

الجمهورية الجزائرية الديمقراطية الشعبية
DEMOCRATIC AND POPULAR REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
جامعة عباس لغرور- خنشلة
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Investigating EFL Students Comprehension Competence in Decoding

Metaphors and Idiom in British newspapers:

A Case study of First Year Master Students at the University of Khencela

*Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture*

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May, 2018

Dedication

This work is dedicated to:

Our Master and Creator, “Allah” who gave us the grace of mind to think and to create beautiful things,

The one who taught us the purpose of life, Mohammed (Peace be upon him),

The ones who love us unconditionally, our beloved Parents who never stop giving themselves in many different countless ways,

Our beloved brothers and sisters

Our Husbands, who lead us through the hardest times like stars in the darkest nights with all hope, support and love,

Grandmother Beia, you have been always there for me and you will always be in the heart, May Allah has mercy on you and places you into his heavens

(Your granddaughter Rayen),

Our best friend Rayane Bouzidi who encourages and supports us,

We dedicate this research.

ملخص

هذا العمل مخصص لـ

سيدنا وخالفه ، "الله" الذي أعطانا نعمة العقل للتفكير وخلق أشياء جميلة ،

الشخص الذي علمنا غرض الحياة ، محمد (عليه السلام)،

الذين يحبوننا دون قيد أو شرط ، ألبؤنا المحبوبون الذين لا يتوقفون عن إعطاء كل ما لديهم بطرق عديدة مختلفة ،

إخواننا وأخواتنا المحبوبون

أزواجنا ، الذين يقودوننا خلال أصعب الأوقات مثل النجوم في أحلك الليالي مع كل الأمل والدعم والحب ،

جدتي بيا ، لقد كنت دائما هناك بالنسبة لي ، وسوف تكوني دائما في القلب ، رحمك الله ووضعك في سمائه

، (حفيدتك ريان)

أفضل صديق لنا بوزيدي ريان التي تشجعنا وتدعمنا.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It does not exist any great work that was done separately from any active support of person's that surround us. Thus it would probably not be possible to finish this study without the help of people around us.

First and foremost we would like to thank our supervisor Ayadi Karim for his guidance throughout all steps of our research. We are grateful for the constructive feedback and notes you left as a comment about the errors we made as you went through our chapters. We appreciate all the advice you have given us and for sharing your pearls of wisdom with us.

We would also like to express our thanks to our teacher Beddiaf Abderrazak for his help, for being willing to lend us an ear and for keeping up our spirit.

Moreover, we are immensely grateful to our big and small families who provided us with enough power, support and energy.

Last, but not least, we are very grateful to the students who accepted to took part in our research, without whose contribution, this study would not have been completed .

Abstract

The present study explores an investigation of EFL students' comprehension competence in decoding metaphors and idioms in British newspapers. The aim of this study is to investigate comprehension competence among Master 1 EFL students at Abbes Laghrour University-Khenchela, as well as and the main difficulties students face in decoding metaphors and idioms. In this respect, a test and a questionnaire made up for students to answer the research questions. The collected data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The test is made up of fourteen idioms and two metaphors assigned to the participants . The students were asked to underline metaphors and idioms in the sentences along with the explanation. The results of the study showed that there are significant problems in the process of decoding idioms and metaphors. Furthermore, the questionnaire revealed the fact that the students use some strategies to help improve their figurative language.

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List of Abbreviations

ESL (English as Second Language)

EFL (English as Foreign Language)

L1 (First Language)

General Introduction

Introduction

Metaphorical and idiomatic language is the most difficult challenge for EFL students, where they find a plenty of problems in decoding and understanding this kind of non-literal language since they have no cultural references or immersion or even linguistic competence which allow them to be proficient in the English Language. However, for many students this lack of understanding and having low abilities of decoding metaphors and idioms often leads to the perception that the strategies and methods used by teachers and students to some extent are not sufficient and as a result a large gap is created to reach a successful comprehension of authentic articles in Anglophone newspapers. In 1995, Danesi suggested in his article "*learning and teaching languages*" that the problems with producing and understanding non-literal language account for learners "*foreign discourses*" being unnatural, overly literal on the surface, and lacking depth in describing reality. However, there are many EFL students who have difficulties in understanding the language used in English newspapers and that's due to the repeated use of Metaphorical language and idiomatic expression which seems to be beyond their comprehensive competence.

Aims:

Thus, this study aims to investigate the EFL students' comprehensive competence in decoding metaphors and idioms that are used in British Newspapers. In addition, it seeks to investigate their different use of methods and strategies in understanding this kind of non-literal language and the difficulties and problems that may face. Also, if their level of proficiency allows them to facilitate understanding them.

Research questions:

This research is an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. Does the level of EFL students' comprehension competence allow them to decode metaphors and idioms?
2. What sort of difficulties and obstacles do EFL students encounter in decoding Metaphors and idioms?

General Introduction

3. What are the different strategies used by EFL students to facilitate their ability to decode Metaphors and Idioms?

Method

To support these research questions, a case study of first year Master EFL students from Abbes Laghrou University is undertaken. Quantitative and qualitative data are collected from different sources, relying on two research instruments: a test and a questionnaire destined to students.

This research investigates the topic of EFL student's comprehension competence in decoding metaphors and idioms in British newspapers. This thesis is made up of in three chapters, which include an overview about the topic, methodology and data analysis, and pedagogical suggestions and recommendations. The first chapter defines metaphors and idioms in general and explains the different difficulties EFL students encounter when they cope with figurative expression.

CHAPTER ONE:

An Overview about

Metaphors and Idioms

1.1 Introduction

In the present chapter, we will review the basic components and the key concepts related to the assessment of the writing skill. First, we will provide a definition of writing and its importance. Also, we will deal with the assessment definition, explaining its types, principles and purposes. Then, we will provide a seminal distinction between assessments, testing and evaluation as these terms are used interchangeably in many researches. Finally, it is worth noting the use of this kind of figurative language in newspapers.

1.2 Definition of Metaphors

Definitions of metaphor vary from one language to another, and in the English language terminology metaphor is a powerful literary device that provides strong, vivid imagery in the reader's mind. Frege stated that "It is astonishing what a language can do. With a few syllables it can express an incalculable number of thoughts, so that even a thought grasped by a terrestrial being for the very first time can be put into a form of words which will be understood by someone to whom the thought is entirely new."

"Metaphors often allow us to express subtle nuances of thought and feeling that would otherwise be inexpressible" (Ritchie, 2006, p.2). Eventually, metaphors help us to enrich our English language vocabulary and expand our cultural knowledge, also they denote quite tricky meanings. As Ritchie (2006, p.5) puts it: "*Playfulness is apparent in our approach to language from the beginning*".

Metaphors are largely used by English native speakers that are considered as a part of their daily life. That we often don't recognize them as such: (*'he burns me up!'*, *'my sister moved thousands of miles away but we are closer than ever'*). Like any other phrase, metaphors have their own shapes and different sizes. Others are very interesting, colorful, having a complex structure and simply beautiful which you enjoy using then while talking (*the autumn of her life*) but some of them were lost under the glamorous light of this vivid metaphor (*flowerily language*) (Ritchie, 2006, p. 2). This means that the use of metaphors, whether in written or spoken language, and with their endless flow in our conversations is something which we don't think about most of the time. The fact is that we are surrounded by embedded metaphors "at every

point of our social lives, and which we are dealing with in one way or another at every moment” (Punter, 2007, p.56). As Punter (2007, p.74) claims that: “There are barely any words that can be uttered which will not carry and invoke a metaphorical dimension”. Moreover, metaphors play an effective role in the English language that every EFL learner should take into consideration and not neglecting this vital part of the language. Sometimes when speaking or writing, we use words that have a division between what words denote and what they really meant. As Carston (2002, p.16) claimed in her book *“Thoughts and Utterances”* that *“what is said is not even a part of what is meant, but is merely a vehicle for conveying what is meant”*. Metaphor is a concept that sometimes contributes to our understanding very difficult to express in an accurate way (Cardoso and Vieira, 2006). Most metaphors used in our daily conversations by most of us, even if they convey meanings aren’t expressed in a literal way. When we learn a foreign language, many factors may make the process of learning and language comprehension difficult, are precisely metaphors. Some metaphors are very hard to get their meaning easily, for example, students who don’t read a lot plus having a limited vocabulary and cultural background in both their L1 and their L2 or even a third language.

