compositionality and fixedness in MWEs and the two questionnaires are utilized to conduct further information from the candidates and the lecturers as well. After these data are conducted they will be processed by what is so called the SPSS which stands for statistical package for the social science, with a mean, standard deviation, significance and [T] value.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Tools

Both the test and the questionnaire are aiming at assessing Sudanese EFL learners' ability to deal with idiomatic expressions. All of the tasks are related to comprehension of IEs. However, to make sure that they are valid and reliable, they are formulated in form of multiple-choice questions. This will enable the respondents to respond without depending on other skills e.g. writing.

Most importantly, both the test and the questionnaire have been given to English language assessment experts for validation. All of the questions in the test and the statements in the questionnaire are concerned with idiomatic expressions which are the core of the study. Idiomatic expressions are targeted for assessment and nothing else. After the juries confirmed the validity of both tools, the researcher administered thirty copies of both the test and the questionnaire for some respondents as test for checking their reliability. The same respondents are tested again. This is known as test and re-tests method for checking tools reliability. Both tools are confirmed reliable because of the fact that the result of the first group of respondents was 39% for the test and 42% for the questionnaire. However, the percentages scored for the retest 37% for the test and 45% for the questionnaire. Therefore, the test and the questionnaire are proved reliable because of the approximation of the percentages between the test and the re-test.

3.8 Validators of the Tools of Data Collection

No.	Validator's Names	Academic Rank/s	Academic Institution/s
1	Dr. Abdelazeem Osman Mohammed	Assistant Professor of English	Omdurman Islamic University, Faculty of Arts, Eng. L. & Literature Dept.
2	Dr. Alshareef Mohammed Mosa	Assistant Professor of English	Omdurman Islamic University, Faculty of Arts, Eng. L. & Literature Dept.
3	T. Abdela Mohammed Mosa	Lecturer of English	Omdurman Islamic University, Faculty of Arts, Eng. L. & Literature Dept.
4	T. Hossam-Aldeen Babiker Dawsheen	Lecturer of English	Omdurman Islamic University, Faculty of Arts, Eng. L. & Literature Dept.

3.9 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter the researcher has described the two tools which are used for data collection as well as the procedures. The population and the tools for data analysis are fully described. Finally, validity and reliability of the test and the questionnaire are confirmed.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis, Results and Discussions

Chapter Four

Data Analysis, Results and Discussions

4.1 Introduction

This chapter includes data analysis, results and discussions. The researcher analyzed and discussed the data which are collected via the test and the questionnaire; came up with findings and results. The following tables and bar-charts are related to the test, while the ones that are concerning the questionnaire are shown later. The test consists of three main questions, but the third one is divided into two sub-questions, each containing ten items. Furthermore the three questions of the research will be addressed and supported by analysis and discussions with regard to the collected data; the questions are:

1. What are the factors that make idiomatic expressions (IEs) difficult to be comprehended when they are encountered in literary texts?
2. To what extent do IEs constitute hurdles to Sudanese EFL university students in comprehending English literary texts?
3. What are the adequate word knowledge and vocabulary learning strategies that Sudanese undergraduates should have to achieve the proficiency needed in comprehending English literary texts?

The first question seeks to reflect the students' ability in dealing with non-compositional meaning as well as fixedness; they are provided with ten IEs which should be placed at the right space according to their meaning. Furthermore, some of the items contain hints to help the respondents to figure out the meaning. The overall performance of the candidates in this question is poor. Firstly, because for each item of this question the students have to consider ten options, unlike other questions where there are only three distracters. This means the chance of guessing the right answer is reduced dramatically in this question. Secondly, these IEs are

characterized by non-compositionality, although there are some hints, most of the students were not successful in scoring right answers.

The following data discussion and analysis will account for the questions and the hypotheses of the study. The first question is aiming at finding out the factors behind the escalated difficulty that Sudanese EFL undergraduates encounter in literary texts.

What are the factors that make IEs difficult to be comprehended when encountered in literary texts?

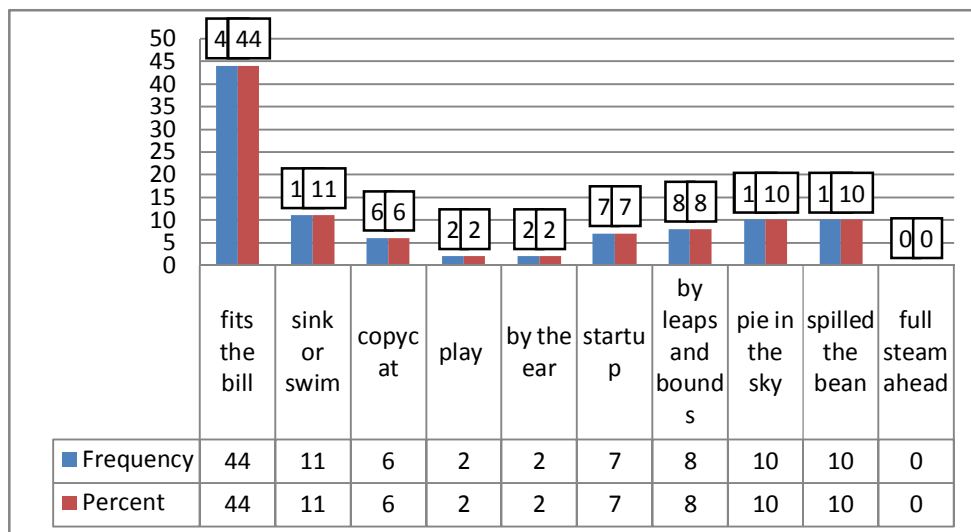
4.2 Analysis of the results obtained via the test.

Q. 1: Fill in the blanks with the correct option.

Table 4.1: I think peter.....he is perfect for the job.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Fits the bill	44	44%
Sink or swim	07	07%
Copycat	06	06%
Play	02	02%
By the ear	02	02%
Startup	07	07%
By leaps and bounds	08	08%
Pie in the sky	10	10%
Spilled the bean	10	10%
Full steam ahead	04	04%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.1: I think peter.....he is perfect for the job.



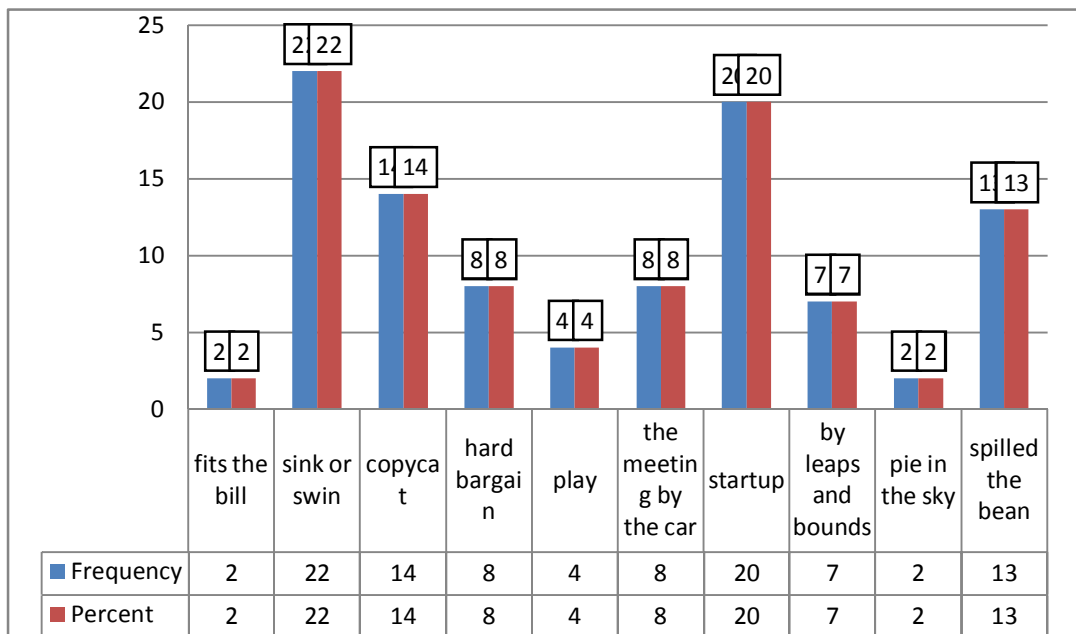
The table and the bar-chart show the achievement of the students with reference to the first item in question one. In this item, only 44% of the respondents were able to achieve the right answer. However, the second sentence in the same item functions as a hint to help the students figure out the meaning. To clarify more, this sentence (He is perfect for the job) has in some way a correspondent of mapping with the IE fits the bill. If the students thought about this kind of relationship, they should have found out the right by this way or even thorough guessing.

Table4.2: It is.....project. We have no time.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Fits the bill	02	02%
Sink or swim	22	22%
Copycat	14	14%
Hard bargain	08	08%

Play	04	04%
By the ear	08	08%
Startup	20	20%
By leaps and bounds	07	07%
Pie in the sky	02	02%
Spilled the bean	13	13%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.2: It is.....project. We have no time.



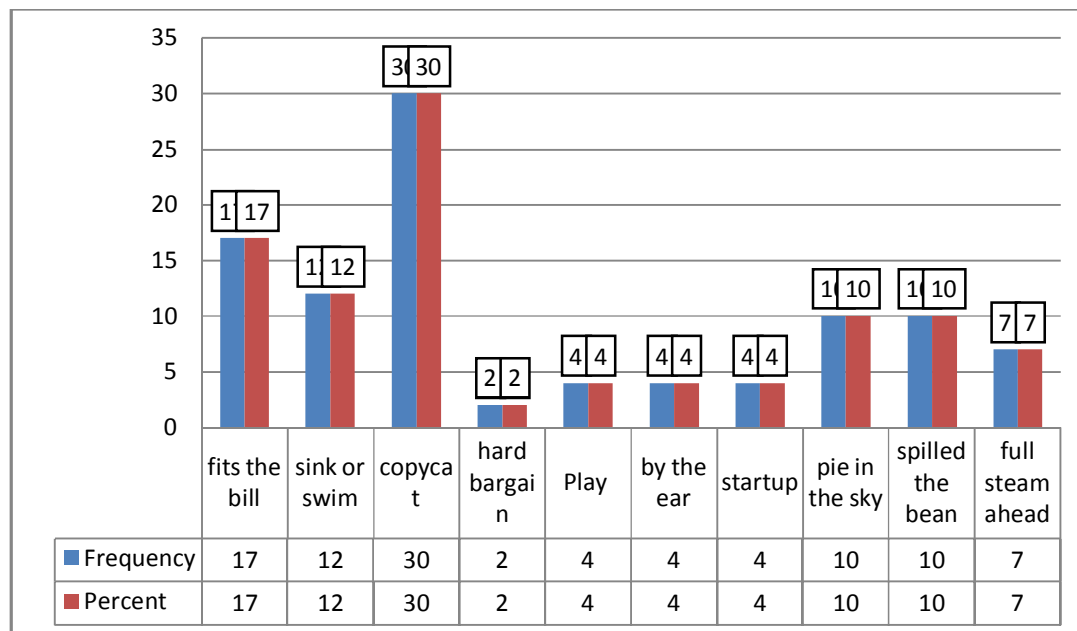
The bar chart reveals the answers of the students in the second item. A handful number of the respondents score right answers (sink or swim), exactly 22%. There are three options that seem to be appealing to the students according to the bar-chart: startup 20%, copycat 14% and spilled the bean 13%. The first choice is very attractive to be chosen by the students, because of the fact that in the stem of the question there is apart that gives the students a clue to select the IE (startup) as a right answer. This is expected because the respondents thought that (start + up) has a compositional meaning *to begin*. However, this is not true. The second

appealing response (copycat) which means *a company* is highly idiomatic and synonymous at the same time with the word (company). (Spilled the beans) which is the last appealing answer is so far from consideration.

Table 4.3: Do not pretend you're like Kevin. Nobody likes a

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Fits the bill	17	17%
Sink or swim	12	12%
Copycat	30	30%
Hard bargain	02	02%
Play	04	04%
By the ear	04	04%
Startup	04	04%
Pie in the sky	10	10%
Spilled the bean	10	10%
Full steam ahead	07	07%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.3: Do not pretend you're like Kevin. Nobody likes a



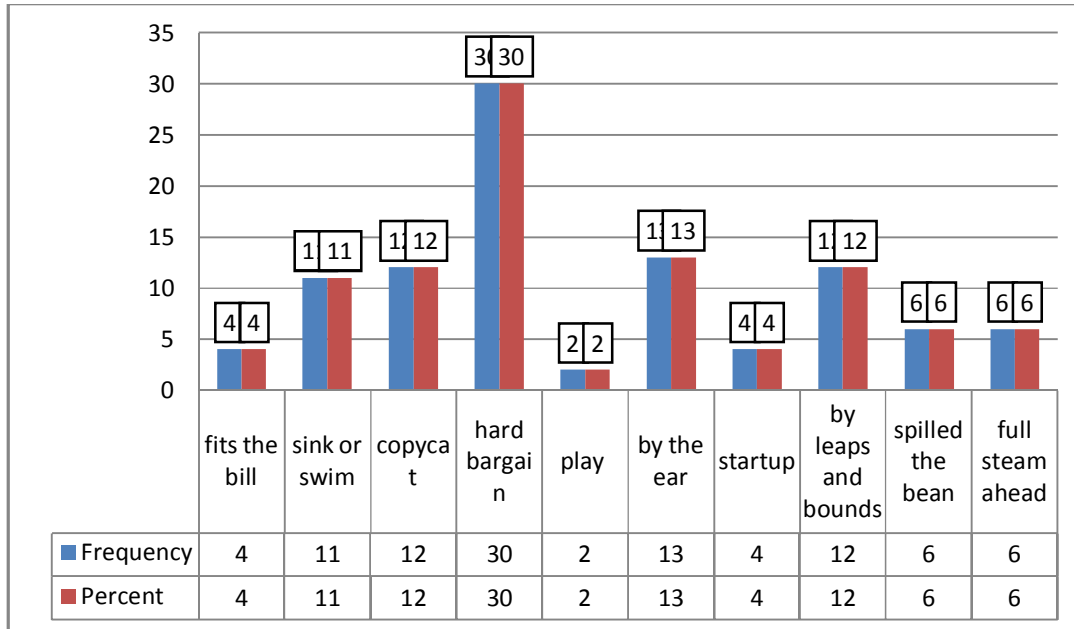
The above bar-chart shows that nearly quarter of the respondents scored right answers, whereas, the rest committed errors. The researcher expected that

even more than this number could have chosen wrong options. This happens because firstly, the initial part of the sentence provides the students with no enough hints comparatively with the two previous sub-questions. Secondly the IE (copycat) has a highly non-compositional meaning. Hypothetically, the students may have spilled the word into (copy and cat). Once again, this is not helpful, because the literal meaning of these two individual words is misleading. The only way to be able to understand the sentence is that to know the meaning of the IE (copycat) in advanced.

Table4.4: The business personbut we had to accept her offer.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Fits the bill	04	04%
Sink or swim	11	11%
Copycat	12	12%
Drove hard bargain	30	30%
Play	02	02%
By the ear	13	13%
Startup	04	04%
By leaps and bounds	12	12%
Spilled the bean	06	06%
Full steam ahead	06	06%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.4: The business personbut we had to accept her offer.

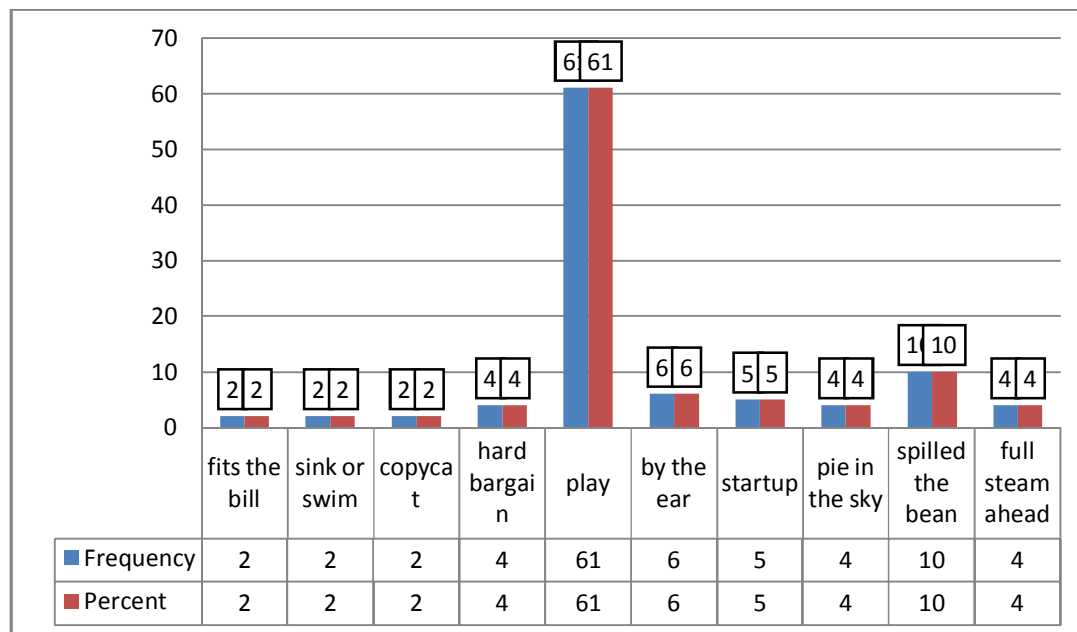


Like the previous items, the respondents' achievement is very low. Only thirty percent were able to score the right answer. There semantic and grammatical relationship between the sentence which is put as a stem for this question and the IE that should be placed in the blank. The semantic relationship is represented by the word (business person) in the stem of the question and the word (bargain) in the IE. On the other hand, the grammatical correspondence is achieved by the use of the past tense (had) in the second sentence of the stem and the verb (drove) in the IE. From all of the other distractors given on one of them has a verb in the past, i.e. (spilled the beans), but this should not be regarded as a justification for why some of the respondents have chosen this option, because the semantic relationship that has been explained so far, should have helped the students to exclude this option.

Table 4.5: I think it is best tothe meeting.....