When it comes to describing someone by using a metaphor, like “he is a peacock”, is to realize a non-literal and artistic effect in your language and make it sounds more attractive. “Metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain” (Kövecses, 2002, p.4). In the sentence “he is a peacock”, the “he” person obviously shares certain qualities with a peacock. Therefore, it is likely to make the metaphorical identification of the two (Kövecses, 2002). Saying that someone is a peacock may create the impression that this is an arrogant man who likes dressing or behaving in a way that draws attention to him.

The way in which peacock is used metaphorically is “a characteristic of a linguistic expression” (Kövecses, 2002, p.vii). Throughout the last Three decades metaphor is considered as a fundamental part and special way of using language (Andrew Goatly, 1997). In other words, metaphors make sentences more artistic than other phrases, the one can choose if he wants to emphasize or moderate something by doing it deliberately or unconsciously.

1.3 Types of Metaphors

Ahmed Hasani Yaseen (2013) gathered all types of metaphors and tried to categorize them into three general types according to the English language schools to which they belong. These types are as follows in the table below:

Types of metaphors	Definition
Metaphors divided according to their verbs:	
1- Concretizing metaphors	They make what is abstract more. For example: A fat Account
2- Animating metaphors	This subtype of metaphors gives a sense of spirit to nature or natural phenomena, For example: An angry sky.
3- Synaesthetic metaphors	Deals with the five senses (taste, smell, seeing, hearing, and touch) by transmitting them.
4- Personifying metaphor	Humanizing what is not human, such as: - My car whines in pain as it climbs up steep hills.
Metaphors divided in terms of their circulation and usage:	
1- Absolute metaphors	They are those where there is no similarity or connection between the metaphor and the subject, such as: We are the eyelids of defeated caves.
2- Cliché metaphors	They are similar to proverbs and idiomatic expressions. For example: “Filthy lucre”,

	is intended to be collecting money to dishonest crooked ways, i.e., illegal gain.
3- Complex metaphors	Metaphors are those that have additional layers “metaphoric elements”. For example: - That throws some light on the question.
4- Compound metaphors	They are metaphors that have multiple points of similarity of metaphoric elements, such as the description of a runner: He has the wild stag's foot.
5- Dead metaphors	Metaphors lost all their technical features and force of meaning through the frequent use.
6- Extended metaphors	Adding multiple comparisons to the main subject, such as a description of President Lyndon Johnson of the United States by saying: The uncrossed desert and the unclimbed ridge ... the star that is not reached and the harvest that's sleeping in the unplowed ground.
7- Mixed metaphors	They are combinations of two or more metaphors. For example: Put the ship of state on its feet.

8- Original metaphors	They are known as creative metaphors that are created in special occasions. For example: "Oxford, a place in Lyonnaise"! (Newmark, by Hassan Ghazala, p.2881: 211).
9- Recent metaphors	New metaphors where they find in the media, for example: The brain of the computer.
10- Simple metaphors	Metaphors that have one single between the subject and the metaphoric element, such as: Cool it!
11- Submerged metaphors	They are an implied comparison, such as: My winged thought.
Metaphors divided in terms of their concept	This type is known as Conceptual metaphors. E.g. - Argument is war, - Try to pack more words into fewer words, - We need to battle rising prices. Here, inflation is regarded as, and it is imperceptible act, an entity stands-alone, we must combat it.

Table01. Different types of English metaphors (Yaseen, 2013)

1.4 Definition of Idioms

As any language in this world, English language is full of idioms, especially that are spoken. Idioms are like colors or spices to language that creates an image beyond those individual words that make them up. Many sociolinguistic scholars and other linguists have tried to clarify the term idioms as the difficult area of foreign language teaching and learning. There are several definitions of idioms, and so, we will first examine some of them.

According to the general definition given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* “idiom is a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words”. This definition just gives a superficial imperfect meaning of what is and isn’t an idiom because it does not establish any fixed criteria that establish a decision of either not being an idiom or being a phrase. Nunberg et al (1994, p.492-493) explained that if a given expression or phrase share some of the same characteristics (conventionality, inflexibility, figuration, proverbially, informality, and somewhat arbitrary... etc.) that illustrates what an idiom is can be confused and label as idiomatic, e.g. a. Jealous much?

On the other hand an idiom can be defined as “a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own: To "have bitten off more than you can chew" is an idiom that means you have tried to do something which is too difficult for you” (The Online Cambridge Dictionary), Moon (1998) who defined an idiom as a sequence of words that has a hidden meaning beyond its essential parts. To conclude an idiom should be defined as “a group of words that has a special meaning that is different from the ordinary meaning of each separate word” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English).

1.5 Types of Idioms

Idiomatic sayings may likewise recommend a specific state of mind of the individual utilizing them. The Dictionary of Idioms incorporates the implications of expressions, as well as cases in light of sentences from the Cambridge International Corpus. Altogether, there are fifteen types of idioms recognized as 'theme panels' appearing towards the end of the dictionary as takes after:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Anger | 8. Interest and Boredom |
| 2. Business | 9. Liking and Not Liking |
| 3. Dishonesty | 10. Money |
| 4. Happiness and Sadness | 11. Power and Authority |
| 5. Health | 12. Remembering and Forgetting |
| 6. Helping | 13. Speaking and Conversation |
| 7. Intelligence and Stupidity | 14. Success and Failure Understanding |

1.6 Idiomatic and Metaphoric competence in ESL/EFL Classroom

The ability to decode a metaphor or an idiom needs a higher non- literal language competence. As the structures of metaphors and idioms in the minds of native speakers are mostly unconscious and immediately infer their meanings. However, ESL/EFL students “Who encounter an unknown idiom are at a distinct disadvantage because they do not possess the native speaker’s degree of linguistic competence” (Cooper, 1999, p.254); are strongly required to develop their non-literal language competence in order to reach their goals to be fluent in the English language. Due to this lack of linguistic competence ESL/EFL students have to lay more effort in digging deeply to obtain the meaning of metaphors and idioms than a native speaker. There are many possible factors that influence the students’ ability to come up with several interpretations such as: the context where metaphors or idioms occur, their literal meaning, and the target culture. According to Cooper (1999) to improve ESL/EFL students’ comprehension and linguistic competence, non-literal language is very important at this point to facilitate the process of decoding these expressions.

On the other hand, in 1980 Canale & Swain introduced communicative competence which is very important for acquiring a foreign language where these components: “linguistic, discourse, and sociolinguistic used as communication and learning strategies” play a noteworthy role in improving the EFL learner comprehension competence. Littlemore & Low (2006)

conducted a research about the different strategies used by EFL learners in order to interpret metaphors they claimed that metaphor skills apply to all these four components. Moreover, their research displayed that learners find it hard working with metaphors in all four areas within communicative competence. Hence, being familiar with the foreign language culture is essential to realize the several connotations of the direct expressions (Littlemore and Low, 2006)

1.7. Difficulty of Metaphoric and Idiomatic comprehension among ESL/EFL students

There is no doubt to say that students may encounter difficulties in understanding idioms and metaphors in all kinds of discourse, daily conversations, newspapers, movies, songs, books, lectures,...etc (Cooper, 1999). According to Chuang (2013) it is not easy for learners to determine the meaning of this kind of non-literal language because of the different denotations the individual word may carry. For EFL learners it is difficult to consider the literal meaning of idioms and metaphors, for example the exact equivalent between English and Arabic is not accurate sometimes (Irujo, 1986).