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Fits the bill	02	02%
Sink or swim	02	02%
Copycat	02	02%
Hard bargain	04	04%
Play	61	61%
By the ear	06	06%
Startup	05	05%
Pie in the sky	04	04%
Spilled the bean	10	10%
Full steam ahead	04	04%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.5: I think it is best tothe meeting.....



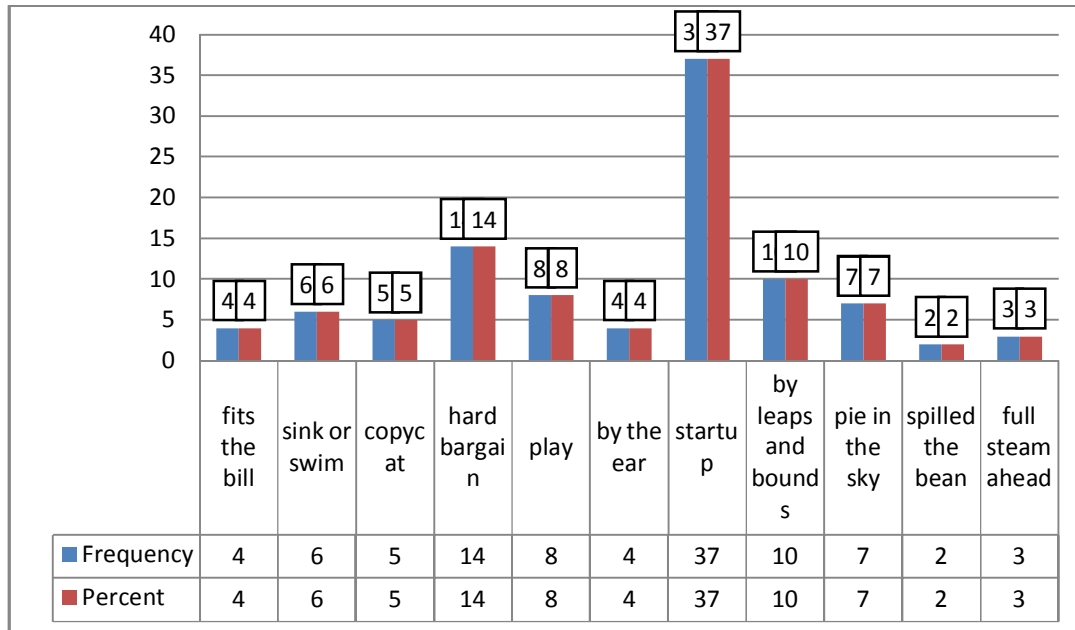
The chart illustrates the percentages of the students with reference to question five. Unlike the other nine items of the main question, this one includes two blanks, which means the candidates should choose two options to successfully make this sentence meaningful. Anyhow, 61% of the candidates were able to select the right option (play) in the first blank, while only 6% were successful in answering the second part of the item. A possible justification is that the verb (play) seems to have a direct semantic relationship with the noun phrase (the meeting). This kind of possible collocation by have sprang from the mind of the respondents, because hypothetically they know that the verb (play) can cope with many noun/phrases like (a game, music, sport). However, the majority of the candidates were unsuccessful to do so in the second blank of the same stem, because it is not the same case of the previous case. The second part (by the ear) is characterized by a highly non-compositional meaning which resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of right answers to 6% only.

Table4.6: He founded a in 2008 and made millions.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Fits the bill	04	04%
Sink or swim	06	06%
Copycat	05	05%
Hard bargain	14	14%
Play	08	08%
By the ear	04	04%
Startup	37	37%
By leaps and bounds	10	10%
Pie in the sky	07	07%

Spilled the bean	02	02%
Full steam ahead	03	03%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.6: He founded a in 2008 and made millions.



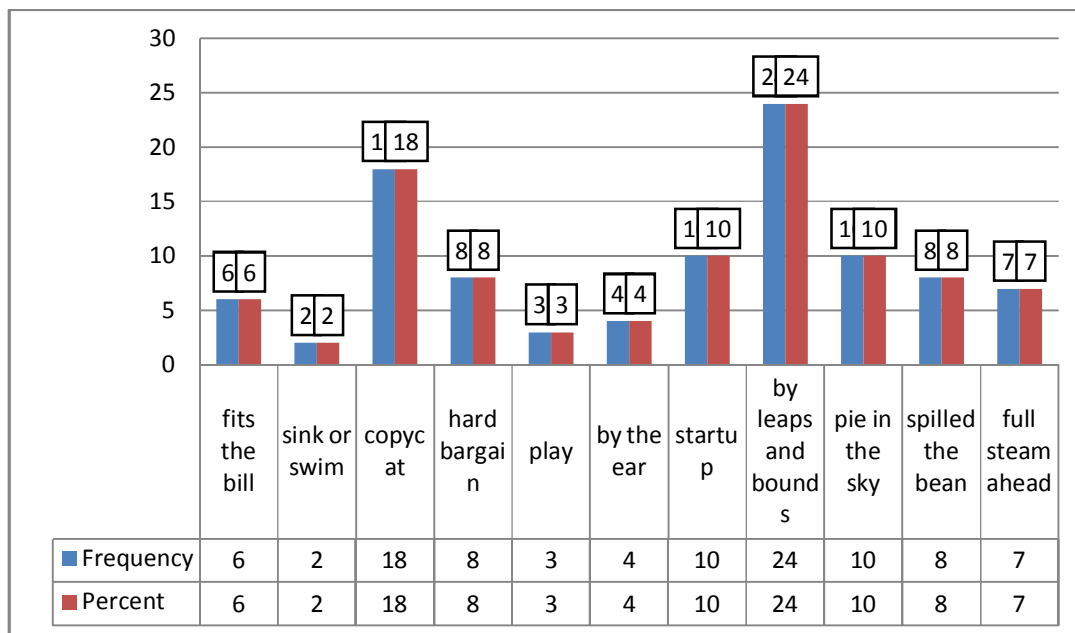
According to the illustration 37% of the candidates have chosen the right option. However, the researcher expected that less than this number would be successful in this item, because of the fact that there is a high level of non-compositionality in the IE (startup) which means (a small company related to technology). This non-compositionality made it difficult to many students to comprehend the IE.

Table4.7: Our business has grown..... We are very happy.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Fits the bill	06	06%
Sink or swim	02	02%

Copycat	18	18%
Hard bargain	08	08%
Play	03	03%
By the ear	04	04%
Startup	10	10%
By leaps and bounds	24	24%
Pie in the sky	10	10%
Spilled the bean	08	08%
Full steam ahead	07	07%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.7: Our business has grown..... We are very happy.



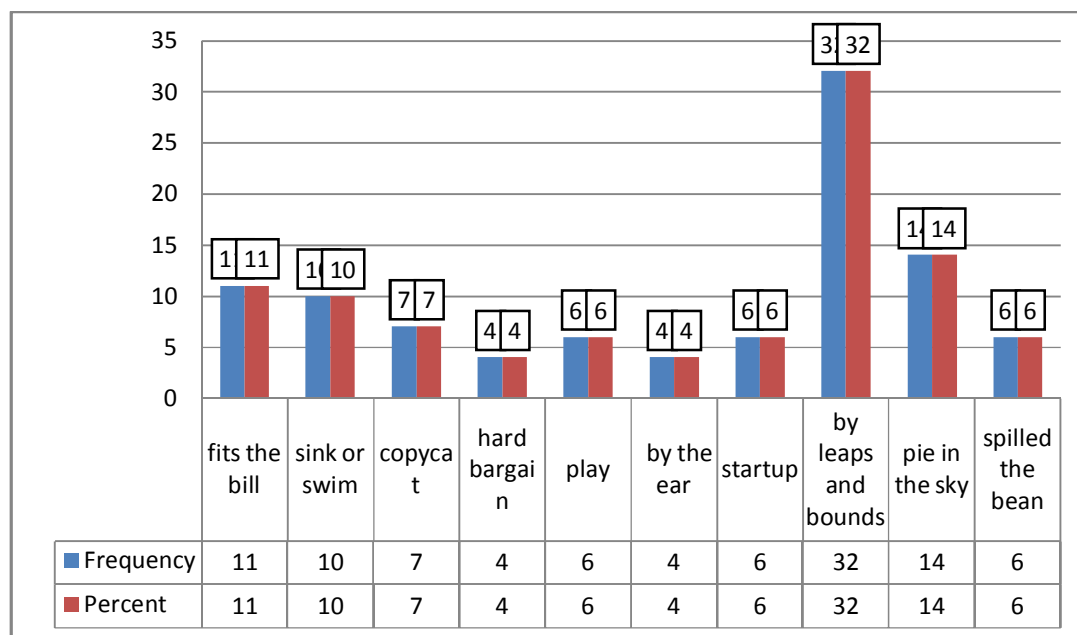
As far as non-compositionality is concerned, the respondents' comprehension has decreased sharply according to this statistical analysis. Once again, the literal meaning of the items in this IE is not helping in decoding the meaning, but the second sentence gives a clue that first sentence that contains the

IE should have a positive meaning at least, even though, that the meaning is not clear. This is clear evidence that the students have a problem related to IEs that have non-compositional meaning.

Table4.8: I am afraid; I think that idea is it will never work

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Fits the bill	11	11%
Sink or swim	10	10%
Copycat	07	07%
Hard bargain	04	04%
Play	06	06%
By the ear	04	04%
Startup	06	06%
By leaps and bounds	32	32%
Pie in the sky	14	14%
Spilled the bean	06	06%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.8: I am afraid; I think that idea is it will never work

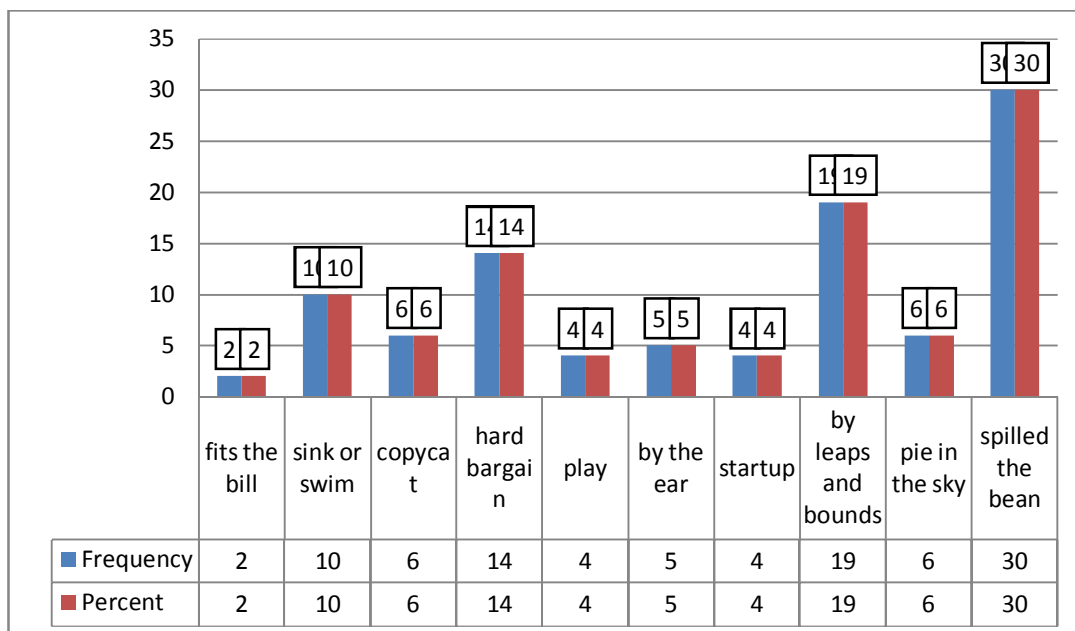


Just unlike the previous items and the coming one, only 14% of the total number of the respondents scored right answers. However, this is the lowest percentage throughout this question. It is may be because the IE is so novice to the respondents. Not only this, but it is highly non-compositional as well.

Table4.9: Because he knew all the secrets he.....

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Fits the bill	02	02%
Sink or swim	10	10%
Copycat	06	06%
Hard bargain	14	14%
Play	04	04%
By the ear	05	05%
Startup	04	04%
By leaps and bounds	19	19%
Pie in the sky	06	06%
Spilled the bean	30	30%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.9: Because he knew all the secrets he.....



More than quarter of the sample did well in this item of the main question. The number of right answers were expected in this stem, because there a clear clue which has been put in the initial part of the sentence (knew all the secrets). However, the respondents may also find this hint as unhelpful because of the fact that the IEs (spill the bean) is characterized also by a high level of non-compositionality.

In conclusion, this question that is formulated out of ten items proves that the students have a problem in comprehending IEs with reference to non-compositionality and fixedness. All of the scores are below 50% except item number (5), the first blank. To clarify more, this is a summary of the percentages: 44%, 22%, 30%, 61%, 30%, 37%, 24%, 32%, and 30%. This is a clear indication that the students are unable to comprehend IEs which are characterized by non-compositionality and fixedness which has been postulated in the first hypothesis of this research (Idiomaticity, fixedness, opaque collocation and non-compositionality are some of the factors behind the difficulties that Sudanese EFL undergraduates encounter in comprehending English language literary texts.) with regard to the first question (What are the factors that make IEs difficult to be comprehended when encountered in literary texts?). Besides, the problem of comprehending IEs is significantly high according to the students' weak performance in this question and this validates the first hypothesis of this study.

Q. 2: Choose the right option that suits the meaning of the bolded and underlined part of these sentences.

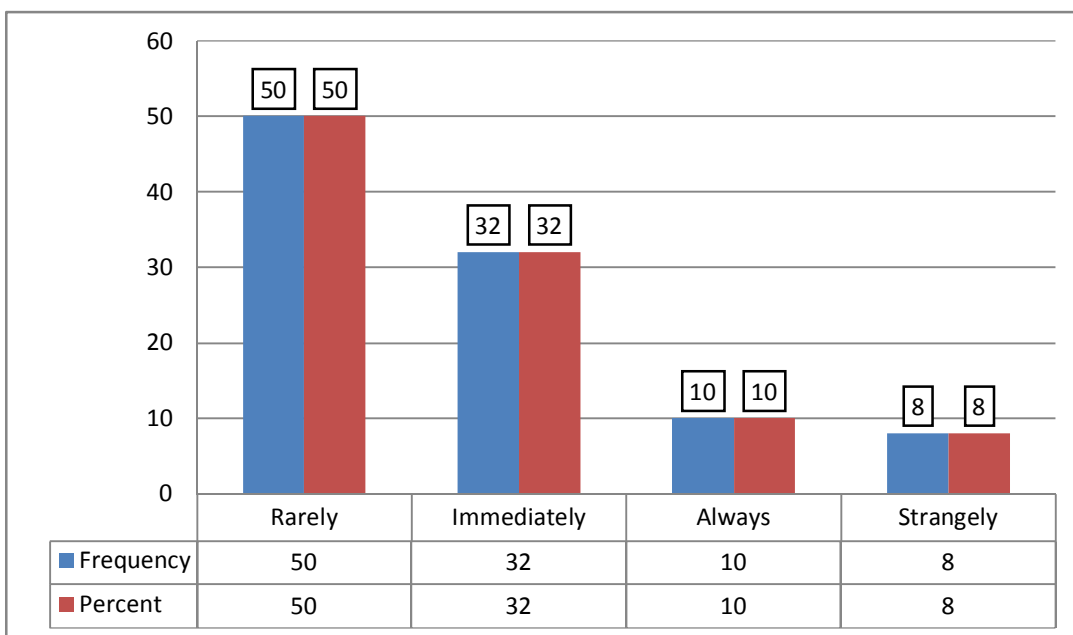
This question aims at assessing the students' comprehension of IEs which are characterized mainly by non-compositionality and fixedness. In this question the candidates are provided with ten sentences each include an IE and they are given four options to choose the right one which appeals to stem. In addition, the

other three options function as distractors. The number of the provided distractors should have been two only or three, but this gives the students a chance of fifty percent to guess the right response, therefore, they are increased to a worse four options, and this reduces the chance of finding out the right prompt to a worth twenty five percent. Furthermore, this helps in assuring that the answers are authentic enough. All of the IEs in this question are underlined and bolded, because of the fact that the main purpose here is not to test recognition of these phraseological chunks but to investigate what are so called non-compositionality and fixedness and to what extent they constitute comprehension problems to the students.

Table4.10: Once in a blue moon the blue jay (a noisy and brightly colored bird) can be seen in these parts of the forest.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Rarely	50	50%
Immediately	32	32%
Always	10	10%
Strangely	08	08%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.10: Once in a blue moon the blue jay (a noisy and brightly colored bird) can be seen in these parts of the forest.

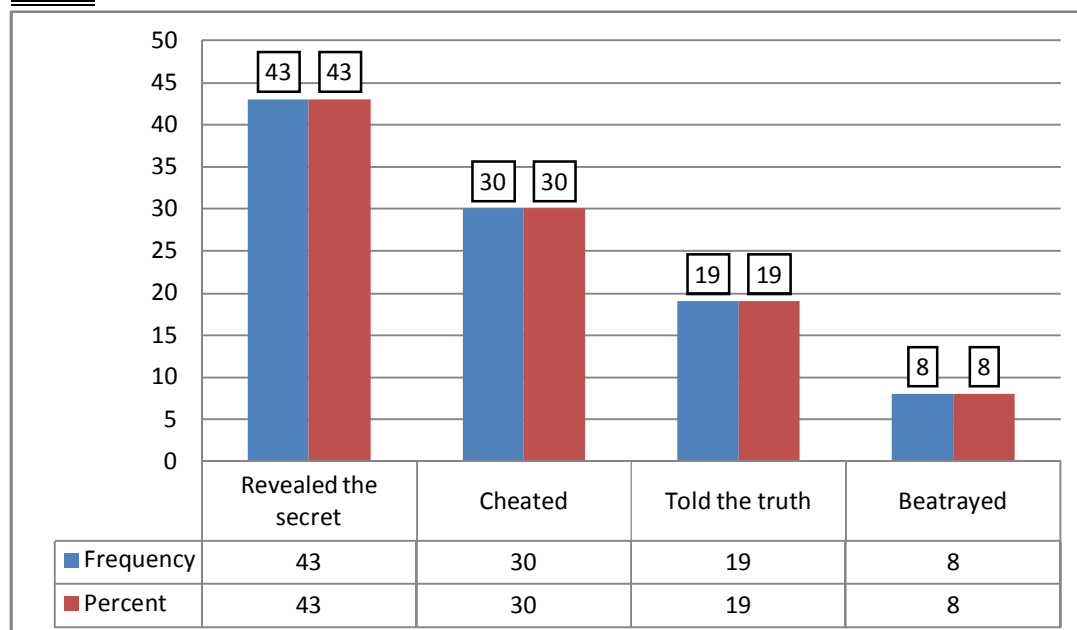


The table and the bar-chart show comprehension of the students to stated IE. However, only half of the respondents were able to find out the appropriate answer. All of the distractors are formulated in a form of adverbs that convey the meaning of the IE. It is clear from the statistics that the students were successful in excluding two distractors, i.e. (always and strangely). On the other hand, the second distractor was so appealing that 32% of the students chose it. This happened because since they excluded the other two distractors successfully, a significant number of them find it difficult to do the same for the other two.

Table4.11: Immediately after the meeting was over, the wicked man spilled the bean.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Revealed the secret	43	43%
Cheated	30	30%
Told the truth	19	19%
Betrayed	08	08%
Total	100	100%

Figure4.11: Immediately after the meeting was over, the wicked man spilled the bean.



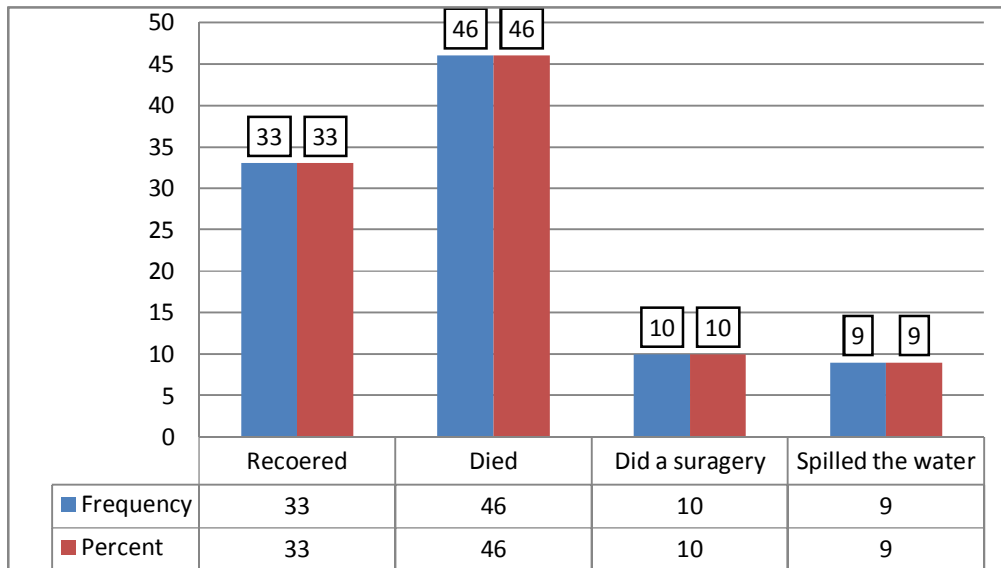
Both the table and the chart show the responses of the students with regard to the second question. Like the previous questions, the achievement of the candidates is below 50%. Only 43% of them were right. As far as non-compositionality and fixedness are concerned, this IE is characterized by a higher level of indirect meaning and semantic fixedness. These two characteristics are clear in the IE, because there is no relationship between (spill the bean) and (reveal a secret). However, there a hint in the stem of the question which is the (wicked man); this can help the students to exclude the third distractor. It seems to be that the majority students (30%) chose the second distractor may be because they are familiar with its meaning; unlike the final one (betrayed) which also has a negative meaning.

Table4.12: After the old man has been taken to the hospital, he kicked the bucket.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Recovered	33	33%
Died	46	46%
Did a surgery	10	10%
Spilled the water	09	09%
Total	100	100%

The bar chart shows the elicitation of the students in the third question. This IE is also characterized by a higher level of idiomaticity and fixedness, so less than half number of the students scored right answers. Shedding the light in distractors,

Figure 4.12: After Ali has been taken to the hospital, he kicked the bucket.

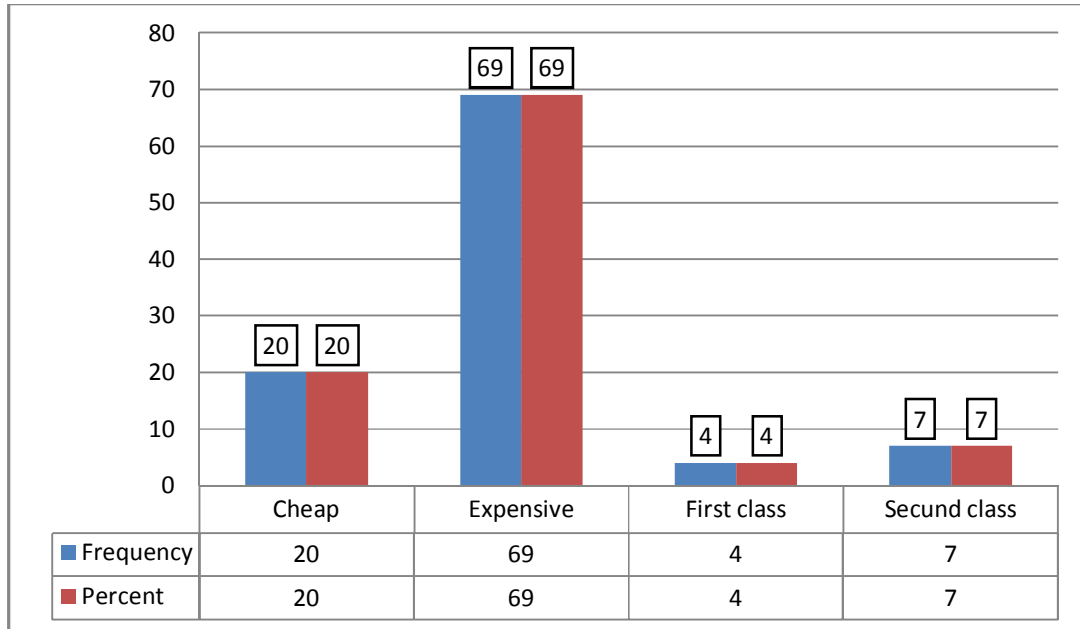


All of them are appropriate with regard to the clue given in the stem of the question (taken to the hospital). Yet, the final distractor is connected to IE by the word (water) and (bucket) it has been excluded. Regarding the first distractor which a significant number of the respondents chose it is very appealing, once again because of the clue (hospital).

Table4.13: His laziness made him miss his flight to the UK. The next ticket cost him an arm and a leg. This means the ticket was.....

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Cheap	20	20%
Expensive	69	69%
First class	04	04%
Second class	07	07%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.13: His laziness made him miss his flight to the UK. The next ticket cost him an arm and a leg. This means the ticket was.....



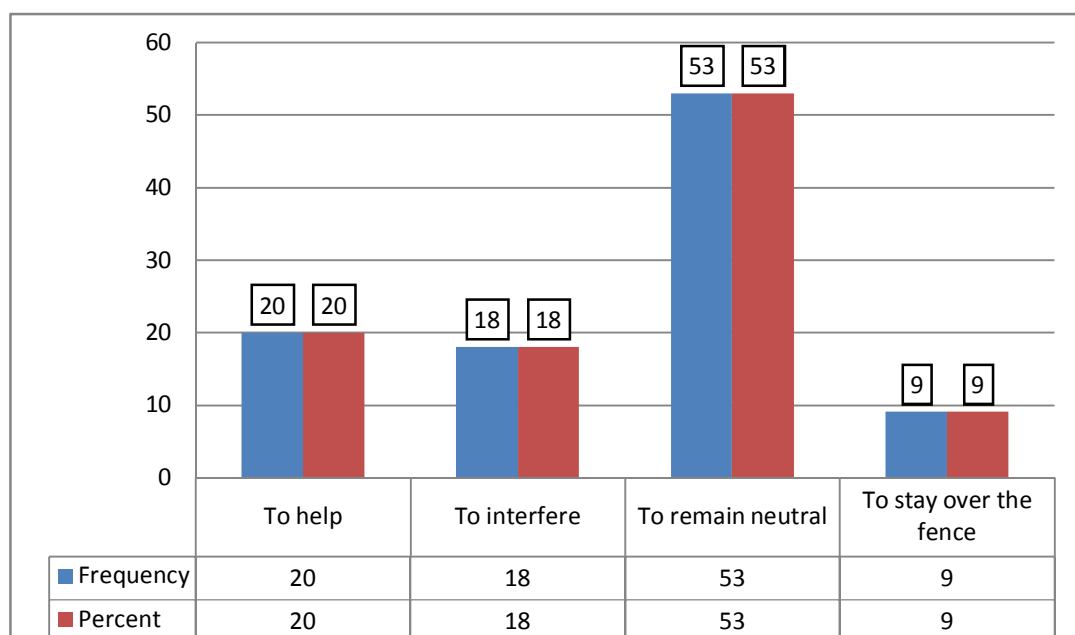
The bar-chart shows the achievement of the respondents with reference to fourth question. Not less than the previous IEs in terms of non-compositionality and fixedness this IE is characterized by them. Exactly 69% figured out the right option. Referring to the stem where the IE is contextualized, there is enough hint indicated by missing the first flight. It sounds more logical that missing the first flight adds to the cost in booking another one which is not planned. This can account to the reason why the students understood the stem well and responded in the right way accordingly.

Table4.14: Since I wasn't aware of the details, I decided to sit on the fence during the argument between them.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
To help	20	20%
To interfere	18	18%
To remain neutral	53	53%

To stay over the fence	09	09%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.14: Since I wasn't aware of the details, I decided to sit on the fence during the argument between them.



Both of the table and the bar-chart reveal the performance of the students in the fifth question. Shedding the light on non-compositionality and fixedness, both features are present on this IE. It is contextualized as well so that the students have to try to comprehend it, or they have to use any possible strategy to figure out the meaning. According to the statistics, 53% comprehended the IE because of the fact that the overall meaning of the sentence seems very helpful. The disagreement is between the mother and the wife, so in this case most people are likely decide to sit on the fence. Although the third distractor is a paraphrasing to the compositional meaning of the IE, the majority of the students ignored it. Inferably, it can be said that the students understood that the compositional meaning of these idioms which is presented by some of the distractors are always almost fallacious.

Table4.15: Her creepy encounter with the supernatural had devastating effect on her, she is now **afraid of her own shadow**. This means to become easily.....

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Convinced	29	29%
Cheated	18	18%
Frightened	47	47%
Brainwashed	06	06%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.15: Her creepy encounter with the supernatural had devastating effect on her, she is now **afraid of her own shadow**. This means to become easily.....

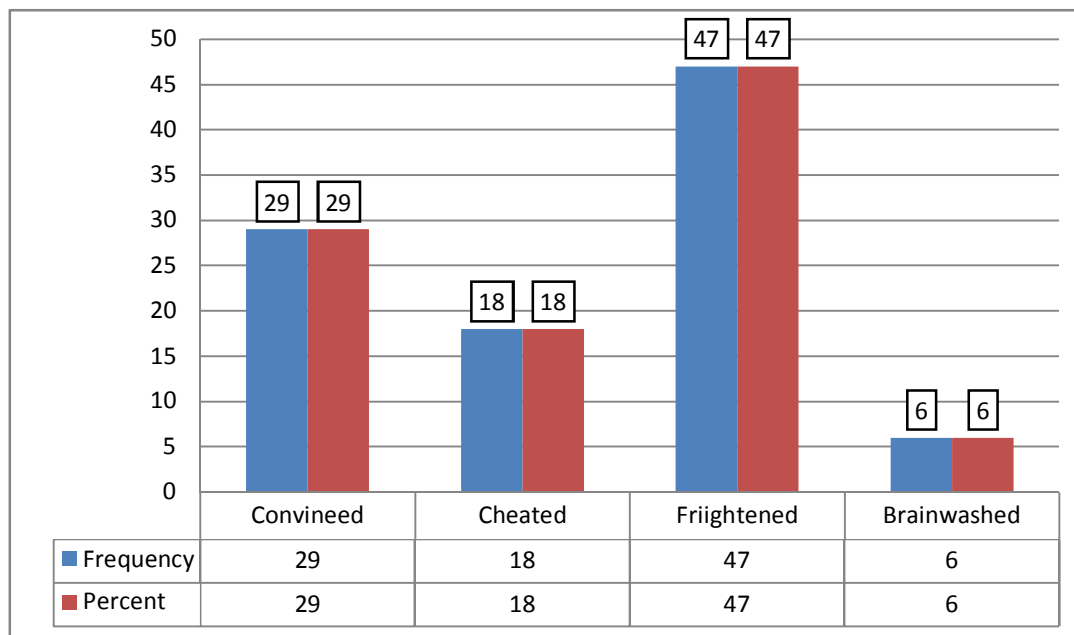


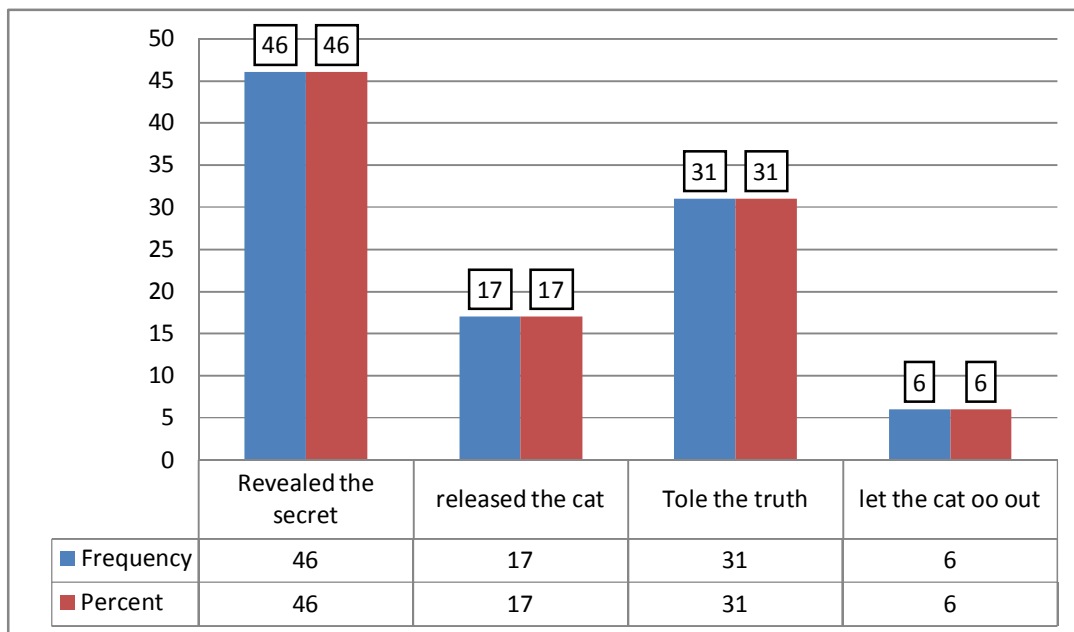
Table 6 shows that the overall comprehension of the students is below 50% i.e. 47% exactly. Contrary to this, the researcher expected that the respondents are going to fully comprehend this IE or at least 70% will do so for many reasons. Firstly, the IE is explanatory, i.e. it explains itself by itself. The literal meaning of the items by which the IE is composed is helpful. Secondly, the meaning of the three distractors is not related to the IE by any mean.

Thirdly, in the stem of the question there are two hints which are helpful in extracting the meaning, i.e. (creepy encounter, supernatural and devastating effect) all these phrases pave the way for the students to understand the IE. Finally, the IE is not in isolation it is contextualized. Anyhow, the respondents seem to have devolved their own strategy, which is inferably one could believe that they acquired that fact that most IEs have non-compositional meaning.

Table4.16: Now that she had left the cat out of the bag, she had no option but to confess.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Revealed the secret	46	46%
Released the cat	17	17%
Told the truth	31	31%
Let the cat to go out	06	06%
Total	100	100%

Figure4.16: Now that she had left the cat out of the bag, she had no option but to confess.



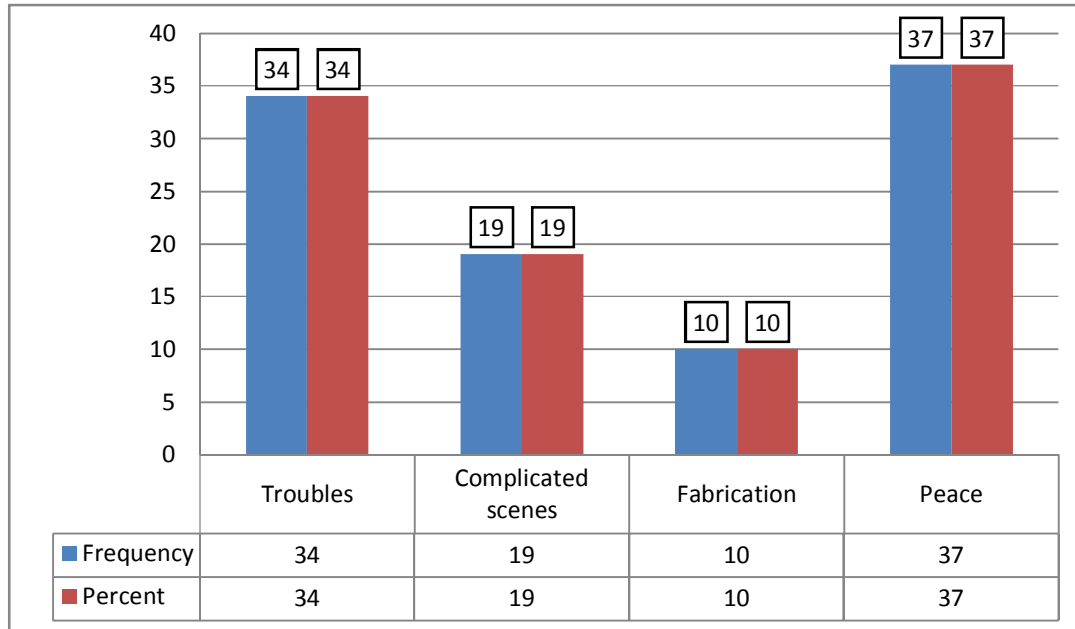
The table and the bar-chart demonstrate the achievement of the students in the seventh question. As far as non-compositionality and fixedness are concerned, this IE is highly compositional because of the fact that all of its items bear no signal at all to infer its meaning. It is synonymous with the IE (spill the bean), but they are different in many aspects. What is surprising is that there is similarity in the students' performance in both questions. In terms of percentages the score in both of the questions is not far, 43% in the former and 46% for this one as the above statistics show. This is an indication that both IEs are problematic for the students in term of comprehension.