Hussein, Khanji, & Makhzoumi (2011), who claimed that the difficulty of learning idioms is because of their arbitrariness and unpredictable in terms of meaning and cannot be taught systematically. Furthermore, “difficulties in understanding metaphors from one language to another are not only due to linguistic differences between English and the L1, but are also due to the differences in the way each culture views the various components of the idioms being learned” (Denise Lowery, 2013, p.14).

Although, the importance of non-literal language or discourse to EFL students in enhancing their comprehensive skill, it remains very difficult to be acquired and master. The lack of understanding idioms and metaphors, because of their widely spread in every language, has become a reason for ESL/EFL students to avoid these types of lexical devices which results often misunderstanding and misinterpretation. A study conducted by Boers (2000) attempted to find a solving solution to make students aware enough of the conceptual metaphors that support a range of idioms. However, even Boers admits that such treatment cannot be applied to all types of metaphors and idioms.

In most studies on fixed phrases such as idioms, Cooper (1999) conducted another study that has been confirmed that native speakers process the metaphorical meaning of fixed phrases faster than the literal meaning of their constituents, later on findings also confirmed that this advantage. Though the study by Cooper (1999) indicates that the average student, who does not have such an expansive knowledge of vocabulary as native speakers or advanced students, has to rely on a number of facilitating strategies, such as guessing from the context or using their first language or background knowledge, which makes the processing of non-literal language more difficult. Additionally, Littlemore & Low (2006) suggested that the lack of common sociolinguistic background can lead to misinterpretation.

1.8 Idioms & Metaphors in Newspapers' headlines

Generally, idioms and metaphors are found in newspaper headlines. A news headline is defined as a heading comes at the top of an article usually written in bigger size and bold fonts. Bruce (1972), has implied that the function of news headlines is to give a brief overview about the content of the article and make the reader more interested in reading the pieces of news. Journalist and Reporters are commonly known for using metaphors and idioms at the front pages of newspapers, to bring their articles into life and create a full in image the reader's mind. Hodgson (1998) notices that the headlines may contain some talked language, for example, idioms, metaphors and informal words.

The utilization of idioms, metaphors in English language headlines make a great challenge for readers and scholars who are non-native speakers of English. Aside to this, Headline words are short words, the majority of these words are not used as a part of daily life.

To put it plainly, Harris and Spark express that newspaper language ought to be straightforward and understandable for individuals from various educational backgrounds and societies.

1.9 Conclusion

Figurative language and especially metaphors and idioms have been always a great challenge that causes a lot of difficulties to English Foreign Language students. Students usually find difficulties in making the difference between metaphors, idioms and simple expressions, and then understanding their implicit meaning. This is mainly due to unfamiliarity with both metaphors and idioms. In other words, comprehension competence of figurative language varies from one student to another and that's according to their level of proficiency. Hence, better understanding and using this kind of non-literal language needs cultural background and equivalent in the first.

CHAPTER TWO:

Research Methodology and

Data Analysis

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the situation under investigation as well as the research design and instruments. In the present work, two research instruments are used. The data gathered in this chapter are analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Finally, the main results drawn from this research are summarized and related to the research question put by the researchers to check its validity.

2.2 Research Methods and Design

Taking into consideration the importance of idioms and metaphors in the EFL classroom and the difficulties that most students have when facing these figurative expressions, this study is conducted under a descriptive method which fits these issues.

The study has as main objective to investigate the students' comprehensive competence in understanding metaphors and idioms that are utilized by British newspapers. As a secondary objective, this study aims to investigate the difficulties EFL students face in decoding metaphors and idioms, and examine the strategies utilize to understand metaphors and idioms. The approach used in descriptive design to carry out this study is to assign people randomly.

2.3 Participants of The Study

The participants of the study were selected randomly. They were all in their first year Master degree students at the University of Abbes Laghrour of Khenchela. Their ages were between 22 and 25 years old. The total of 30 students (male students: 5 and female students: 25) were involved in this study for the academic year 2017/2018.

2.4 Materials & Procedure

A short test was generated about idiomatic and metaphorical expressions, to investigating EFL students' comprehensive competence in decoding metaphors and idioms, which in case if they marked or knew their meaning, they were asked to write it down. The researchers have also formulated a questionnaire of 13 questions to examine and investigate the strategies and the difficulties students may use and face while reading a piece of news.

2.4.1 Test

The researchers conducted a test to investigate the level of comprehension competence that EFL students have in understanding idiomatic expressions and metaphors used in British Newspapers. The test is designed to fit the level of first year Master students because they show an appropriate linguistic competence knowledge of the English culture. In the test, Students were asked to underline idioms and metaphor that were selected from 16 headlines of different newspapers (The Telegraph, The Times, Independent, Metro, The Guardian, The Express, Morning Star, and The Mirror) and determine whether it is an idiom or a metaphor along with the explanation without being given any clues.

2.4.2 Questionnaire

After the test, the researchers had a questionnaire to examine participants' awareness towards idiomatic and metaphorical expressions that are used in British newspapers. Students were asked to answer 13 questions. It is concerned with students' background information, their productive and comprehensive skills. Both closed and open questions will be included in our questionnaire in order to get as valid information as possible and relatively in a short time.

2.5 Data Analysis

2.5.1 Test: Presentation and Analysis

The students' test attempts to examine the students' degree of familiarity and unfamiliarity with metaphors and idioms. Moreover, it aims at investigating the students' level in decoding and distinguishing between English metaphors and idioms that are used in British newspapers, also to investigate the degree of comprehensibility of these figurative expressions. Moreover, it The test, as it has been stated before, consists of sixteen headlines from different British newspapers; only two headlines (see headline 3 and 7) consist of metaphors the rest of headlines consist idioms.

Metaphors and Idiom in Context	Number of Correct and Incorrect Answers		Percentage of Familiarity and Non-familiarity with Idioms and Metaphors	
	Correct Answers	Incorrect Answers	Familiarity (%)	Non-familiarity (%)
Sentences From 1-16				
1- BBC News weather forecast: Snow to hit UK 'thick and fast' as Beast from the East 2 rages (Express, 03.17.2018)	7	23	23%	77%
2- Jones swings the axe on England (Metro, 03.16.2018)	13	17	43%	57%
3- Liverpool vs. Watford TV channel, kick-off time , date and odds (Metro, 03.17.2018)	18	12	60%	40%
4- Russia in tit-for-tat expulsion of 23 British diplomats (The Telegraph, 03.17.2018)	14	16	47%	53%
5- Theresa May wants to have her cake and eat it with housebuildings too (The Guardian, 03.05.2018)	7	23	23%	77%
6- Dijon defy Ligue 1 stereotypes and catch the eye with fluid (The Guardian, 03.05.2018)	11	19	37%	63%

7- Arsenal 0-3 Manchester City: Booed and Leory Sane's on fire (The Mirror, 03.01.2018)	23	7	77%	23%
8- Rubbing salt into Palestine's wounds (Morning Star, 03.14.2018)	15	15	50%	50%
9- A new movie has swept the board at an international award ceremony (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press. January 11,2017)	8	22	27%	73%
10- Well-known actor is on track to win the final of a TV dance competition (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press. January 11,2017)	9	21	30%	70%
11- A comedian reports that he thought he was going to lose his job and be on the street (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press. January 11,2017)	7	23	23%	77%
12- Give the show a new lease of life (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press. January 11,2017)	8	22	27%	73%
13- A famous football manager and his wife have decided to call it a day after fifteen years of marriage (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press. January 11,2017)	10	20	33%	67%

14- A politician has come under fire from within her party because of her negative remarks about her party's leader (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press. January 11,2017)	11	19	37%	63%
15-The opposing politician party is criticized for being out of step with ordinary working (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press. January 11,2017)	11	19	37%	63%
16- The English cricket team is on the brink of defeat in their latest series (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press. January 11,2017)	11	19	37%	63%
TOTAL	37.08%	62.29%	37.08%	