Referring to this question's distractors the third one (told the truth) is so appealing to the students even though is totally the opposite. While in the previous question the most appealing distractor is the second one (cheated). All in all, both of the IEs are problematic for the students almost equally.

Table4.17: I am always stuck pouring oil on troubled waters when my mother and wife start their bickering argument. This means to make.....

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Troubles	34	34%
Complicating the problem	19	19%
Fabrication	10	10%
Peace	37	37%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.17: I am always stuck pouring oil on troubled waters when my mother and wife start their bickering argument. This means to make.....



The table displays the performance of the students in question eight. In order to avoid problems of comprehension related to students' shortage in vocabulary, they are provided with explanation of some difficult or infrequent words, such as (bickering). In this question, the comprehension of the students to the IE is significantly low. Only a handful number of them were successful in understanding the IE.

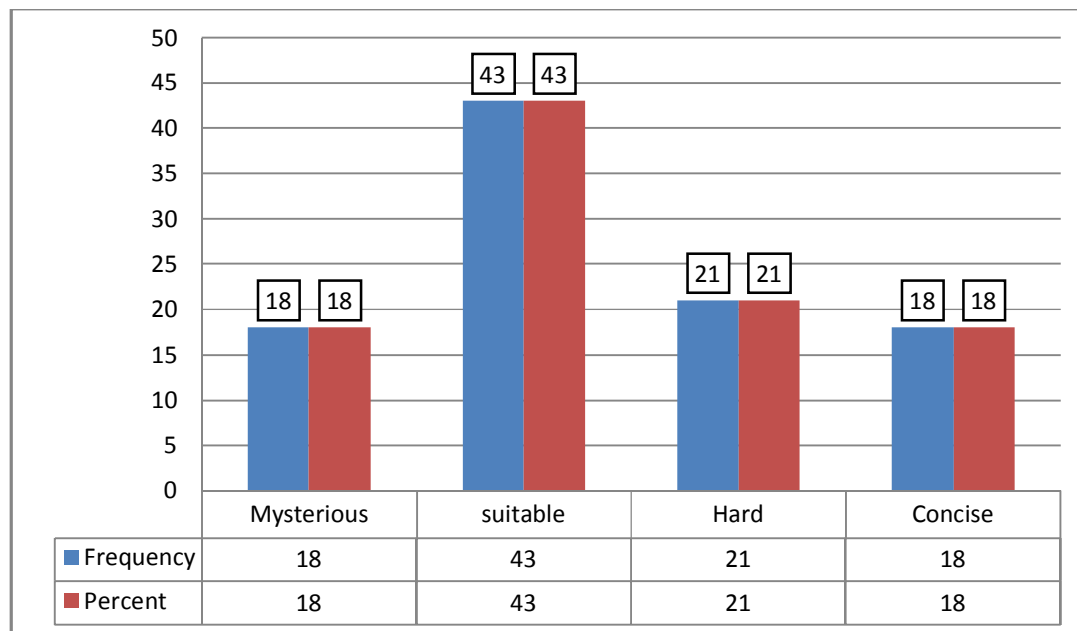
There is a relationship between the source domain and the target domain. The source domain is the depiction of what happens when oil poured on troubled waters (boiling) of course it will culminate it. This should have given the students a sense of solving a problem or since there is an argument between the wife and the mother. When the students relate the two former situations they can possibly understand what is meant by the IE. The escalated problem of comprehension here

can be attributed to non-compositionality which is regarded as an inseparable feature of IEs.

Table4.18: The textbook Development Committee decided to put the 30 page chapter in a nutshell to help save time for students during revision. This means to make something.....

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Mysterious	18	18%
suitable	43	43%
Hard	21	21%
Concise	18	18%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.18: The textbook Development Committee decided to put the 30 page chapter in a nutshell to help save time for students during revision. This means to make something.....



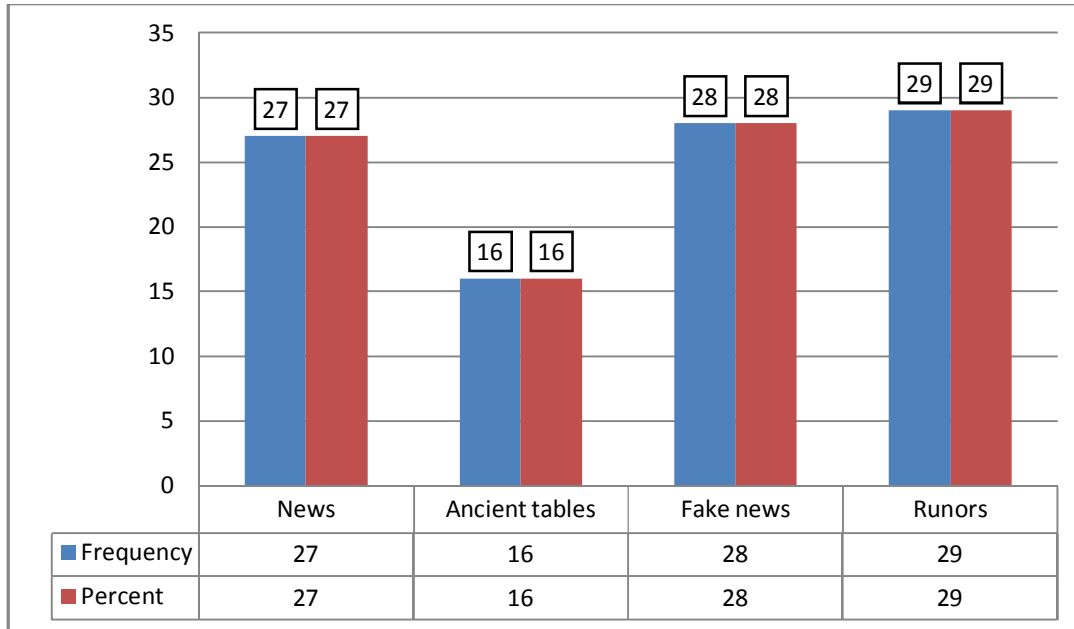
The bar-chart show exhibit the achievement of the students with regard to the pre final question. The statistical indicator revealed that only 18% of the respondents were able to find out the suitable matching. However, the researcher expected this dramatic fall in comprehension, because the hints which were given in the stem of the question provide a little help. In addition to this, the majority of the respondents may be thought about the literal meaning of the word (nutshell) because it is the only word in the IE that carries the meaning of the whole idiom.

On the other hand, this part of the sentence (to help save time for students during revision) should have assisted the respondents to easily exclude two distractors, i.e. (hard and mysterious). Contrary to this, these two distractors scored 18% and 21% which almost half of the total percentage. While nearly half of the students 43% chose the second appealing distractor (suitable). The researcher believe that this is possible, because the two words (suitable and concise) seem to be synonymous for the students and that is why they find it difficult to discern between them.

Table4.19: I heard it on grape vine that he had stiffed an old man asking for his pension. This means to hear the information as;

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
News	27	27%
Ancient tales	16	16%
Fake news	28	28%
Rumors	29	29%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.19: I heard it on grape vine that he had stiffed an old man asking for his pension. This means to hear the information as;



The bar-chart shows the percentages of the right answers regarding the last question. It can be seen clearly that, almost all of the percentages of the distractors are the same except the second one (ancient tales 16%). The IE is highly compositional and only one word from the stem functions as a clue (heard) which best collocates with all of the distractors. For the students to understand this IE they should have a prior knowledge about it, otherwise, problems of comprehension will arise.

In conclusion, throughout the ten items of this question the level of comprehension of the students of these IEs is significantly low. This is a clear indication that IEs constitute hurdles to the students as far as comprehension of IEs in literary texts is concerned. Although the respondents are provided by a lot of hints and clues to assist them guessing the right meaning; their achievement was so low. This escalated difficulty can be attributed to the fact that almost all of IEs

have non-compositional meaning. To put it in a nutshell, these are the percentages, 50%, 43%, 46%, 69%, 53%, 47%, 46%, 37%, 18% and 29%. This result is not so different from the previous question, where the performance of the respondents has been indicated as so weak. The only difference is that great number students are successful in comprehending two items, i.e. the third and the forth, because of the fact that the context was helpful, besides, the two IEs were explanatory (they have enough hints/clues to be comprehended). But this is not the same case with most of the other IEs. These results answer the first question (What are the factors that make IEs difficult to be comprehended when encountered in literary texts?). and further enhance the first hypothesis (Idiomaticity, fixedness, opaque collocation and non-compositionality are some of the factors behind the difficulties that Sudanese EFL undergraduates encounter in comprehending English language literary texts.).

Q.3: Section [A], read the following sentences thoroughly and choose the right option which represents the meaning of the underlined part.

This is the final question in the test which comprises two sections; [A] and [B]. On fact, the two sections are formulated out of a short story made out of two paragraphs. The first one is tailed in a form of multiple-choice-question like the previous one, i.e. question two. In addition, the same techniques of design are applied here. However, the difference between the two is that in this question the IEs are further contextualized, i.e. instead of separate sentences they are represented here in a form of paragraphs. This will probably provide the respondents with a real situation to further understand IEs, because they can link the events to each other.

Table 4.20: Hefits the bill.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Has the right characteristics	38	38%
Has enough cash	25	25%
Has good interaction	10	10%
Very attractive	27	27%
Total	100	100%

Figure4.20: Hefits the bill.



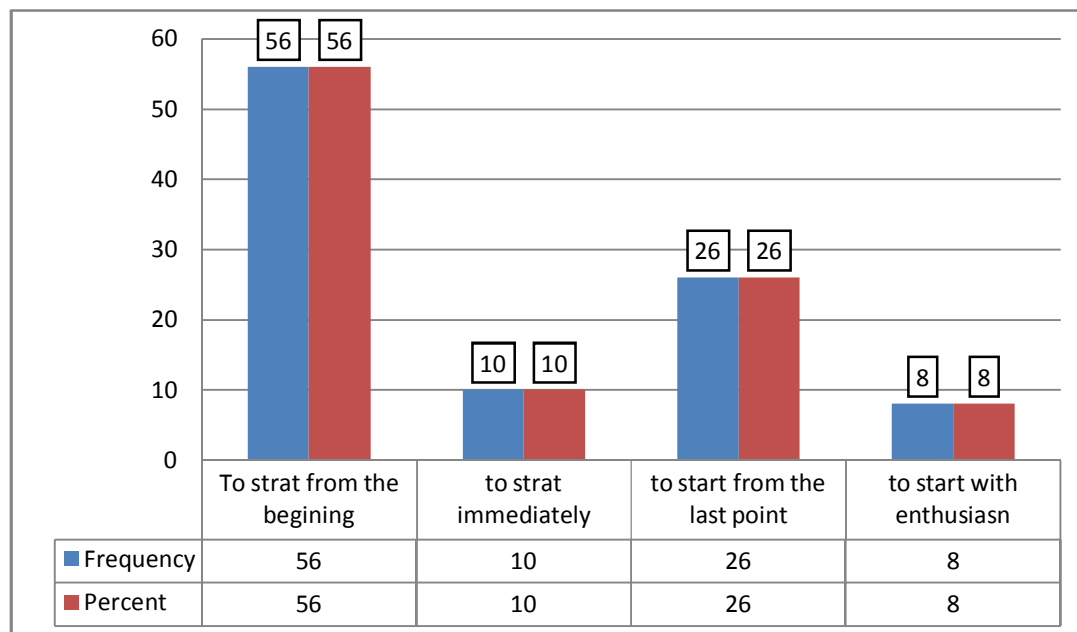
As it is illustrated in the table and the bar-chart above, only 38% of the respondents elicited right answers. It is clear evidence that the participants face difficulties in comprehending this IE. These difficulties result in misunderstanding IEs. However, this difficulty stemmed out from the fact that idiomaticity and semantic fixedness are some of the ultimate characteristics of idioms.

Referring to the distractors which were provided, they related to the overall meaning of the IE in some way or another. For instance, the second distractor is related semantically to the IE, because may be the students thought about the literal meaning of the word (bill) in the stem of the question and the word (cash) in the second distractor, and this is why 25% percent of them chose labeled it suitable. The other two distractors are related to the IE through the positive meaning that they carry. To clarify more, the word (fits) in the IE stimulates the students to select one of the two options.

Table4.21: He is willing to start from scratch.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
To start from the beginning	56	56%
To start immediately	10	10%
To start from the last point	26	26%
To start with enthusiasm	08	08%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.21: He is willing to start from scratch.



According to the table and the bar-chart a reasonable number of respondents succeeded in figuring out the right answer even though the IE is characterized by non-compositionality and fixedness. Putting the provided distractors in consideration they all begin with this phrase (to start) which is the initial part of the given IE. In this case they all serve as hints, telling the students that the IE is definitely about (starting).

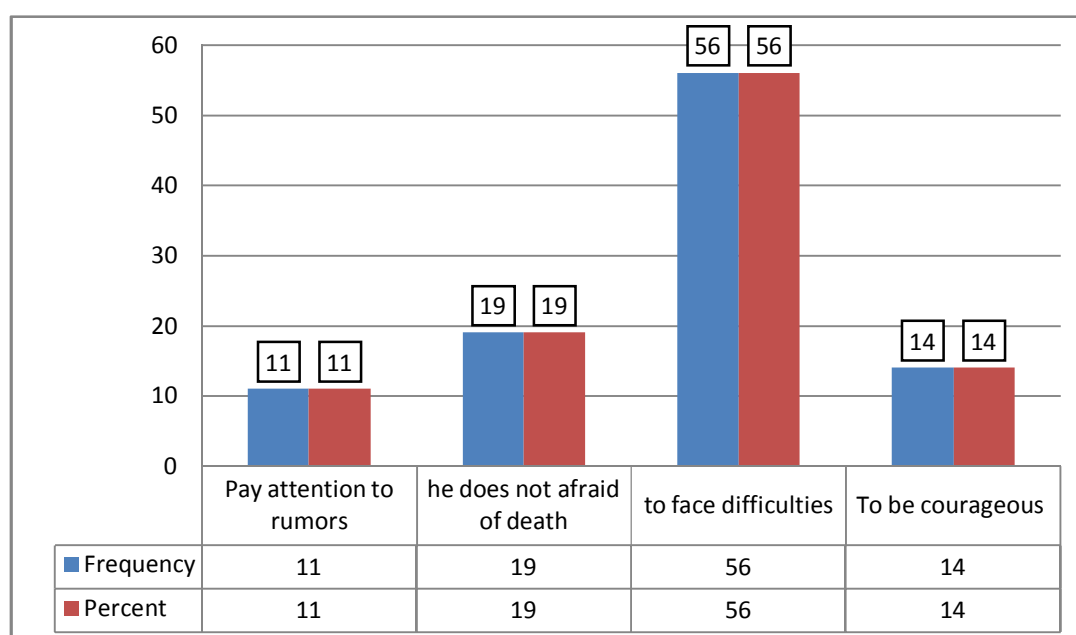
On the other hand, this phrase (from scratch) which is located at the end of the IE should support the respondents with a clear clue to eliminate easily the second, third and fourth distractors. The researcher expected more than this number of participants to be able to comprehend this IE or at least they should figure out the right meaning by guessing, because of the hints that are present in the stem of the question and contextualization. There are a lot of factors that participate in this difficulty, i.e. one of which is known as non-compositionality. Despite the fact that the level of non-compositeness in this IE is not so high, only 56% of the respondents were able to comprehend it. This is due to semantic drift that often disobeys the literal meaning of the individual words in IEs. However, 26% of the respondents chose the third option which is (to start from the last point), if the participants concentrated more, starting from a last point means there is already something present.

Table4.22: He is not afraid of putting his nose to the grindstone.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Pay attention to rumors	11	11%
He does not afraid of death	19	19%
To face difficulties	56	56%

To be courageous	14	14%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.22: He is not afraid of putting his nose to the grindstone.



As far as the comprehension of the IEs is concerned, 56% of them succeeded to do so. However, this result is warning, because nearly half of the respondents are beating around the bush. This IE has a high level of idiomcity and this is why it constituted difficulties to the students. Referring to the literal meaning of *grindstone* (a large round stone that is turned by a machine and is used to make tools sharper or sharp edges smooth) it is set as thread signaling the encountering of difficulties.

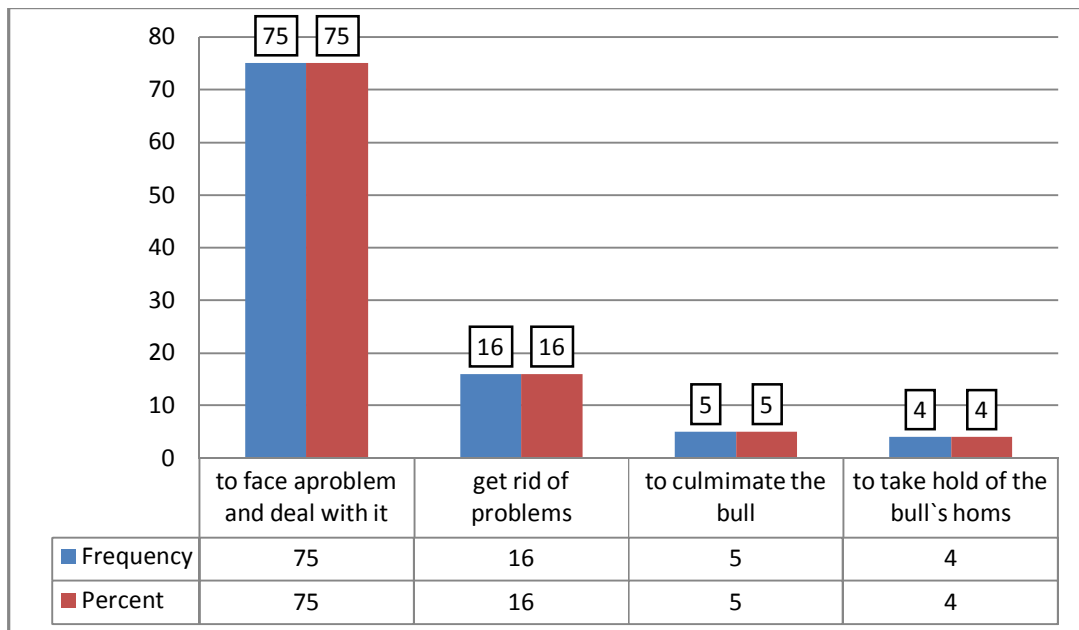
To comprehend this IE there should be a correspondent of mapping between the source domain and the target domain. The source domain is the IE and the

target domain is the message that it intending to convey. The rest of the students who failed to understand the IE did not realize this mutual relationship to be able to figure out the meaning.

Table4.23: He decided to take the bull by the horn.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
To face a problem and deal with it	75	75%
Get rid of problems	16	16%
To culminate the bull	05	05%
To take hold of the bull`s horns	04	04%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.23: He decided to take the bull by the horn.



This item is as the same as the previous one in terms of the correspondence of mapping between the source domain and the target domain. Using the literal meaning of the individual words in this IE is nonsense because ideational meaning. Referring back to the correspondence of mapping, the source domain is picture that

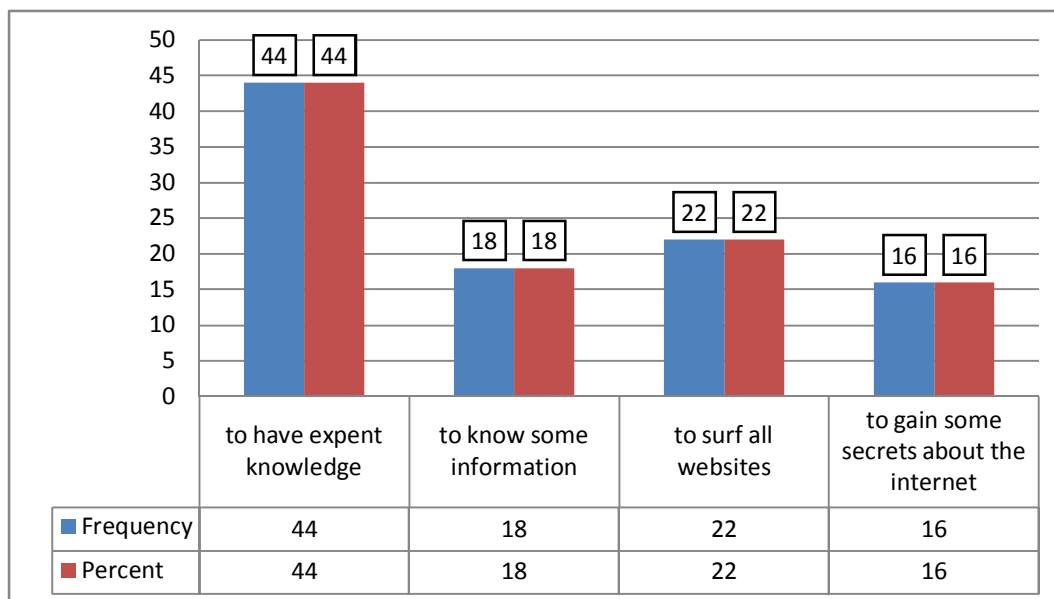
will be generated from the mind of the participants of a person in reality taking hold of a bull's horns; this signal what is so call taking risk, or in other words facing difficulties.

On the other hand, the target domain is the intended message that the IE conveys. Unlike the previous question 75% of the respondents comprehended the IE because the connection of the source and target domains were already triggered by the previous question. Therefore, a significant number of the participants succeeded in doing so.

Table4.24: He found a software developer who knew the internet inside out.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
To have expert knowledge	44	44%
To know some information	18	18%
To surf all websites	22	22%
To gain some secrets about the internet	16	16%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.24: He found a software developer who knew the internet inside out.

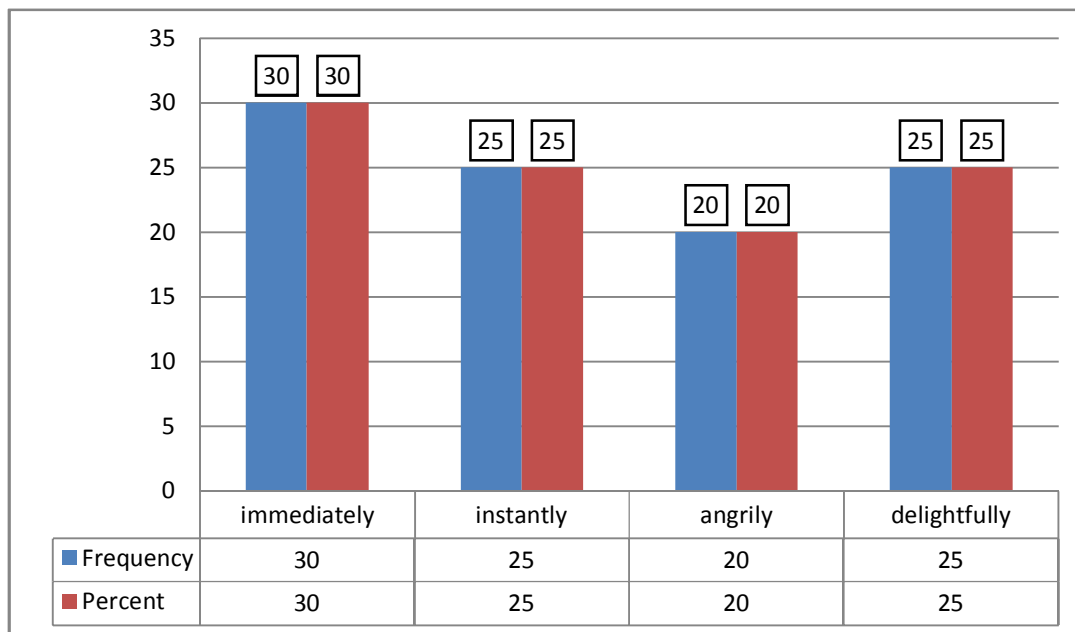


Once again the statistical indicator shows that there is a decrease in the respondents' performance in understanding IEs. This is not novice, throughout 90% of the pervious questions; it had been proved that these IEs undergo a lot of difficulties to be understood. Unfortunately, more than half of the students selected the appealing distractors as right response. This result reflects the anomaly of these phraseological chunks. This anomalous nature makes Sudanese undergraduates find it difficult to comprehend them. Therefore, only 44% did well. Furthermore, in this IE there is no strong correspondence between the source domain and the target domain as in the previous two questions.

Table4.25:He left his safe job at the drop of a hat.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Immediately	30	30%
Instantly	25	25%
Angrily	20	20%
Delightfully	25	25%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.25:He left his safe job at the drop of a hat.



This result proves that non-compositionality and the weakness of correspondence of mapping between the source domain and the target domain affects the respondents' understanding to a large extent. Firstly, the IE itself is opaque as a result of the anomalous collocation of its items. The word (drop) which always collocates with liquids such as oil, water, etc. now collocates with the word (hat) which has no by any mean a semantic relation with the word (drop). The difficulty in comprehension that the students have encountered stemmed from this point.

However, the researcher expected that most of the participants will find their way to understand this IE, because to the fact that the antecedent sentence stated that the man was very ambitious, which means his dream is more than just being an employee to an outstanding company. In order to do so he has to make use of time and this could be a strong hint to leave the job immediately. All these should have stimulated option and eliminate other distractors. Despite this fact, just 30% of the participant understood this IE.

Table4.26: They were both reaching for pie the sky.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Something very hard to achieve	60	60%
Something easy	06	06%
Something rewarding	18	18%
Something extreme	16	16%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.26: They were both reaching for pie the sky.

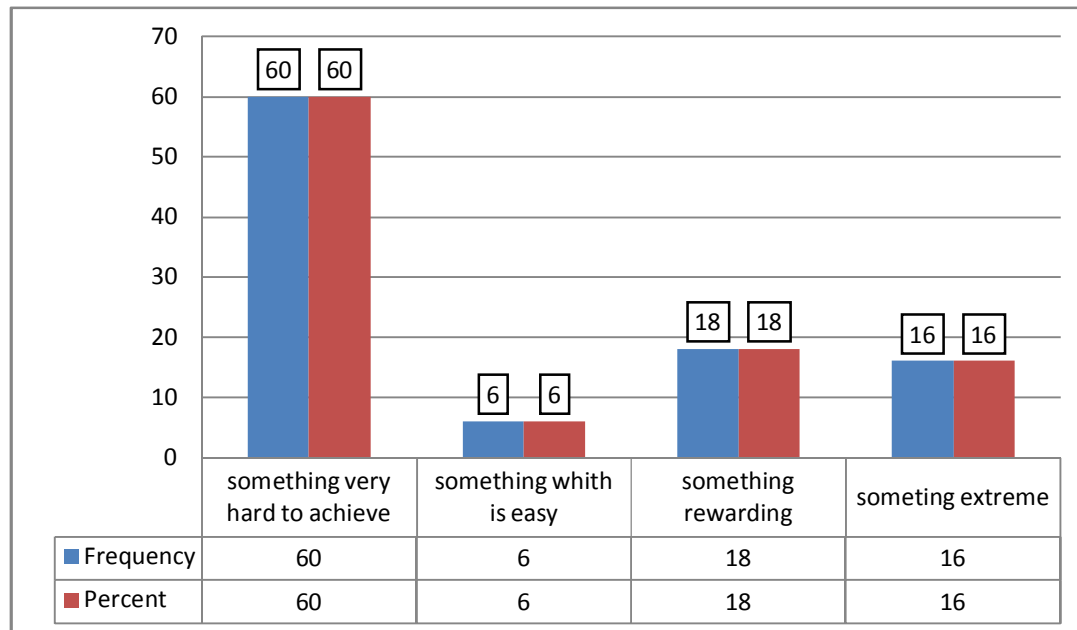


Table (7) illustrates the performance of the EFL Sudanese students with regard to comprehension of IEs. 60% of them were successful in selecting the right option. The anomalous collocation of the IE's items is clear. As a result the rest of the respondents who account for 40% from the total number failed in finding out the meaning. This is an obvious indication that IEs constitute a lot of difficulty to them.

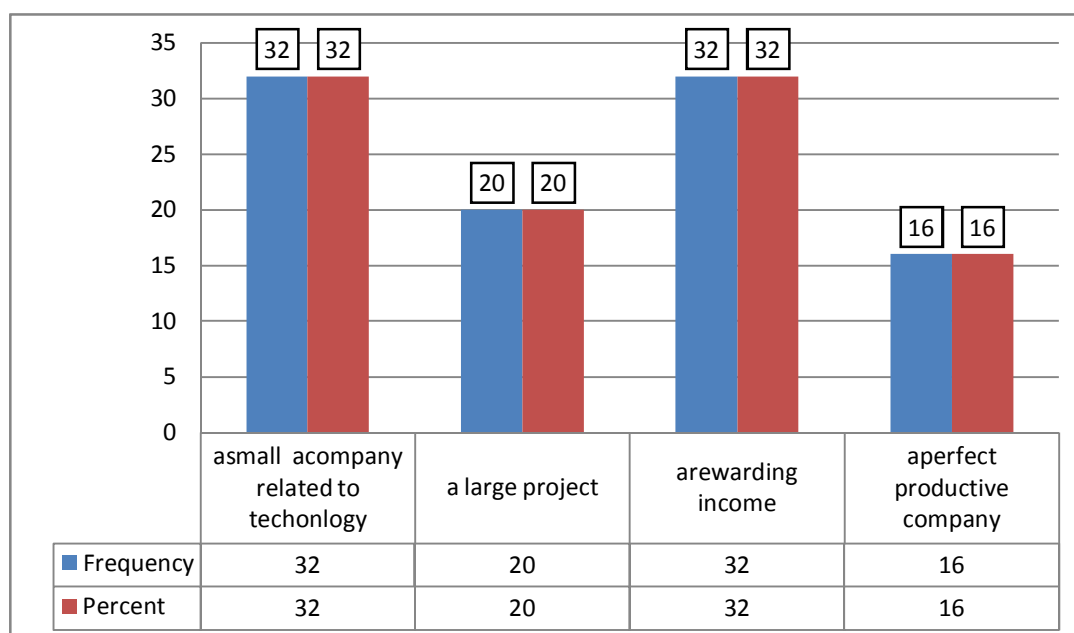
Even among the 60% right answers there may be some scored by chance. Anyhow, the antecedent sentence triggers a hint that stimulates predicting the right answer in this question. To clarify more, (left his job at a drop of hat) signals that the person will face some difficulties because he has to search for another job.

Table4.27:They founded a startup.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
A small company related to technology	32	32%

A large project	20	20%
A Rewarding income	32	32%
A Perfect productive company	16	16%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.27: They founded a startup.



This is the statistical result for investigating the problem of comprehending IEs encountered by Sudanese EFL undergraduates. Referring to the percentages a very handful number of the candidates scored right answers 32%. Shedding the light on distractors they all fit the right answer grammatically, but semantically they are not. The third distractor should have been eliminated easily by the respondents because of the fact that it is about an income only, which the talk about it often comes after finding a job.

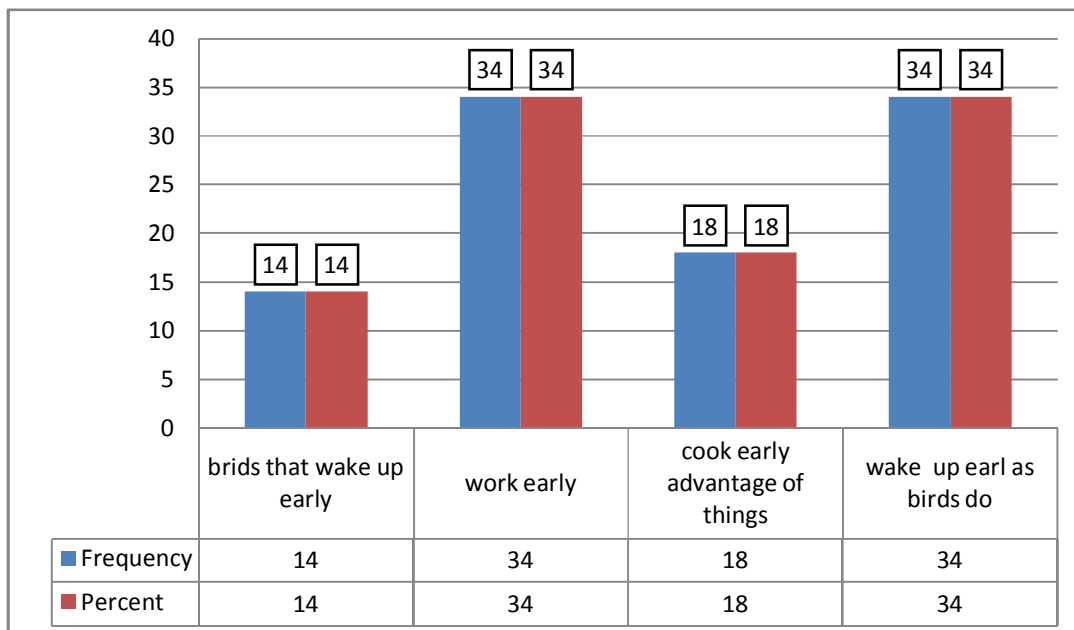
The other three options collocate both semantically and grammatically as right answers. However, IEs have different meaning which is totally different from the literal meaning, but the respondents were not given a chance to think about the

literal meaning of the IE (startup). Again it is clear that there is a downfall in students' comprehension and this can be as a result of non-compositionality which is an ultimate feature of IEs. In addition, these idiomaticity often betrays the literal meaning of IEs' items to a far extent. As a result a lot of participants were unable to comprehend the IE.

Table4.28:In other words, they were early birds.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Birds that wake up early	14	14%
Work early	34	34%
Took early advantage of things	18	18%
Wake up early as birds do	34	34%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.28:In other words, they were early birds.



Unfortunately, the result shown in table (9) has clearly indicated a dramatic decrease in students' comprehension. However, only 18% of the respondents understood the IE because of the fact that it is highly idiomatic in which its items do not give hint to the indented message that the user wants to convey. In terms of distractors the first and the last represent the literal meaning of the IEs and that is why 34% of the respondents chose it, believing that it is the right answer, but it is not. They succeeded in eliminating the first distractors because it is so far semantically to be related to the subjects of the sentence.

What is interesting is that the students thought about a reasonable answer which is represented in the second distractor (work early). The researcher expected this because it sounds logical.

Table4.29:They were willing to play things by ear.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
To improvise in a situation	37	37%
To play by your ear	16	16%
To cheat other company owners	11	11%
To take advantage of a situation	36	36%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.29:They were willing to play things by ear.