(Table02. Percentage of students' correct and incorrect answers)

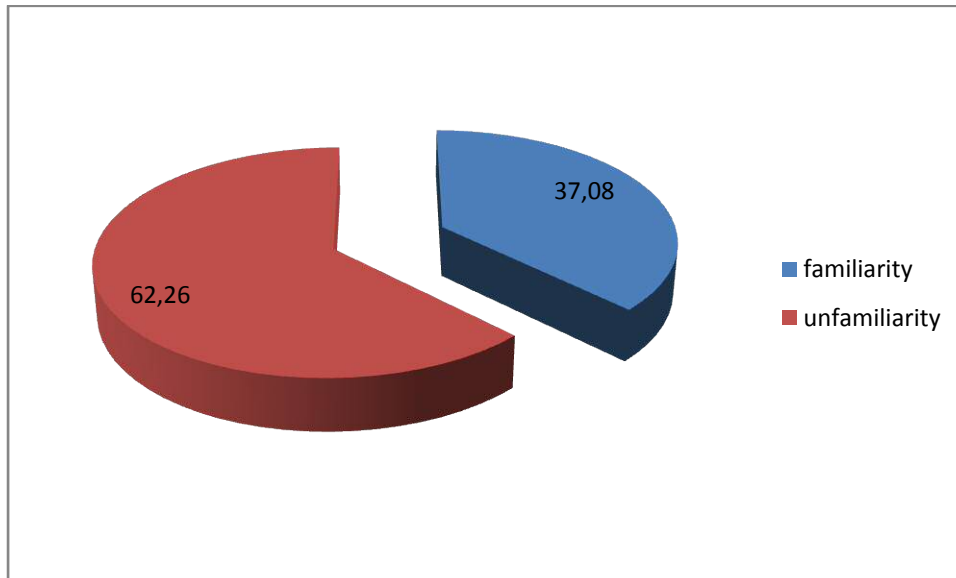
(Figure01. Degree of Familiarity and Unfamiliarity with Metaphors and idioms)

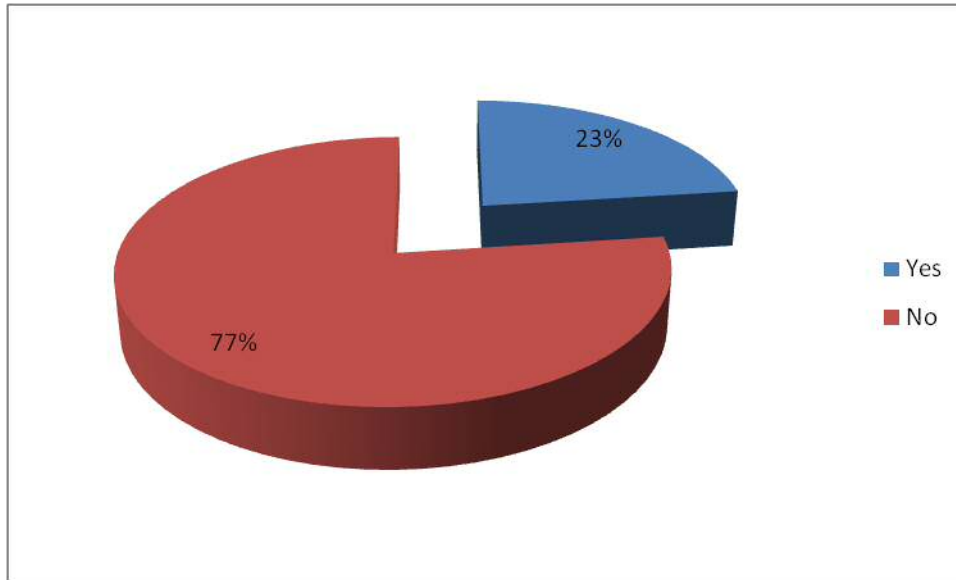
Table 02 above shows that the degree of comprehensibility competence has a great impact on students' familiarity and unfamiliarity with English metaphors and idioms that are used in British newspapers. It is observed that the minority students had the lowest score of correct answers with a total percentage of **37.08%** and the majority students with a total percentage of **62.26%** for incorrect answers. As is shown in the pie chart, the degree of unfamiliarity is higher than the degree of familiarity with a rate of **62.26%**.

2.5.2 Student Questionnaire data: Presentation and Analysis:

(Table03. Have you had any English training outside of university curriculums (external courses, home use etc.)?)

N Q	Question	Response Yes		Response No	
		Number of Yes	Percentage %	Number of No	Percentage %
04	Have you had any English training outside of university curriculums (external courses, home use etc.)?	23	77%	7	23%

(Figure02. Have you had any English training outside of university curriculum (external, home use, etc.)?)

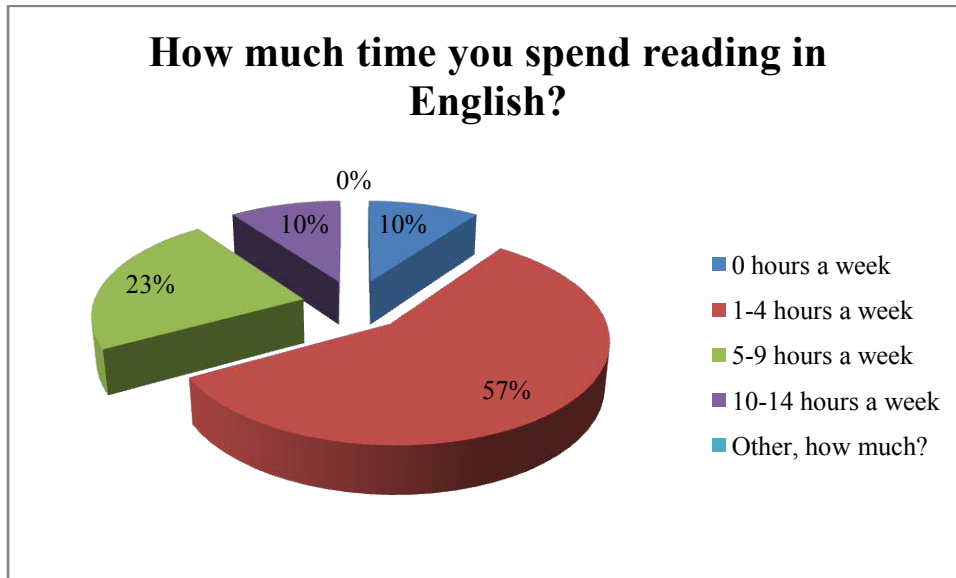


As it is represented in the pie, many students said that they had no other training to learn English outside of their curriculum Internet. However, a few of them said yes without providing any justification.

(Table04. How much time you spend reading English)

N Q	Question	Response to 0 hours a week		Response to 1-4 hours a week		Response to 5-9 hours a week		Response to 10-14 hours a week		Other, how much?
		Num	%	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%	
05	How much time you spend reading English?	03	10	17	57	07	23	07	10	0%

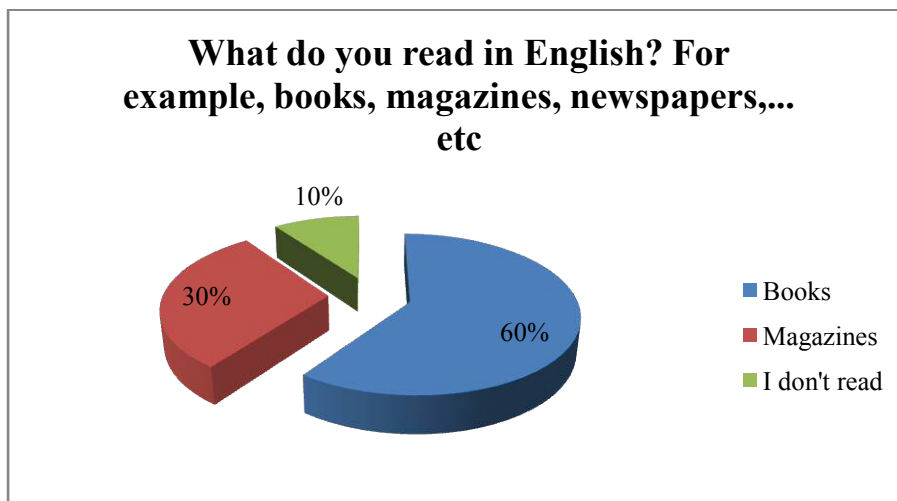
(Figure03. How much time you spend reading English?)