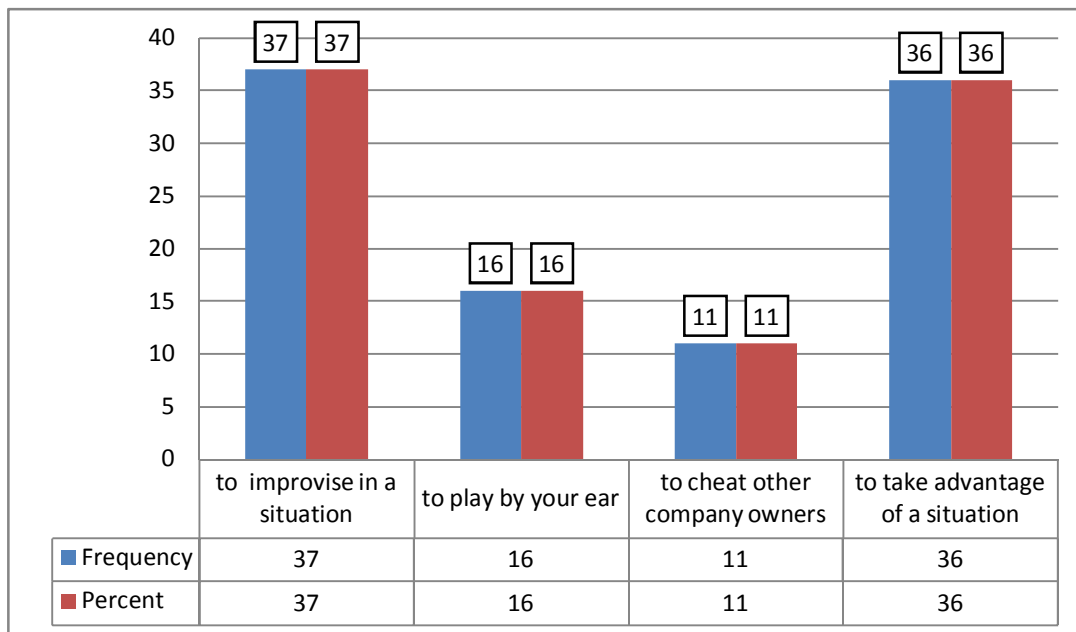


Table (10) shows that non-compositionality constitutes hurdle to EFL Sudanese undergraduates in comprehending IEs. This chronic problem lingered up with them since the first question result till now. Spotting the light on distractors on one of them has literal meaning of the IE (to play by your ear). The researcher expected that this distractor would be the last to be chosen because even it is an interpretation to the IE in a literal sense; it does not fit semantically at all.

In addition, the last distractor (to take advantage of a situation) is expected to be chosen by the respondents because it is so appealing and fitting semantically. So far, the researcher has mentioned that the correspondence between the source and target domains is always helpful in understanding some IEs, but in this case, it is not, because there is barely any correspondence between the action of controlling a meeting and the item of the IE’s meaning. Finally, all these obstacles constitute these difficulties for Sudanese EFL learners to comprehend these IEs. In sum, the overall performance of the participants is very weak and this indicates that they face many difficulties in comprehending, i.e. non-compositionality/

idiomaticity, syntactic fixedness. These answer question one of the study and further support the first hypothesis. The following is a summary of the whole percentages throughout question three, section [A]: 38%, 56%, 56%, 75%, 44%, 30%, 60%, 32%, 18%, and 37%

Q. 3: Section [B], fill in the blanks with the right option.

This question aims at reflecting Sudanese EFL learners’ ability to figuring out collocations in IEs. They are provided with literary content paragraph including incomplete IEs in order to complete them form a box which contains the completion of these IEs. The format of this question looks like the format of the first question in this test. The ten options that are given will reduce the chance of guessing the right answer. The performance of the candidates is predicted by the researcher to be high, because of the fact that there is word/s that assists in completion.

Table4.30:Of course their company succeeded; the reason behind this is that they agreed not to.....bean.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Spill the	51	51%
Got the jump	10	10%
Cats	05	05%
Troubled waters	05	05%
Steam a head	04	04%
Hard bargains	02	02%
And bounds	04	04%
Kept their ears	03	03%
Stumbling blocks	06	06%
The bucket	10	10%
Total	100	100%

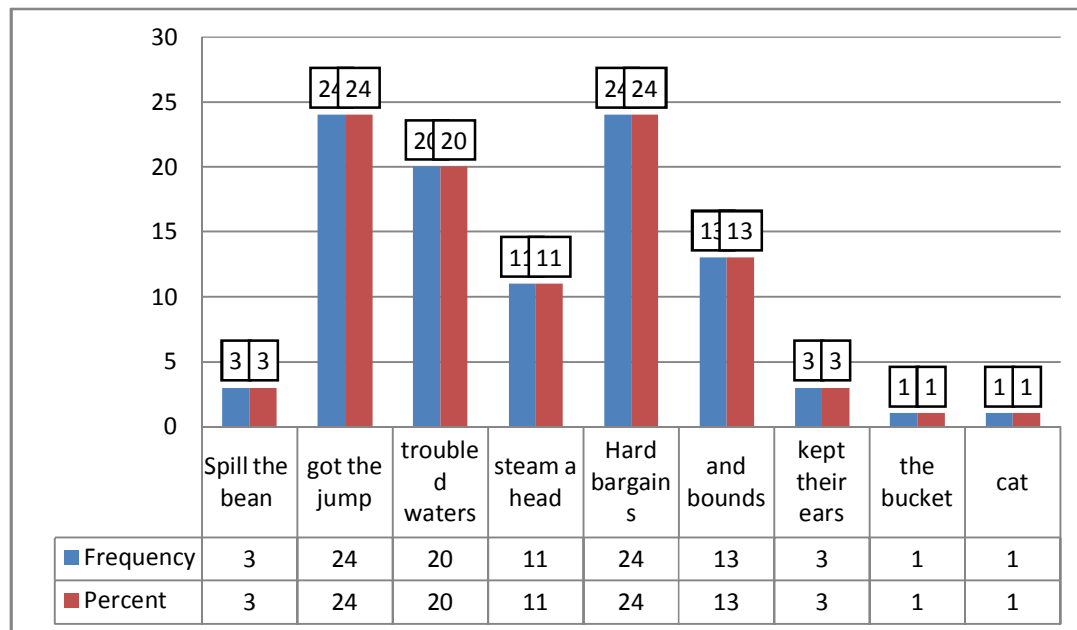
Figure 4.30:Of course their company succeeded; the reason behind this is that they agreed not to.....bean.

The achievement of the student in figuring out the suitable collocation for this IE is low. Only 51% of the respondents were successful. However, the researcher expected that more than this few number of participants will be able to find the suitable match. Another reason for this anticipation is that this IE (spill the bean) is a frequent IE. Beside this the existence of the preposition (to) gives indication that the next word should be a verb and the students encountered this IE before in other paragraphs. There is no distractor that scored a realizable percentage.

Table 4.31:Theyto the ground.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Spill the	03	03%
Got the jump	24	24%
Cats	20	20%
Troubled waters	11	11%
Steam a head	20	20%
Hard bargains	13	13%
And bounds	03	03%
Kept their ears	03	03%
Stumbling blocks	01	01%
The bucket	04	04%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.31:Theyto the ground.



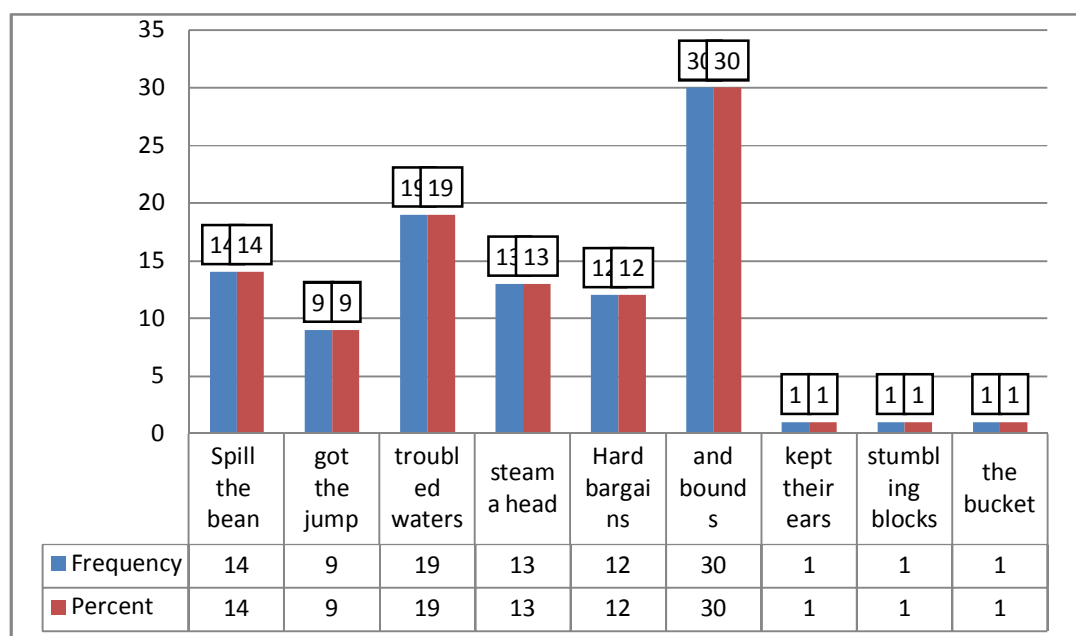
The statistical indicator shows that surprisingly almost all of the participants fail to find out the right collocation, 3% only. It is clear that the students labeled two distractors equally as suitable completion (go the jump 24%and hard bargains 24%). In terms of grammatical suitability the first one is matching but the second is not, because after the subject (they) there should be a verb.

Table4.32: Moved full

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Spill the bean	14	14%
Got the jump	09	09%
Troubled waters	10	10%
Steam a head	13	13%
Hard bargains	12	12%
And bounds	30	30%
kept their ears	01	01%

Stumbling blocks	01	01%
The bucket	01	01%
Cat	09	09%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.32: Moved full



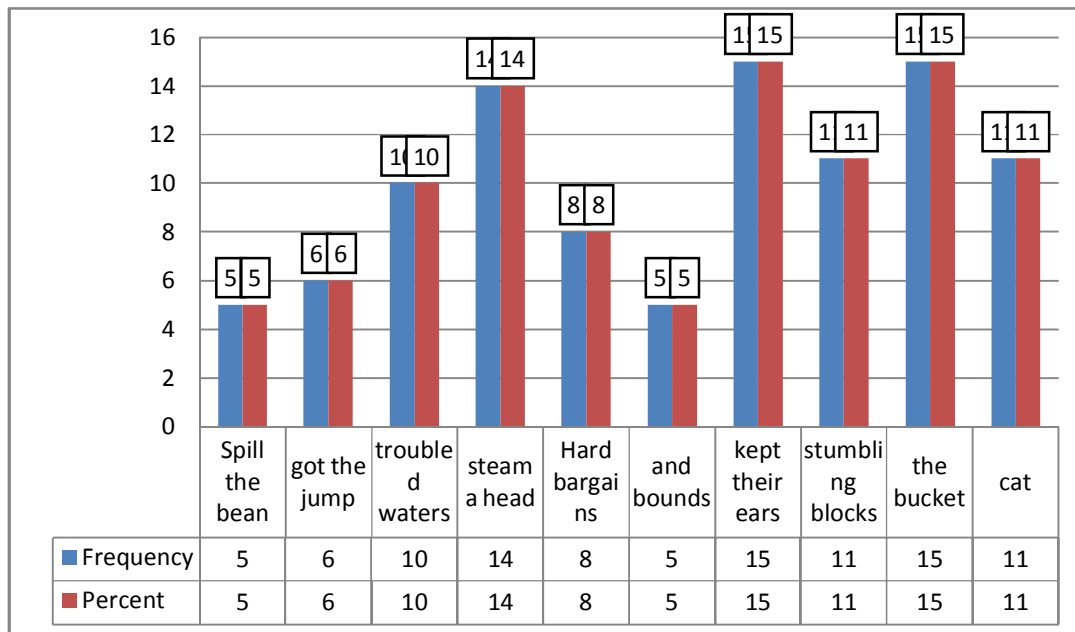
Not far from the previous result the statistical indicator revealed that the problem of understanding collocations by Sudanese EFL learners is lingering up. However, it sounds reasonable that those learners find it difficult to deal with IEs with regard to non-compositionality and grammatical and syntactic fixedness. For this reason only 13% of the respondents were able to find out the right collocational option. Despite the fact that the sixth distractor was wrong it scored the higher percentage even though grammatically it does not match well.

Table4.33: And drove

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Spill the bean	5	5%
Got the jump	06	06%

Troubled waters	10	10%
Steam a head	14	14%
Hard bargains	08	08%
And bounds	05	05%
Kept their ears	15	15%
Stumbling blocks	11	11%
The bucket	15	15%
Cat	11	11%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.33: And drove

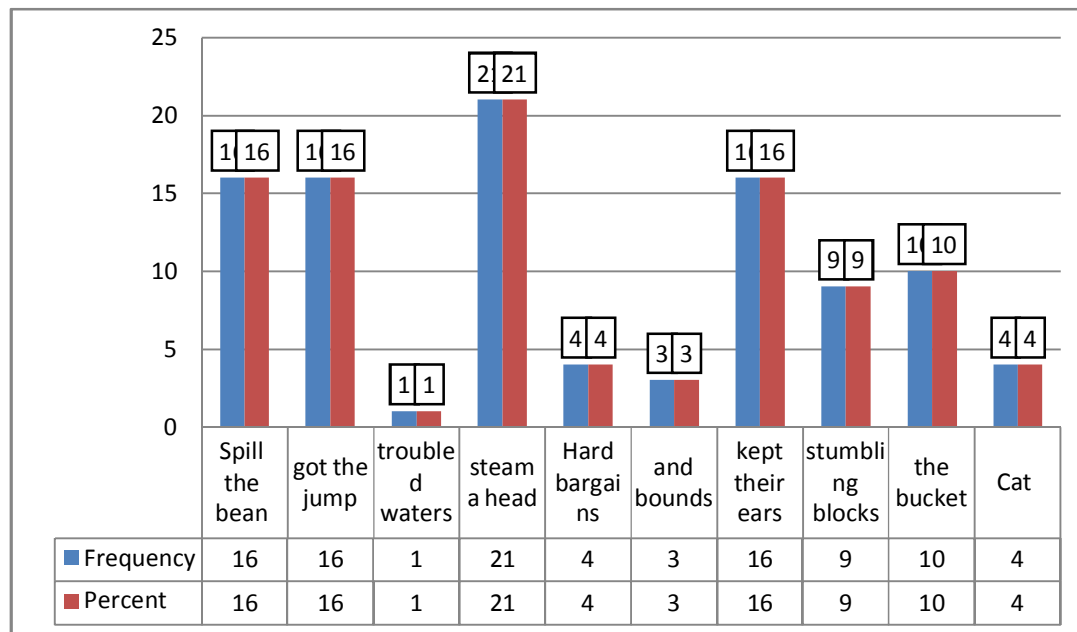


In this stem the candidates seem to be completely unable to discern between what is matching and what is not. This information is generated from the statistical calculation, as the percentages are not so different. However, 15% was set equally by the respondents to the phrases (kept their ears and the bucket) even though that they are fallacious. In terms of grammatical suitability both of them are not suitable at all. The sentence that should be completed is (and drove...) this eliminates the former option, because two verbs cannot be placed in one place. While for the later, grammatically it is right but semantically is erroneous.

Table 4.34: Soon, their business was growing by leaps

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Spill the bean	16	16%
Got the jump	16	16%
Troubled waters	01	01%
Steam a head	21	21%
Hard bargains	04	04%
And bounds	03	03%
kept their ears	16	16%
Stumbling blocks	09	09%
The bucket	10	10%
Cat	04	04%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.34: Soon, their business was growing by leaps



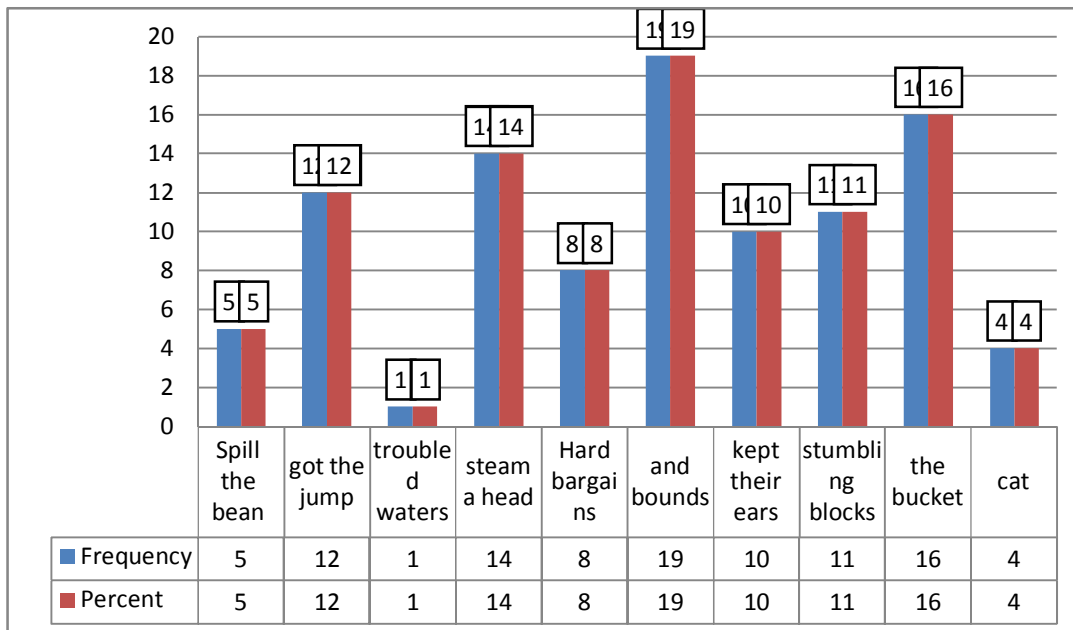
The performance of the students decreased sharply to only 3% according to the statistical indicator. To account for this, first, the IE is novice for the students and has an unusual collocation that cannot be comprehended by non-experts, i.e. Sudanese EFL learning. However, the largest proportion was devoted to the forth

distractor as indicated in the table and the bar-chart. Grammatically, the option is not suitable at all, because already there is a noun in the stem of the sentence provided and this IE also starts by noun, so this is redundant.

Table4.35: Of course they had somealong the way.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Spill the bean	05	05%
Got the jump	12	12%
Troubled waters	01	01%
Steam a head	14	14%
Hard bargains	08	08%
And bounds	19	19%
Kept their ears	10	10%
Stumbling blocks	11	11%
The bucket	16	16%
Cat	04	04%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.35: Of course they had somealong the way.

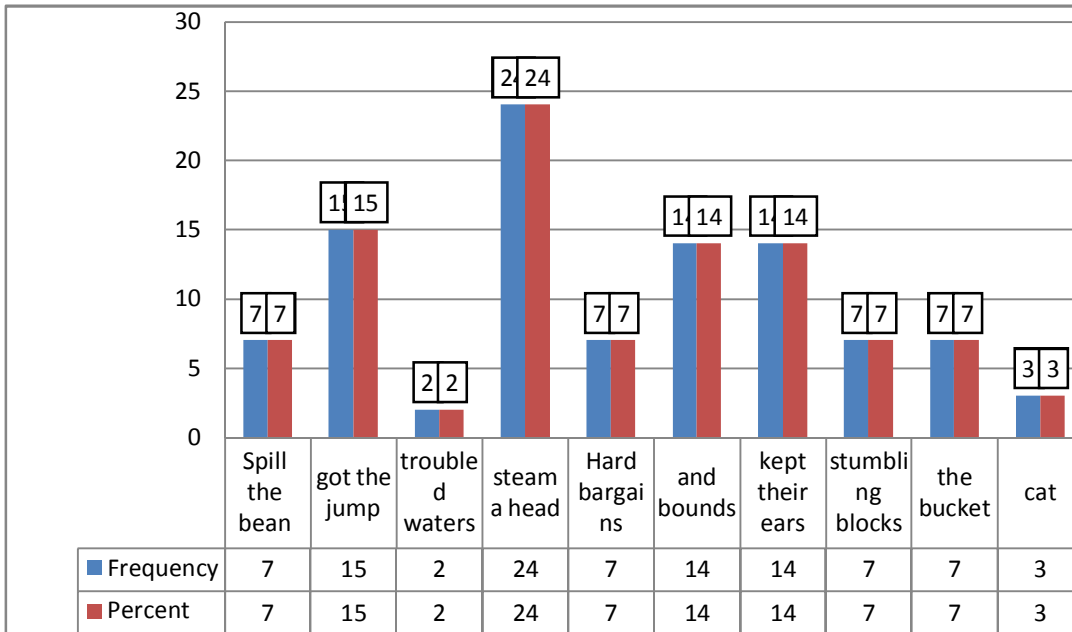


The statistical information provided in this bar-chart reveals that the majority of the students exactly 89% failed to match the contextualized IE to its completing part. The suitable completion for this IE is whether a phrase that starts with a noun or adjective. By this way a lot of distractors can be easily eliminated and this give the students a good chance to figure out the right match.

Table4.36:Who does not? Still theyon the competition and by the year 2018, they were multi-millionaires.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Spill the bean	07	07%
Got the jump	15	15%
Troubled waters	02	02%
Steam a head	24	24%
Hard bargains	07	07%
And bounds	14	14%
Kept their ears	14	14%
Stumbling blocks	07	07%
The bucket	07	07%
Cat	03	03%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.36: Who does not? Still theyon the competition and by the year 2018, they were multi-millionaires.



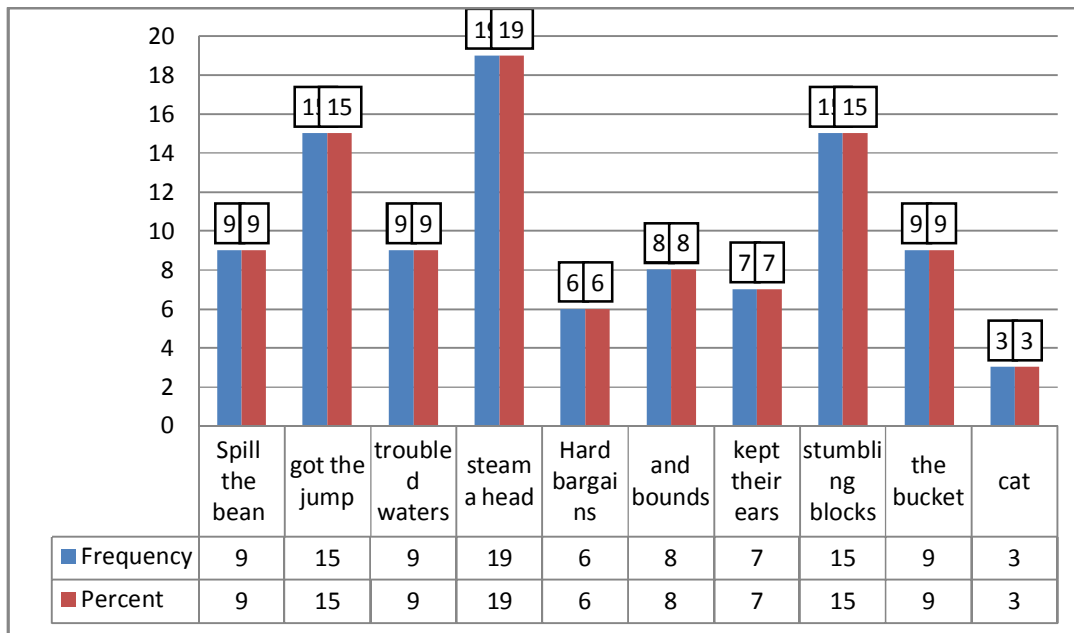
Just like all of the pervious statistical calculation the performance is low. However, the right completion in this space is a complete IE and not just a part that completes another. It is highly idiomatic as well as has unusual collocation. This is why almost all of the students faced difficulties in placing the IE in the right place that fit semantically and grammatically.

Table4.37:This sort of success for the young and they now have copy.....around the world.

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Spill the bean	09	09%
Got the jump	15	15%
Troubled waters	09	09%
Steam a head	19	19%
Hard bargains	06	06%
And bounds	08	08%
kept their ears	07	07%
Stumbling blocks	15	15%

The bucket	09	09%
Cat	03	03%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.37:This sort of success for the young and they now have copy.....around the world.



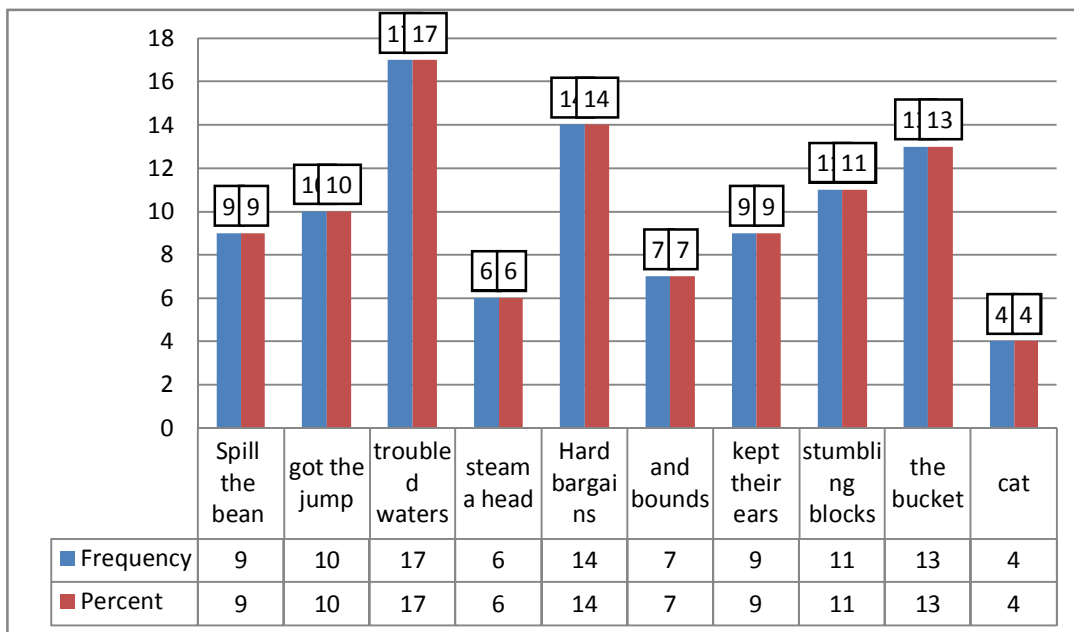
The percentages shown in the table and the bar-chart reveal that only 3% of the respondents scored well. While, 97% strayed by the rest of completing parts provided in the box. However, the researcher thought that the result will be contrary to this, because this is not the first time for this IE to appear, but in terms of non-compositionality and collocational fixedness it is reasonable account. Unless the ability of dealing with IEs is strengthened by a lot of exposure to them in various texts the students will not be able to comprehend them.

Table4.38: Whenever, argument occurs between the employees, those admins are always ready to pour oil on

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Spill the bean	09	09%
Got the jump	10	10%

Troubled waters	17	17%
Steam a head	06	06%
Hard bargains	14	14%
And bounds	07	07%
Kept their ears	09	09%
Stumbling blocks	11	11%
The bucket	13	13%
Cat	04	04%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.38: Whenever, argument occurs between the employees, those admins are always ready to pour oil on



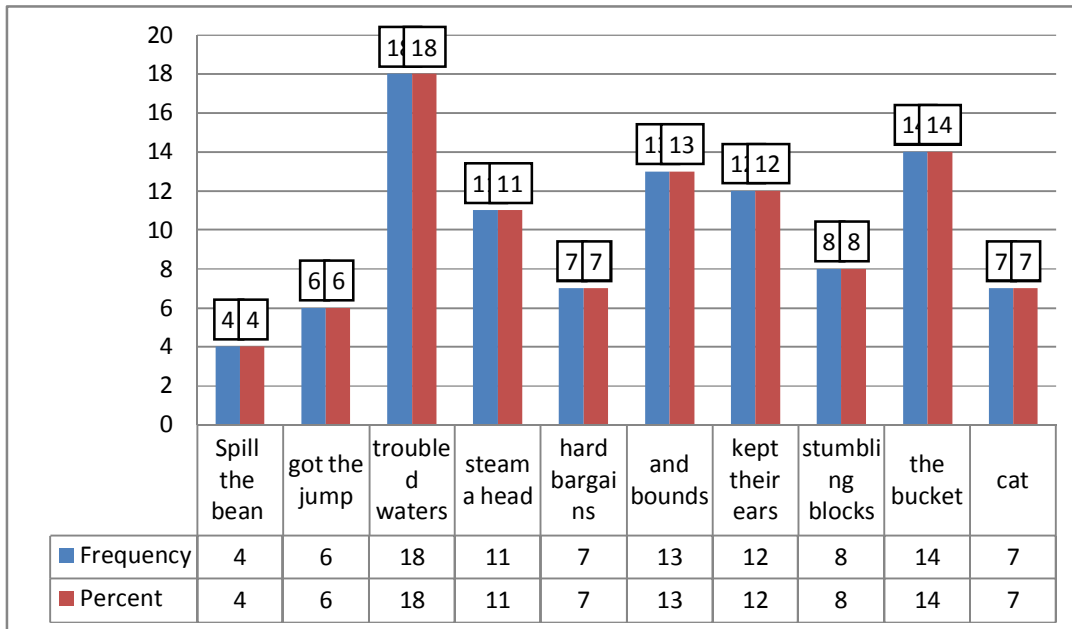
The table and the bar-chart show that 17% of the students succeeded, while 8% failed in doing so. However, this result is reasonable comparatively with the antecedent questions where the some distractors win higher percentages than even

the right answer. From the researcher’s point of view, the participants are expected to discern the right answer easily because of the fact that there is relationship between the stems of the IE. Furthermore, the verb (pour) in the stem of the IE in the paragraph helps a lot in completing it. There is a correspondence of mapping between the source and target domains. The source domain is the action of pouring oil in boiling water; the result is that it will culminate. The overall meaning of the IE is stimulated by (whenever argument occurs between the employees) which is present in the sentence where this IE is located.

Table4.39:Unfortunately in an expected accident, they both kicked

Distractors	Frequency	Percentages
Spill the bean	04	04%
Got the jump	06	06%
Troubled waters	18	18%
Steam a head	11	11%
Hard bargains	07	07%
And bounds	13	13%
Kept their ears	12	12%
Stumbling blocks	08	08%
The bucket	14	14%
Cat	07	07%
Total	100	100%

Figure 4.39: Unfortunately in an expected accident, they both kicked



Even though this IE is characterized by a high level of frequency only 14% of the participants scored well. The IE starts with the verb (kicked) which should be followed by a noun/noun phrase. So the following options can be labeled suitable grammatically (troubled water, steam ahead, hard bargains, stumbling blocks, cat). However, the semantic suitability assists a lot in eliminating a lot of these options. So far, the researcher explained that IEs are characterized by anomalous collocation. Bearing this in mind, Sudanese EFL learners hopeful will be able to collocate IEs in the right way. Finally, an account for why the majority of the students fail in figuring out right options is that they think that there should be a logical relationship between the items of the IEs and this is erroneous.

To put it in a nut shell, the overall performance of the Sudanese EFL learners throughout this question which aims at assessing those students' collocational ability (semantic and syntactic fixedness) with regard to IEs is very low. The reason behind this is that these IEs are characterized by anomalous

collocation which is hard to non-experts like Sudanese EFL learners to comprehend. However, this strange collocation can be helpful in terms of recognizing IEs. This answers question one, with reference to (semantic and syntactic fixedness) and further support hypothesis one as well. To clarify more, these are the percentages that have been scored by Sudanese EFL learners throughout this question: 51%, 3%, 13%, 8%, 3%, 11%, 15%, 3%, 17%, and 14%

Shedding the light on question two of the research, (To what extent do IEs constitute hurdles to Sudanese EFL undergraduates in comprehending English literary texts?) and the second hypothesis, (IEs seem to constitute hurdles to Sudanese EFL undergraduates in understanding English literary texts to a large extent.); the overall performance of Sudanese EFL undergraduates was significantly low. So IEs constitutes hurdles to those students to a large extent and this comes in line with this hypothesis.

The students' questionnaire aims at assessing the students' theoretical knowledge of IEs. The first and the second statements are about non-compositionality and fixedness in MWEs. While the third and the fourth ones are about collocations and the non-literal meaning in IEs specifically. The importance of having adequate vocabulary knowledge and dealing with IEs as single inseparable chunks are investigated in the fifth and the sixth statements. The seventh and the eighth ones are about the grammatical and syntactic fixedness in IEs. The investigations of the strategies that L2 learners use to comprehend MWEs are represented in the rest of the statements of the questionnaire.

Table4.40: Descriptive statistics and calculation obtained from the students' questionnaire.

Statements	Agree	Strongly Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly Disagree
	Percentages	Percentages	Percentages	Percentages	Percentage s
1. The majority of Multi - word expressions (MWEs) have direct meaning.	25%	16%	18%	33%	8%
2. Idioms as a part of MWEs are characterized by a kind of strong fixedness which means all of the words in the expression should be dealt with as one unit.	39%	25%	17%	7%	12%
3. Understanding how idiomatic items collocate together helps in working out their meaning.	43%	23%	05%	17%	12%
4. Idioms always almost have a compositional meaning which means you can understand them if you know the dictionary meaning of the words used in the IE.	34%	21%	27%	6%	12%
5. Having an adequate knowledge about how single words are connected together to formulate MWEs is essential to comprehend them.	32%	31%	24%	6%	7%
6. You can easily replace a noun with a pronoun in an IE, e.g. instead of X kicked the bucket, you can say X kicked it.	27%	8%	25%	28%	12%
7. The same previous instance can be passivized; i.e the bucket has been kicked.	23%	14%	17%	25%	21%
8. A noun in an (IE) can be replaced by another one, e.g. you can take a horse to	34%	29%	16%	10%	10%

water but you can't make it drink. Instead of the noun (horse) we can use the noun (camel).					
9. When you encounter an IE in a text you find out its meaning by guessing.	39%	24%	25%	5%	7%
10. You use some strategies to comprehend IEs e.g. imagery.	30%	20%	31%	11%	8%
11. Another interesting strategy that you often use to understand MWEs is (relating) which means you related IEs to the overall meaning of the text where they are used.	34%	28%	25%	3%	10%
12. Sometimes you use mnemonics to memorize IEs, for instance, the word mnemonics itself should be remembered by keeping in mind that it starts with a silent letter (M).	23%	25%	23%	14%	15%
13. When you encounter an IE you often relate it to the one that is found in your native language.	31%	19%	34%	8%	8%
14. You often try to find something distinguishable in IEs to help you memorize them.	42%	30%	11%	4%	13%
15. The literal meaning (dictionary meaning) of MWEs is vital in comprehending them.	22%	8%	34%	20%	16%

Regarding the first statement, (The majority of Idiomatic Expressions (IEs) have direct meaning.), 25% agreed that IEs have direct meaning and 16% strongly agreed. However, as it has been discussed in chapter two that the majority of English language linguists believe that IEs have an opaque meaning which cannot be decoded by non-experts. Since the students believe on a fallacious view about IEs their performance in the test was very low. This proves that there is correlation between the wrong ideas that they believe on and the downfall in their achievement throughout the test. On the other hand, 33% of the respondents disagreed with the

statement and 8% strongly disagreed. This point of view has been proved by many linguists that non-compositionality is the inextricably intertwined with IEs.

Shedding the light on the second and the third statements, (Idioms as a part of MWEs are characterized by a kind of strong fixedness which means all of the words in the expression should be dealt with as one unit.) 39% of the participants agreed and 25% strongly agreed with the statement. In the third statement (understanding how IEs collocate together helps in working out their meaning) 17% disagreed and 12% strongly disagreed with the statement. From the researcher's point of view, understanding how IEs collocate is important to recognize and comprehend them. It is true that IEs are characterized by weak or strong fixedness semantic or syntactic. This positive view of point accounts for the good performance of the students with reference to the last question in the test which is about collocation.

Statement four, (Idioms always almost have a compositional meaning which means you can understand them if you know the dictionary meaning of the words used in the IE.) 34% of the candidates agreed and 21% strongly agreed with the statement. Contrary to this fallacious view, IEs are characterized by what is so called non-compositionality, non-literal meaning or opaque meaning as many linguists agreed with in chapter two. As a result of holding this erroneous believes the students' performance throughout the test was significantly low. Most importantly, this statement is a paraphrase of the first statement in this questionnaire. The researcher has done this in order to find out whether there is consistency in students' responses or not. Fortunately, there is rapprochement in percentages between the two statements and this proves that there is consistency in student's responses.

In statement five (Having an adequate knowledge about how single words are connected together to formulate MWEs is essential to comprehend them.) which is about the importance of obtaining adequate knowledge about the formulation of IE, 63% is the total of those who strongly/agree and 13% for those who strongly/disagree. These percentages view that the students hold positive attitudes about the theoretical side of IEs.