As it is shown in the **table 03** and **figure 03** above, **57%** of the students practice reading from 1-4 hours a week. 7 students with a percentage of **23%** read English from 5-9 hours a week. The rest of the students read from 10-14 hours a week with an exception of 3 (10%) who do not devote time for reading in English language.

- **Question 06:** What do you read in English? For example, books, magazines, newspapers... etc. Answers to this question are reported in figure below:

(Figure04. What do you read in English? For example, books, magazines, newspapers... etc.)

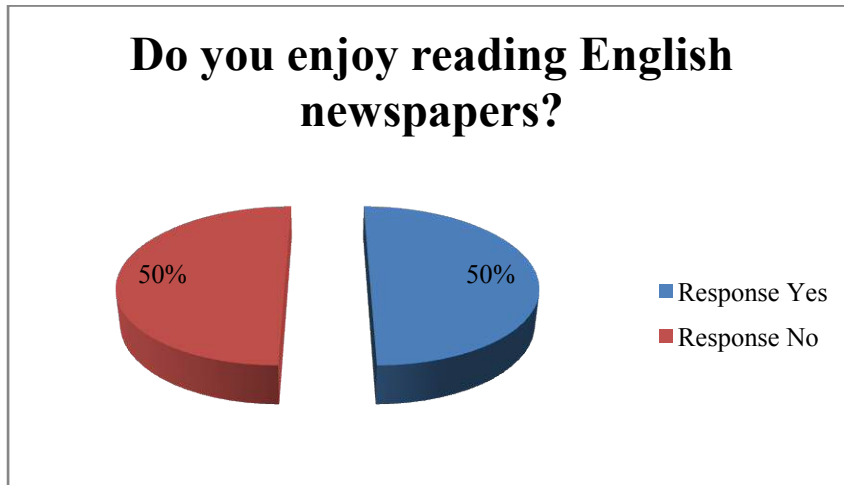


The results of this question showed that most of the students read books, 30% of them like to read magazines, however; 10% of them do not read in English at all.

(Table05. Do you enjoy reading English newspapers?)

N Q	Question	Response Yes		Response No	
		Number of Yes	Percentage %	Number of No	Percentage %
07	Do you enjoy reading English newspapers?	15	50%	15	50%

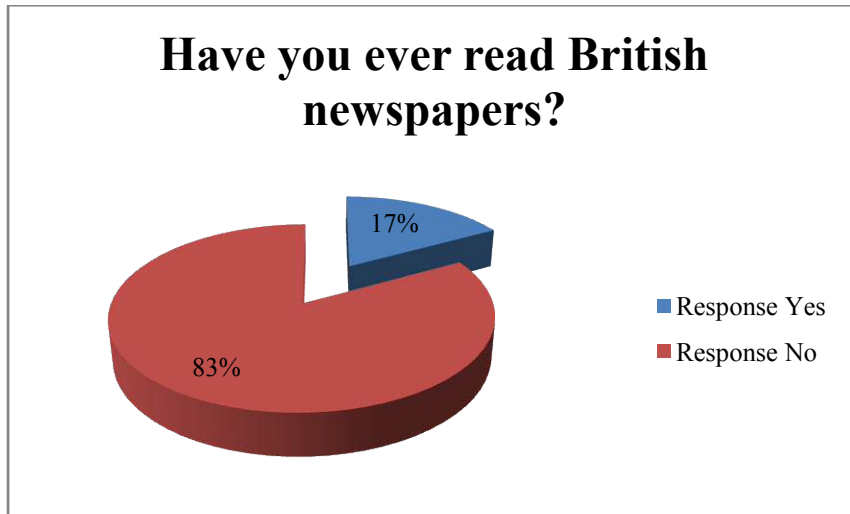
(Figure05. Do you enjoy reading English newspapers?)



The results show that 50% of the student like to read English newspapers. On the hand, 50% of the students have no interest in reading English newspapers and they do not even enjoy it.

(Table06. Have you ever read British newspapers?)

N Q	Question	Response Yes		Response No	
		Number of Yes	Percentage %	Number of No	Percentage %
08	Have you ever read British newspapers?	5	17%	25	83%

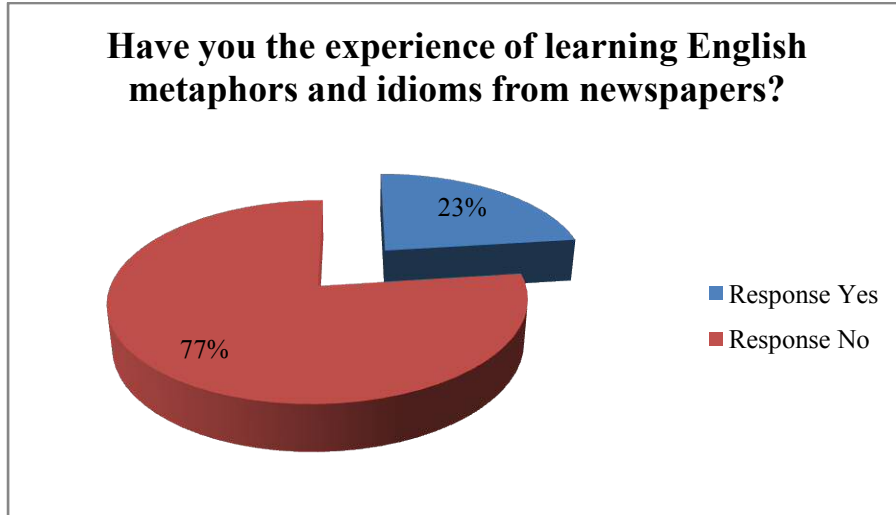
(Figure06. Have you ever read British newspapers?)

Seemingly, most of the students have never tried to read any kind of British newspaper with the exception of 17% students without stating any name of the newspapers they read.

(Table07. Have you the experience of learning English metaphors and idioms from newspapers?)

N Q	Question	Response Yes		Response No	
		Number of Yes	Percentage %	Number of No	Percentage %
09	Have you the experience of learning English metaphors and idioms from newspapers?	07	23%	23	77%

(Figure07. Have you the experience of learning English metaphors and idioms from newspapers?)

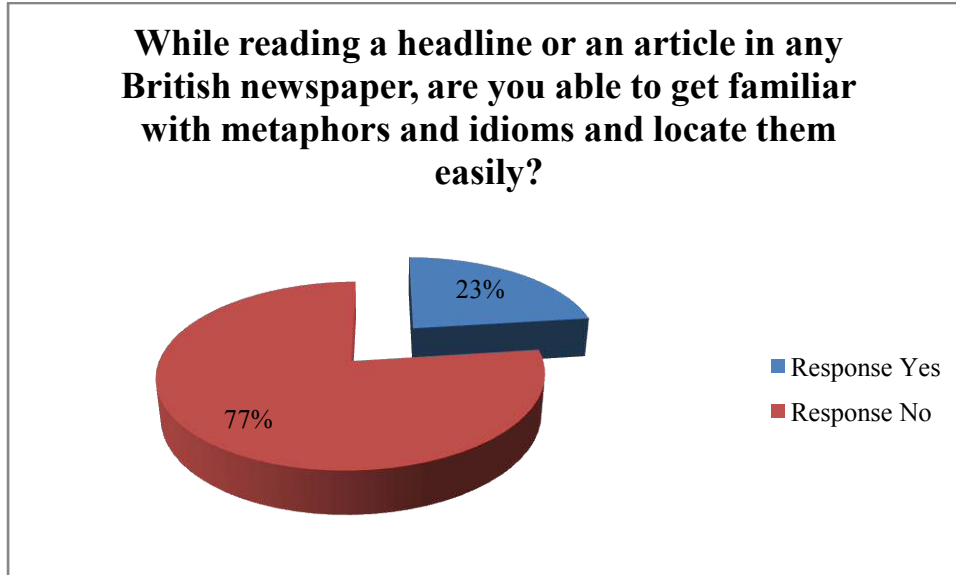


As it is shown in here, most of the students have no experience in learning English metaphors and idioms from newspapers. Except 23% of the students who seem to be familiar with idioms and metaphors that are used in newspapers.

(Table08. While reading a headline or an article in any British Newspaper, are you able to get familiar with metaphors and idioms and locate them easily?)

N Q	Question	Response Yes		Response No	
		Number of Yes	Percentage %	Number of No	Percentage %
10	While reading a headline or an article in any British Newspaper, are you able to get familiar with metaphors and idioms and locate them easily?	07	23%	23	77%

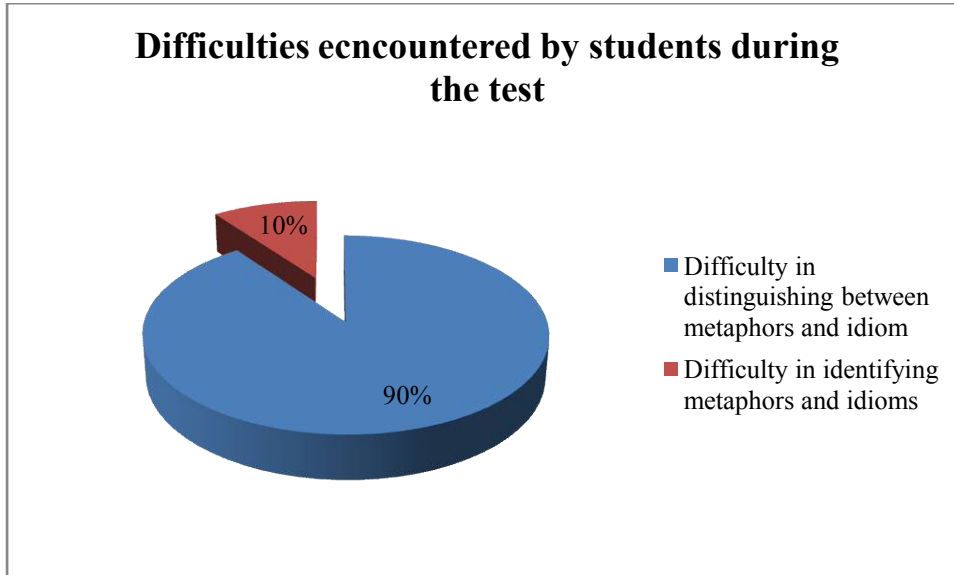
(Figure08. While reading a headline or an article in any British newspaper, are you able to get familiar with metaphors and idioms and locate them easily?)



The results revealed that the majority of students that make 77% of the sample have no ability to get familiar with idioms and metaphors that are used in British newspapers as they stated in their answers that they do not read newspapers at all especially British ones. Only 7 students making 23% of the total number of the respondents said “yes” without providing any explanation.

- **Question11.** What was the greatest difficulty you met during the process of answering when participating in the test?

(Figure09. Difficulties encountered by students during the test)



From the results obtained, it is noted that 90% of the students said that they have difficulties in distinguishing between metaphors and idiom and that is due to the fact that they could not guess their meanings. While the remaining (10%) held that they have difficulties in identifying metaphors and idioms.

(Table09. Do you think idioms and metaphors are difficult because?)

Question 12

Do you think idioms and metaphors are difficult because:	NUM	(%)
a. There is a lack of cultural background behind metaphors and idioms.	23	77%
b. There is a lack of experience dealing with metaphors and idioms.	24	80%
c. They are not part of the course syllabus.	25	83%
d. They are not taught well in class.	26	87%
e. The cultural course not efficient.	27	90%
f. They have unfamiliar words.	28	94%
g. They have no context.	29	97%
h. They have no analogue in Arabic.	30	100%
i. Students have low level.	7	23%
j. All of the above.	0	0%

(Figure10. Do you think idioms and metaphors are difficult because?)

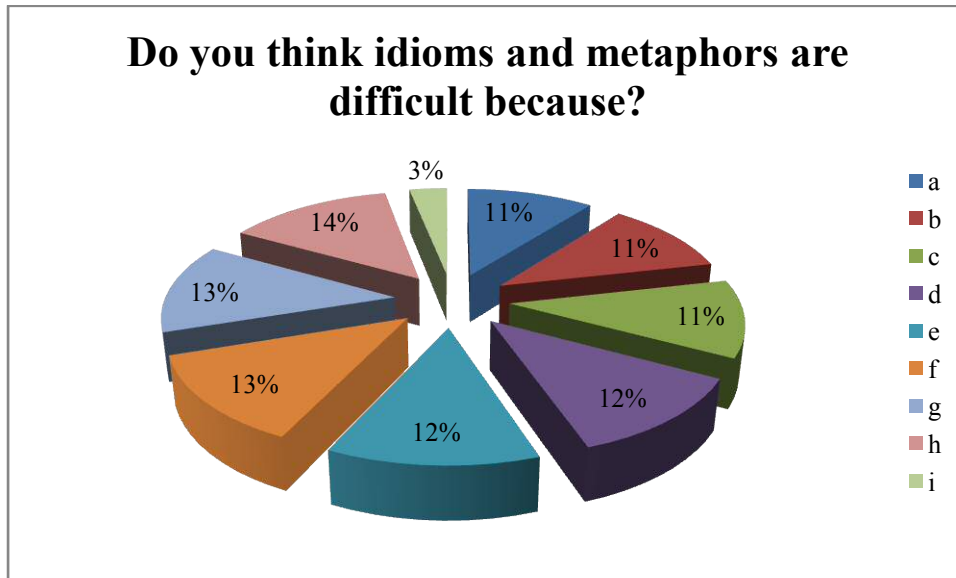


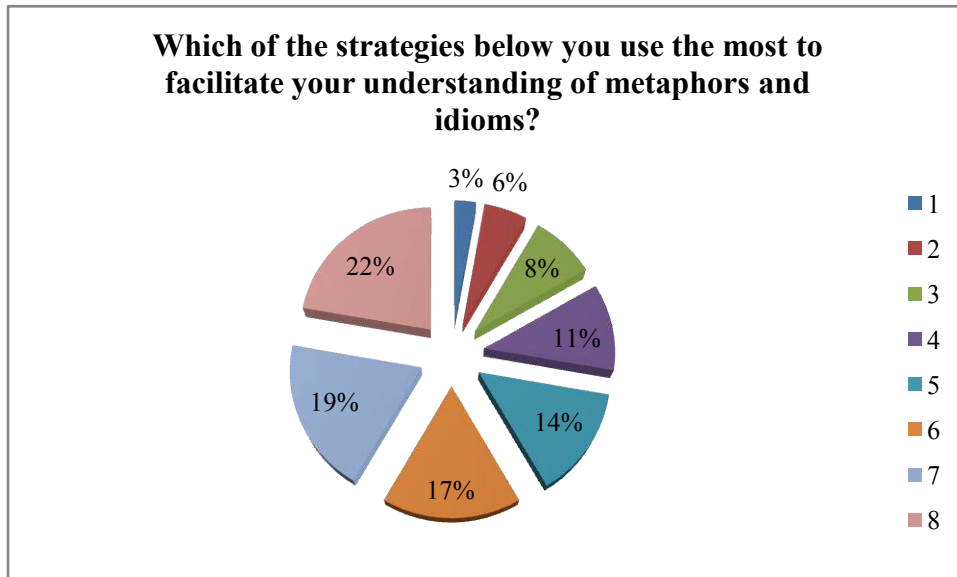
Table09 and **Figure10**, clearly show that the majority of students with the percentage of 100% claimed that the main reason behind the difficulty of metaphors and idioms is because they have no analogue in Arabic, then with the percentatge of 97% and 94% students choosed as two second main reasons that metaphors and idioms have no context and they have unfamiliar words that may not lead them to find the appropriate meaning. The rest of reasons where the most of students pointed out that metaphors and idioms are difficult back to the lack of cultural background , the lack of experience dealing with such figurative language, and they are not part of the course syllabus. Only 7 (23%) students who said that it is due to the students low level.