Statement six (You can easily replace a noun with a pronoun in an IE, e.g. instead of X kicked the bucket, you can say X kicked it.) which is about semantic fixedness in IEs, 35% is the number of those who strongly/agreed with the statement. However, this is wrong. IEs are characterized by semantic fixedness which means that the content words cannot be replaced by even another synonymous one. Furthermore, any alternation in one of the content words in the IE will falsify it and as a result it will miss its idiomaticity.

Putting statement seven (The same previous instance can be passivized; i.e. the bucket has been kicked.) into consideration, a significant number of participants, 37% strongly/agreed with this view. However, this is not true because of the fact that IEs are not characterized by a semantic fixedness only but syntactic fixedness as well. If IEs are passivized as in the stem of the statement, it will lose its idiomaticity. Therefore, they should be dealt with in their original form without any alternation, except in terms of tenses consistency.

The statistical calculation of statement eight (A noun in an (IE) can be replaced by another one, e.g. you can take a horse to water but you can't make it drink. Instead of the noun (horse) we can use the noun (camel).), indicated that a significant number of students 63% have negative views about dealing with IEs. They are always featured by strong collocation that permits no alternation at all.

The rest of the statements are concerned with the strategies that Sudanese EFL learners use to decode IEs. Statement nine (When you encounter an IE in a text you find out its meaning by guessing.) is about using guessing to infer meaning of IEs from the context where they are located. As the researcher expected a huge number of participants use this strategy infer meaning of IEs from context, exactly 63% assured that they use guessing to comprehend IEs. Moreover, this is clear from their performance in the test. So this is a signal for the existence of a mutual relationship between their theoretical knowledge and the practical side which is their performance in the test.

Statement ten (You use some strategies to comprehend IEs e.g. imagery.) is about the use of Imagery as a strategy for comprehending IEs. Since this term is hypothetically unknown for Sudanese EFL undergraduates, the researcher explained it to them orally so that they become able to elicit their view in an accurate manner. Although exactly half of the participants indicated that they use this strategy for comprehending IEs, their performance was poor in the test. From the researcher's point of view the students often try to create a correspondence of mapping between the source domain of the IEs and the target domain to infer non-compositional meaning.

Shedding the light on statement eleven (Another interesting strategy that you often use to understand MWEs is (relating) which means you related IEs to the overall meaning of the text where they are used.). Although 62% of the respondents stated that they use this strategy in comprehending IEs it was not useful and what proves this is their poor performance in the test. However, this strategy can be enhanced by lecturers after exposing the students to a lot of IEs so that they hone their skills in comprehending IEs.

With reference to the twelfth statement (Sometimes you use mnemonics to memorize IEs, for instance, the word mnemonics itself should be remembered by keeping in mind that it starts with a silent letter (M).), 48% of the students agreed that they use Mnemonics as a strategy to memorize IEs. However, it is perfect to know some IEs and memorize them as a stock, so that whenever they are encountered it will be easy to deal with them. Furthermore, this will pave the way for comprehending other new IEs. From the researcher's point of view memorization comes after recognition, comprehension using some strategies then memorization come last.

Statement thirteen when you encounter an IE you often relate it to the one that is found in your native language.), exactly half of the respondents agreed with this view. It is important to relate English language IEs to the IEs in students' native language with regard to cultural difference. This is helpful in some ways, because of the fact that the correspondence of mapping between the source and target domains will facilitate comprehension.

Putting the pre-final statement (You often try to find something distinguishable in IEs to help you memorize them.) in consideration, the statistical calculation indicated that 72% of the participants in line with this view. This statement is a paraphrasing of statement twelve which is about mnemonics, in order to test consistency in the students' responses. There is difference in terms of percentages in the two views.

With regard to the final statement (The literal meaning (dictionary meaning) of MWEs is vital in comprehending them.) 30% of the participants agreed that the literal meaning of the individual words in IEs is vital. Contrary to this, lots of linguists believe that the literal meaning of items in IEs is ambiguous. Therefore,

the students who believe in the view that this literal meaning is essential in comprehending IEs will misunderstand them. So far, IEs known to have non-compositional meaning which is hard for non-expert such as Sudanese EFL learners to decode.

Referring to the last question of the research (What are the adequate word knowledge and vocabulary learning strategies do Sudanese undergraduates should have to meet the proficiency needed in comprehending English literary texts? And the last research hypothesis (Imagery, mnemonics and inference are some of the word knowledge and vocabulary learning strategies that Sudanese EFL undergraduates do not know to comprehend IEs in literary texts.); it appeared throughout the previous data analysis and discussion collected by the questionnaire that the students do use some strategies. They are imagery 50%, mnemonics 48% and inferring 63%. Moreover, there is correlation between Sudanese EFL learners' theoretical knowledge and their performance in the test. To clarify more, the questionnaire has proved that those students hold poor theoretical knowledge or fallacious views that affected their comprehension with regard to IEs in literary texts. According to the researcher who carried out the analysis, Sudanese EFL undergraduate tend to infer meaning of IEs from context frequently because of the fact that they succeed in finding out the right answers when they are provided by enough hints and the vice versa. This information answers the last question in this study and validates its hypothesis.

4.3 Verification of the Study Hypotheses

With reference to the first hypothesis which is “Idiomaticity, fixedness, institutionalization and non-compositionality are some of the factors behind the difficulties that EFL learners encounter in comprehending English language

literary texts.” It has confirmed according to the data obtain the statistical analysis on page (90).

Shedding the light on the second hypothesis, it states that, IEs constitute hurdles to Sudanese EFL undergraduates in understanding English literary texts to a large extent. This hypothesis is confirmed true because of the fact that Sudanese EFL undergraduates’ performance on both the test and the questionnaire was so weak. This has been based on the data obtained throughout the test.

The last hypothesis states that recognition, mnemonics and contextualization are some of the word knowledge and vocabulary learning strategies that EFL learners do not know to comprehend IEs in literary texts. Based on the results of the questionnaire it appeared crystal clear that only handful number of Sudanese EFL undergraduates uses some strategies to comprehend IEs in literary texts and table (4.40) shows this.

4.4 Summary of the Chapter

The data that has been collected is analysis in the light of data and result obtained. This includes both the test and the students’ questionnaire. The study hypotheses have been verified and tested as well.

Chapter Five

Main Findings, Conclusions,
Recommendations and
Suggestions for Further
Studies

Chapter Five

Main Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestion for Further Studies

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a short summary of the study, main findings, recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

5.2 Main Findings of the Study

After the analysis has been carried out, the study has come up with the following findings:

1. Non-compositionality or in other words non-literal meaning has been described as one of the inseparable feature of IEs, this study has proved that this feature constitutes hurdle in comprehending IEs encountered by Sudanese EFL undergraduates.
2. Shedding the light on what is so called fixedness in IEs which is divided into semantic and syntactic fixedness; it has been proved that it is problematic to Sudanese EFL undergraduates
3. With reference to the extent of the escalating problem of comprehending IE by Sudanese EFL learners, the researcher found out that IEs constitute a lot of difficulties to Sudanese EFL undergraduates to a large extent. Throughout the four main questions in the test, the comprehension of Sudanese EFL undergraduates was significantly weak.

5.3 Conclusions

The research investigated the problem of understanding IEs which is encountered by Sudanese EFL undergraduates with special reference to literary texts. In order to investigate this problem the researcher has utilized a test and a questionnaire. To collect authentic data, a representative sample has been collected from three universities with various percentages, namely: Sudan university of Science and Technology 40%, Omdurman Islamic University 40% and Ahfad University for Women 20%. In conclusion, the overwhelming majority of those students are weak in decoding MWEs in literary texts. Furthermore, a great number of them do not utilize any strategy for comprehending IEs with reference to literary texts. These IEs constitute hurdle for them in understanding English literary texts.

5.4 Recommendations

In order to overcome the problem of understanding idiomatic expressions IEs in literary texts, this study postulates these recommendations. They are based on the findings and conclusions. Furthermore, they aim at enhancing EFL Sudanese Undergraduates' understanding of IEs.

1. There should be a course about the nature of IEs designed to be taught in line with literature courses. If there are no enough credit hours, some chapters about IEs can be included within literary courses.
2. Lecturers have to inform EFL Sudanese undergraduates about the importance of having good knowledge of IE, since they are inseparable from many English language texts.

3. There should be a continuous follow up and assessment to these taught course of IEs. Quizzes and competitions between students have to be encouraged.
4. Sudanese EFL undergraduates have to use some vocabulary learning strategies to help them in comprehending and remembering IEs in literary texts, for instance Mnemonics.
5. As practice makes perfection, Sudanese undergraduates should be motivated by teachers to use IEs in the two productive skills writings and speaking. This will enhance their ability to understand IE in the other two receptive skills.
6. Teacher should assign some search tasks to the students, e.g. students have to pick up IEs from films or songs. This will contribute to the enhancement of the students' comprehension from one side and the improvement of receptive skills from the other side.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Due to some factors the researcher limited the population of the study to Sudanese universities located at Khartoum. However, in order to draw a holistic picture about the problems that Sudanese EFL undergraduates encounter, researchers can extend their futuristic researches' population to other states around Sudan. This will reveal other insights that were not discovered by limited studies.
2. This study has focused on some of the factors that affect Sudanese EFL learners' comprehension of IEs in literary texts certainly: non-

compositionality, grammatical/semantic fixedness and collocations.

Therefore, other researchers can conduct further studies in the other factors that affect Sudanese EFL learners' understanding of IEs. This will enable researchers to gain deep insights into the ways that can be used to improve IEs comprehension.

3. Some IEs are inextricably intertwined with culture. So, there should be additional researches on cultural diversity. Moreover, having a historical background about English language is also essential. For instance, the IE (X has blue blood) is definitely related the aristocrats' ruling history. To clarify more, they kept themselves away from hard works until their blue veins appeared under their skin and accordingly people of that time believed that those aristocrats have (blue blood).
4. This study addressed the problem of comprehending IEs from three angles namely: non-compositionality, semantic and grammatical fixedness. Therefore, other researchers can deal with the same problem from other angles, for instance, ideational meaning in IEs.

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Appendices

Appendices

Appendix [A]

Sudan University of Science and Technology

College of Graduate Studies

College of Languages

Department of English Language and Linguistics

Test

By: Mohammed Suliman Abdulrahman

Candidates: (Undergraduates, Level: Four), Sudan University of Science and Technology, Omdurman Islamic University and Ahfad University for Women

Dear candidates,

This questionnaire is a part of a PhD. degree in applied linguistics which is entitled “An Investigation into the Problem of Understanding Multi-Word-Expression Encountered by Sudanese Undergraduates with Special Reference to Literary Texts”.

Of course the researcher would be very delighted and thankful if you would respond to this questionnaire accurately and faithfully. I am hereby to certify that this collected information will definitely remain highly confidential, and it will be used for the purpose of this study only and nothing else.

Pie in the sky – by leaps and bounds – startup – play the meeting by the ear – drove a hard bargain – copycat – full steam ahead / sink or swim – fits the bill- spilled the bean

Q. 1: Fill in the blanks with the right idiomatic expression from the box above that fits semantically and grammatically.

1. I think Peter.....He is perfect for the job.
2. It is on the project. We have no time to waste.
3. Don't pretend you're like Kevin. Nobody likes a.....
4. The business person, but we had to accept here offer.
5. I think it is best tothe meeting.....We need to consider everything.
6. He founded ain 2008 and made millions.
7. Our business has grown..... We are very happy.
8. I am afraid, I think that idea is It will never work.
9. Because he knew all the secrets he

Q. 2: Choose the right option that appeals to the meaning of the bolded and underlined part of these sentences.

1. **Once in a blue moon**, the blue jay (a noisy, brightly colored bird) can be seen in these parts of the forest.
 - a. Rarely
 - b. Immediately
 - c. Always
 - d. Strangely

2. Immediately after the meeting was over, the wicked man **spilled the bean**.
- a. Revealed the secret b. Cheated c. Told the truth d. Betrayed
3. After the old man has been taken to the hospital, **he kicked the bucket**.
- a. Recovered b. Died c. Did a surgery d. Spilled the water
4. His laziness made him miss his flight to the UK. The next ticket **cost** him **an arm and a leg**. This means the ticket was....
- a. Cheap b. Expensive c. First class d. Second class
5. Since I wasn't aware of the details, I decided to **sit on the fence** during the argument between them.
- a. To help b. To interfere c. To remain neutral d. To stay over the fence
6. Her creepy encounter with the supernatural had a devastating effect on her. She is now **afraid of her own shadow**. This means to become easily;
- a. Convinced b. Cheated c. Frightened d. Brainwashed
7. Now that she had **left the cat out of the bag**, she had no option but to confess.
- a. Revealed the secret b. released the cat
- c. Told the truth d. let the cat go out
8. I am always stuck **pouring oil on troubled waters** when my mother and wife start their bickering (argument). This means to make;
- a. Troubles b. Complicated scenes c. Fabrication d. Peace
9. The textbook Development Committee decided **to put** the 30 page chapter **ina nutshell** to help save time for students during revision. This means to make something;
- a. Mysterious b. Suitable c. Hard d. Concise

10. I **heard it on grapevine** that he had stiffed an old man asking for his pension. To hear the information as;

- a. News b. Ancient tales c. Fake news d. Rumors

Q. 3: Section [A], read the following paragraph thoroughly and choose the right option accordingly.

I have got a young friend he's only twenty five, but he fits the bill [1] perfectly. He is single and he is handsome. He is willing to start from scratch[2] and, best of all, he is not afraid of putting his nose to the grindstone[3] for those eighty hour weeks. He decided to take the bull by the horns[4] by going starting up his own business. He found a software developer who knew the internet inside out[5]. This young man was also very ambitious. He left his safe job at the drop of a hat[6]. They were both reaching for pie the sky[7] and they were ready. They also were lucky. They founded a startup [8] and got into the whole social networking business in 2002. In other words, they were early birds [9] and they were willing to play things by ear[10].

1. He fits the bill.

- a. has the right characteristics b. has enough cash
c. has good interaction d. very attractive

2. He is willing to start from scratch

- a. To start from the beginning b. to start immediately
c. to start from the last point d. to start with enthusiasm

3. he is not afraid of putting his nose to the grindstone

- a. Pay attention to rumors b. he does not afraid of death

c. to be courageous d. to face difficulties

4. He decided to take the bull by the horns

a. To face a problem and deal with it b. get rid of problems

c. to culminate the bull d. to take hold of the bull's horns

5. He found a software developer who knew the internet inside out

a. To have expert knowledge b. to know some information

c. to surf all websites d. to gain some secrets about the internet

6. He left his safe job at the drop of a hat

a. immediately b. instantly

c. angrily d. delightfully

7. They were both reaching for pie the sky

a. Something very hard to achieve b. something which is easy

c. something rewarding d. something extreme

8. They founded a startup

a. a small company usually related to technology b. a large project

c. a rewarding income d. a perfect productive company

9. In other words, they were early birds

a. birds that wake up early b. work early

c. took early advantage of things d. wake up earl as birds do

10. They were willing to play things by ear

- a. To improvise in a situation
- b. to play by your ear
- c. to cheat other company owners
- d. to take advantage of a situation

spill the got the jump cats troubled waters steam ahead hard bargains and bounds kept their ears stumbling blocks the bucket

Q. 3: Section [B], fill in the blanks with the right option from the box above.

Of course their company succeeded; the reason behind this is that they agreed not to*bean*..... They*to the ground,*..... moved *full*.....and *drove*..... Soon, their business was growing *by leaps*.....Of course, they *had some*along the way. Who does not? Still, they*on the competition* and by the year 2008, they were multi-millionaires. This sort of success for the young and free now has *copy*..... around the world. Whenever argument occurs between the employees, those admins are always ready to *pour oil on*..... Unfortunately, in an expected accident, they both *kicked*.....

Appendix [B]

Sudan University of Science and Technology

College of Graduate Studies

College of Languages

Department of English Language and Linguistics

Students' Questionnaire

Respondents: (Undergraduates, Level: Four), Sudan University of Science and Technology, Omdurman Islamic University and Ahfad University for Women

Dear students,

This questionnaire is a part of a PhD. degree in English Language (Applied Linguistics) which is entitled “An Investigation into the Problem of Understanding Multi-Word-Expression Encountered by Sudanese Undergraduates with Special Reference to Literary Texts”.

The researcher would be very delighted and thankful if you would respond to this questionnaire accurately and faithfully. I am hereby to assure you that the collected information will definitely remain highly confidential, and it will be used for the purpose of this research only.

Mohammed Suliman Abdulrahman Fadl

PhD. Candidate

Sudan University of Science and Technology

Please feel free to tick the option that applies to you.

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The majority of Multi-word expressions (MWEs) have a direct meaning.					
2.	Idioms as a part of MWEs are characterized by a kind of strong fixedness which means all the words in the expression should be dealt with as one unit.					
3.	Understanding how idiomatic items collocate together helps in working out their meaning.					
4.	Idioms always almost have a compositional meaning which means you can understand them if you know the dictionary meaning of the words used in the IE.					
5.	Having an adequate knowledge about how single words are connected together to formulate MWEs is essential to comprehend them.					
6.	You can easily replace a noun with a pronoun in an idiomatic expression, e.g. instead of X kicked the bucket you can say X kicked it.					
7.	The same previous instance can be passivized, i.e. the bucket has been kicked.					

8.	A noun in an idiomatic expression (IE) can be replaced by another one, e.g. you can take a horse to water but you can't make it drink. Instead of the noun <i>horse</i> we can use the noun <i>camel</i> .					
9.	When you encounter IEs in a text you find out its meaning by guessing.					
10.	You use some strategies to decode IEs e.g. pictures/imagery.					
11.	Another interesting strategy that you often use to understand MWEs is relating which means you related the IEs to the overall meaning of the text where they are used.					
12.	Sometimes you use mnemonics to memorize IEs. For instance, the word mnemonics itself should be remembered by keeping in mind that it contains a silent letter (M).					
13.	When you encounter an IE, you often relate it to the one that is found in your native language.					
14.	You often try to find something distinguishable in MWEs to help you memorize them.					
15.	The literal meaning (dictionary meaning) of MWEs is vital in comprehending them.					

Thank you very much indeed for your participation!!!