(Table10. Which of the strategies below you use to facilitate your understanding of metaphors and idioms?)

Question 13

Which of the strategies below you use to facilitate your understanding of metaphors and idioms?	NUM	(%)
1. The use of verbal information to help activate your knowledge of metaphors and idioms.	9	30%
2. The use of key words	14	47%
3. Memorization	14	47%
4. Looking for the equivalent of idioms and metaphors in your first language	12	40%
5. Translating the literal meaning in your first language	9	30%
6. When facing an idiom or metaphor you ignore it	6	20%
7. Understanding only familiar idioms and metaphors with familiar vocabulary	5	17%
8. Reading metaphors and idioms from different sources	7	23%
9. Other, please justify	0	0%

(Figure11. Which of the strategies below you use the most to facilitate your understanding of metaphors and idioms?)



The results of the above question show that students tend to use different strategies to help themselves decode metaphors and idioms easily. Majority of students (47%) tend to use key words and memorization in order to understand idioms and metaphors, the second frequently used strategies used by students (30%-40%) are looking for the equivalent of idioms and metaphors in their first language, and also by translating the literal meaning in their first language. “When facing an idiom or metaphor you ignore it, understanding only familiar idioms and metaphors with familiar vocabulary, reading metaphors and idioms from different sources” the rest of these strategies are used relatively by students.

2.6 Discussion of the Main Results

This chapter lays out the findings of the test and the questionnaire. The results will be discussed in terms of the student’s level of comprehension competence in decoding metaphors and idioms used in the British newspapers as it is highlighted in the first research question” Does the level of EFL students’ comprehension competence allow them to decode metaphors and idioms?”

The percentage of familiarity of the first question was inferior to the percentage of non-familiarity and this is due to its difficulty and since it is difficult this means that they could not figure it out because they did not deal with it and hence they are not supposed to detect it. The percentage of familiarity of the second question was also inferior to the percentage of non-familiarity and this was due to the lack of cultural background behind the idioms meaning that the course they used to receive was not enough to give them the ability to understand this language. The percentage of familiarity of the third question was inferior to the percentage of non-familiarity and this is because the lack of experience dealing with idioms. Most of students answered this sentence wrongly because they did not use to work with idioms or even make use of them in daily classroom conversation because normally they study and use them extensively as they are the most used kind of non literal language. The percentage of familiarity of the fourth question was inferior to the percentage of non familiarity because it is not part of the courses’ syllabi. Throughout the research, the researcher has come to the idea that it has not that kind of priority when selecting the course syllabus. The percentage of familiarity of the fifth question was inferior to the percentage of non-familiarity because they are not taught idioms and

metaphors properly in class. The lesson plan of the M1 student is not well prepared there is lack of teaching strategies that apply to the incorporation of figurative meaning in content selection. The percentage of familiarity of the sixth sentence was inferior to the percentage of non-familiarity and this can be attributed to the fact that the cultural courses being taught for the target EFL students were not efficient. The student is not put in a situation where they cannot grasp the foreign culture that reveal quite enough pragmatic concepts and eventually the amount of information that is supposed to be provided to the student is not sufficient. The percentage of familiarity of the seventh sentence was inferior to the percentage of non-familiarity and this is due to the fact that idioms cannot be discussed and they are a non literal language which means that that kind of language product is hard for foreign learners to really figure out its real meaning. The percentage of familiarity of the eighth sentence was equal to the percentage of non-familiarity and this can be subject to an existing semantic equivalence of this idiom between mother tongue and the target language. The percentage of familiarity of the ninth sentence was inferior to the percentage of the non-familiarity because of the non-acquaintance of words used in that idiom. May be they did not even understand the meaning of the words and this refers to the teaching process problems. The percentage of familiarity of the tenth sentence was inferior to the percentage of non-familiarity and this due to the fact that students are prohibited from the chances that are supposed to have when learning idioms because teachers do not pay much attention to idioms and metaphors. The percentage of familiarity of the eleventh sentence was inferior to the percentage of non familiarity. In other words, those idioms are taken for granted and this makes them incomprehensible and that needs strategies that will help facilitate their understanding.

The percentage of familiarity of the twelfth sentence was inferior to the percentage of non-familiarity, and correspondingly, this can suggest that that learning figurative expression so late can affect their understanding badly. Normally teachers are supposed to teach idioms at early stages foreign language teaching in intermediate and high school education. The percentage of familiarity of the thirteenth sentence was inferior to the percentage of non-familiarity and one assume that absence of a primary focus on idioms and metaphores is significantly evident.

The percentage of familiarity of the fourteenth sentence was inferior to the percentage of non-familiarity and this is because there are no counterparts in their mother tongue so it will be difficult to really get the meaning. The percentage of familiarity of the fifteenth sentence was also inferior to the percentage of the non-familiarity this is due to the fact that students are not really encouraged by their teachers to learn and acquire the idioms as much as possible, since teachers are almost ignoring this kind of non literal language how can the students be motivated to learn them. The percentage of the last sentence of the test was inferior to the percentage of non familiarity and this is because there is a lack of the teachers' training concerning how to teach idioms and metaphors throughout the syllabus and how to include this kind of non literal language in every course to provide the learners with the sense of being familiar and customary with idioms and metaphors.

Last but not least, it could be concluded that the findings of this study demonstrate that EFL learners might find it really problematic to realize the significance of idioms and translate these significance into their native language. Hence teachers should pay more attention to idioms and metaphors in the teaching learning process

The research question being posed in this study, "What sort of difficulties and obstacles do EFL students encounter in decoding Metaphors and idioms?", where the results of the survey revealed that all students seem to have difficulties in understanding metaphors and idioms in general, and especially those of the British newspapers (see table 09, p. 32 and question 12 in the students' Questionnaire). This could be due to the fact that metaphorical and idiomatic expressions are difficult because of the lack of experience dealing with such figurative expressions. The findings indicate that metaphors and idioms were difficult because they are not a part of the course syllabus. In other words, there is no course that is designed only for learning non-literal language especially metaphors and idioms. Moreover, most of the students pointed out that idioms and metaphors are difficult because some of them have no counterparts in Arabic as they are unfamiliar words with no context. This indicates that English non-literal language with no equivalence in Arabic is more difficult to understand and use in a context. All these above-discussed results answer to the second research question by confirming that students have difficulties in decoding metaphors and idioms to recognize their structure and meaning.

The third research question, “What are the different strategies used by EFL students to facilitate their ability to decode Metaphors and Idioms?” the collected data from the questionnaire revealed that students learn idioms and metaphors through the use of different strategies to improve their comprehension competence as can be seen from table 10 page32, the majority of students responded that they rely on memorization and use key words in order to get the meaning easily. This result indicates that memorization and using key words plays a great role in understanding figurative language and enhancing EFL students metaphorical and idiomatic comprehension competence. The second most frequently used strategy which involves looking for metaphors and idioms in the first language entails that one can comprehend non-literal language very easily if they have a good knowledge of metaphors and idioms in their source language. Another strategy that is used regularly by students is translating the literal meaning of idioms and metaphors into first language. It seems that student rely more on their L1 to understand the non-literal meaning. This might be due to their low vocabulary background in English language.

2.7 Conclusion

The findings above show that metaphors and idioms are, to a great extent, problematic for the participants. In the previous given newspapers headlines, students have neither been able to distinguish between the figurative expressions and the simple expressions nor have they infer the right meaning of these metaphors and idioms and that’s due to different reasons such as lack of reading , lack of cultural background, lack of experience dealing with idioms and metaphors,etc. The study also collected some of the different strategies students tend to use in learning non-literal language and to help them improve their comprehension competence in decoding such figurative expressions.

3.1 Suggestions and Recommendation

This research suggests that English figurative language plays a vital role as a tool of communication and to enhance the EFL students' competence to comprehend metaphors and idioms. Therefore, it is important to develop and adopt new strategies to learn them very easily.

- a. Using images and imagination could be very helpful for EFL students to grasp the meaning of metaphors and idioms, because the link between the image and the metaphorical or idiomatic meaning can be more explicit.
- b. Another strategy or technique that seems very suitable to learn new non-literal expression and expands the students' knowledge is by using contextual clues to decipher the meaning because each word of the sentence is written with purposeful clues to help student to determine or to guess the correct meaning.
- c. Translating direct to students first language it can help them remember the meaning of metaphors and
- d. Students are not fully satisfied with the learning outcomes of this course. So teachers should work hard and try to improve students' writing as well as speaking skills through extra reading or computer assisted programs.
- e. Integrating metaphors and idioms courses in the syllabi of EFL classes should be taken into consideration in order to enhance students' comprehension competence.

Finally, the present chapter has provided some suggested strategies that can be useful as an aid for EFL students to improve their comprehension competence in decoding metaphors and idioms.

Recommendations

This study demonstrates the demand to investigate metaphor and idiom comprehension competence that are used in British newspapers in further, it is clear that students also have problem to find the equivalence in their mother tongue so it much preferably to start investigating the metaphor and idiom comprehension competence in their mother tongue .

Due to the fact of the importance of idiomatic and metaphorical competence it would be interesting to start first investigating to what extent idioms and metaphors are included in the teaching curricula, and how much teachers are working on increasing student idiomatic and metaphorical competence.

Also, it quite important to investigate the teachers' awareness of idioms and metaphors and see if they are competent and qualified enough to teach this kind of non literal language. Besides, it of great significance to investigate to what extent does learners use idioms and metaphors in daily classroom conversations

General Conclusion

This study is concerned with investigating the EFL students' comprehension competence in decoding metaphors and idioms in British newspapers. The results of the test reveal that students of English really find significant difficulties in guessing the correct meaning of metaphorical and idiomatic expressions. Their comprehension competence with English non-literal language is to some extent very low, and their ability to decode metaphors and idioms and find the right interpretation is limited. Generally, this is due to the fact that non-literal language is above students' comprehension competence at this level, also figurative language is considered the most difficult part of language to any ESL/EFL student in which the meaning is not clear from the meaning of the component words. Furthermore, the findings show that students failed in locating figurative language in most sentences, and in some sentences their explanation of some idioms and metaphors was even worse from what it was expected.

The study also relies on questionnaire with students to answer the rest of the research questions, by discussing the main difficulties they face while reading a metaphor or an idiom in any type of British newspapers, and the strategies they use to understand and learn these figurative expressions.

Finally, this study reached its aims , because the research questions set at the beginning which are: "Does the level of EFL students' comprehension competence allow them to decode metaphors and idioms?", and the second "What sort of difficulties and obstacles do EFL students encounter in decoding Metaphors and idioms?", and the last research question "What are the different strategies used by EFL students to facilitate their ability to decode Metaphors and Idioms?", clearly and without a doubt, show that students of EFL encounter major problems in decoding and understanding metaphors and idioms that are utilized in British newspapers. Hence, students should be exposed, more and more, to metaphorical and idiomatic expressions in schools and universities in order to improve their comprehension competence and expand their knowledge.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Metaphors and Idioms understanding Test

As trainers of English class, we are carrying out a research about an investigation of the EFL students' comprehension competence of decoding Metaphors and Idioms that are used in British Newspapers. You are kindly invited to submit your answer to the task below, we would be very glad to get your answer, and your contribution are very vital to the structure of the task and all the responses will be kept confidential. Thank you!

Read each of the newspapers headlines below. Underline words and phrases that you think have to do with non-literal language and try to label them as either '*metaphor*' or '*idiom*' along with their explanation. If you don't know it, state that you don't know it.

1- BBC News weather forecast: Snow to hit UK 'thick and fast' as Beast from the East 2 rages (Express, 03.17.2018)

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2- Jones swings the axe on England (Metro, 03.16.2018)

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3- Liverpool vs Watford TV channel, kick-off time, date and odds (Metro, 03.17.2018)

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4- Russia in tit-for-tat expulsion of 23 British diplomats (The Telegraph, 03.17.2018)

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Appendices

5- **Theresa May wants to have her cake and eat it with housebuilding too** (The Guardian, 03.05.2018)

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6- **Dijon defy Ligue 1 stereotypes and catch the eye with fluid** (The Guardian, 03.05.2018)

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7- **Arsenal 0-3 Manchester City: Booed and Leory Sane's on fire – 5 talking points** (The Mirror, 03.01.2018)

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8- **Rubbing salt into Palestine's wounds** (Morning Star, 03.14.2018)

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9- **A new movie has swept the board at an international award ceremony** (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press, January 11, 2017)

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10- **Actor is on track to win the final of a TV dance competition** (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press, January 11, 2017)

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Appendices

11- A comedian reports that he thought he was going to lose his job and be on the street

(Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press, January 11, 2017)

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12- Give the show a new lease of life (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press, January 11, 2017)

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13- A famous football manager and his wife have decided to call it a day after fifteen years of marriage (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press, January 11, 2017)

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14- A politician has come under fire from within her party because of her negative remarks about her party's leader (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press, January 11, 2017)

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15- The opposing political party is criticized for being out of step with ordinary working people (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press, January 11, 2017)

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16- The English cricket team is on the brink of defeat in their latest series (Kate Woodford. Cambridge Press, January 11, 2017)

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Thank you 😊

Appendices

Appendix B: Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims at collecting data concerning investigating EFL students comprehension competence in decoding metaphors and idioms in British newspapers. Thus, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions. Thank you for your help

1- What is your gender?

Male

Female

2- What is your age?

—

3- How many years have you been learning English?

—

4- Have you had any English training outside of university curriculums (external courses, home use etc.)?

Yes

If yes, specify: _____

No

5- How much time you spend reading English?

0 hours a week

1-4 hours a week

5-9 hours a week

10-14 hours a week

Other, how much? _____

Appendices

6- What you read in English? For example, books (e.g. novels, auto biographies, comic books etc.), magazines, newspapers...

7- Do you enjoy reading English Newspapers?

Yes

No

8- Have you ever read British Newspapers?

Yes

If yes, name some of them: _____

No

9- Have you the experience of learning English metaphors and idioms from newspapers?

Yes

No

10- While reading a headline or an article in any British Newspaper, are you able to get familiar with metaphors and idioms and locate them easily? (If you answered yes or no please specify)

Yes

No

11- What was the greatest difficulty you met during the process of answering when participating in the test?

Appendices

12- Do you think idioms and metaphors are difficult because:

- There is a lack of cultural background behind metaphors and idioms
- There is a lack of experience dealing with metaphors and idioms
- They are not part of the course syllabi
- They are not taught well in class
- The cultural course not efficient
- They have unfamiliar words
- They have no context
- They have no analogue in Arabic
- The low-level of students
- All of the above

13- Which of the strategies below you use the most to facilitate your understanding of metaphors and idioms?

- The use of verbal information to help activate your knowledge of metaphors and idioms
- The use of key words
- Memorization
- Looking for the equivalent of idioms and metaphors in your first language
- Translating the literal meaning in your first language
- When facing an idiom or a metaphor you ignore it
- Understanding only familiar idioms and metaphors with familiar vocabulary
- Reading metaphors and idioms from different sources
- Other, please justify

Thank you 😊