



Examination of the Impact of Idiomatic Expressions on the Spoken English of Students of English Language Department, College of Education, Zing

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Abstract

The study is an examination of the impact of idiomatic expressions on the spoken English of students of English Language Department, College of Education, Zing. The study employed three objectives and research questions respectively. The study adopted quantitative survey research design with 100 students selected as the respondents of the study. The study used the adopted 4 points Likert Scale as the research instrument to elicit information from the respondents. The study found out that there are prevalent idiomatic expressions used by the students such as, beat around the bush, call it a day and sitting on the fence. The study also found out that there is numerous importance of idiomatic expressions on the spoken English of the students. The study also found out that there are challenges encountered by the students in the use of idiomatic expressions. The study therefore recommended the following that; students should advance their use of idiomatic expressions so as to upgrade their spoken English and also recommended that students and lecturers alike should regularly use idiomatic expressions in their interactions.

Keywords: idioms, idiomatic expressions, English, spoken English, English Students.

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of vocabulary knowledge in enabling individuals to hold authentic and native-like conversations is self-evident. Yet vocabulary is not limited to a set of words whose meanings are always identifiable from a cursory surface glance. The English language is rich in idioms and native speakers use daily a diverse set of vocabulary items which do not have a literal meaning, as stated by Brenner (2013). By all accounts, idioms appear to have meanings that are largely rooted in a nation's deep culture. Non-native speakers of English have difficulties understanding such idioms, especially if they do not possess the necessary vocabulary knowledge commonly associated with such lexical items. Lack of knowledge of idioms may even harm relationships if communications break down, as opined by Alhaysony (2017) and prevent successful intercultural competence. One of the defining characteristics of native proficiency in a given language, according to Maisa and Karunakaran (2013), is idiomatic competence. Khonbi and Sadeghi (2017) maintains that "since idiomatic expressions are so frequently encountered in both spoken and written discourse, they require special attention in language programs and should not be relegated to a position of secondary importance in the curriculum". Similarly, Doiz and Elizari (2013) claims that since idioms are an integral aspect of verbal communication, and since they pave the way for effective communication, they should receive due attention in teaching.

There are claims that lack of constant spoken English is posing difficulty in idioms conjunction while speaking to colleagues and teachers alike. Al-Kadi (2015), reported that despite research findings that using idioms in spoken and written discourse is a significant indicator of high English language proficiency, Chen & Lai (2013) and Brown (2000) termed English as a foreign language (EFL) which learners may show low motivation for idiom learning if idioms are not taught in their classrooms. Al-Kadi (2015) further stated that to be sure, teachers may have difficulty in motivating students to pick up (or use) idioms beyond the classroom context because the chance for such extension may seem almost

non-existent. As a result, students may not even try to understand what an idiom conveys if they are not given opportunities to see idioms enacted in real life.

Today, there is a wide agreement among language learning theorists and researchers that the number of idioms acquired is positively correlated with the degree of success on spoken English, suggesting a close connection between idiom acquisition and spoken English abilities (Ellis, 2001; Cieslicka and Heredia, 2017). Gere (2001) thinks that idioms form a large part of natural communication, and a knowledge of idiomatic expressions increases conversational fluency. This was reinforced by an earlier proclamation that idioms would allow learners to produce English more confidently and “with less effort” as stated by Hinkel (2017). In other words, the more idioms one knows, the more native-like one’s English will sound, and by learning idioms, one consequently learns a big deal of the culture of the community speaking the language in question.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the assertion of Hinkel (2017) whom stated that we need to focus on idioms in order to upgrade the speaking skills of our students, this study observe that the students of English Department, College of Education, Zing find difficulty in using idiomatic expressions while discussing with their colleagues and staff. This research therefore is geared towards the impact of idiomatic expressions on the spoken English of students of English Language Department, College of Education, Zing, to bring to light the importance of learning to use idiomatic expressions by students. By doing this, we use the principles, techniques and strategies of teaching, learning and assessing vocabulary, considering that these vocabulary components are different (from other vocabulary items) in that they are multi-word lexical items – units larger than words. This study therefore is an examination of the impact of idiomatic expressions on the spoken English of students of English Language Department, College of Education, Zing.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of idiomatic expressions on the spoken English of students of English Language Department, College of Education, Zing. This would be achieved through the following research objectives:

1. To identify and list out various English idiomatic expressions.
2. To investigate the importance of the idiomatic expressions on students’ spoken English.
3. To identify the challenges encountered by students in the use of idiomatic expression.

Research Questions

The above objectives would be achieved through the following research questions:

1. What are the prevalent English idiomatic expressions?
2. To what extent is the knowledge of idiomatic expressions important to students of English Department of College of Education, Zing?
3. What are the challenges encountered by the students of College of Education, Zing in the use of idioms?

METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study is survey research design of the descriptive type. Mugenda & Mugenda (2009) observed that a survey design generally collects data from a defined population to describe the recent condition of the population using the variables for the study to achieve this. The population of the study was drawn from the approximately 1000 students of the Department of English Language, College of Education, Zing, while the Simple random sampling was used in selecting 100 students as the respondents. The instrument used for data collection in this study was a closed-ended structured questionnaire designed based on the adopted four point Likert scale thus: Strongly Agreed - 4 points, Agreed - 3 points, Disagreed - 2 points and Strongly Disagreed - 1 point. The questionnaires were distributed and collected back by the researcher and the SPSS was used to analyze the data.

Research Question 1: What are the prevalent English idiomatic expressions?

Item 1: Beat around the bush

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	41	41
A	36	36
SD	10	10
D	13	13
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 41 (41%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 36 (36%) agreed, 10 (10%) strongly disagreed while 13 (13%) disagreed with the statement which states that, 'beat around the bush' is a prevalent English idiomatic expression. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Item 2: Better late than never

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	46	46
A	42	42
SD	6	6
D	6	6
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 46 (46%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 42 (42%) agreed, 6 (6%) strongly disagreed while 6 (6%) disagreed with the statement which states that 'better late than never' is a prevalent English idiomatic expression. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Item 3: Come rain or shine.

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	49	49
A	40	40
SD	6	6
D	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 49 (49%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 40 (40%) agreed, 6 (6%) strongly disagreed while 5 (5%) disagreed with the statement which states that 'come rain or shine' is a prevalent English idiomatic expression.

Item 4: Call it a day

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	52	52
A	36	36
SD	4	4
D	8	8
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 52 (52%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 36 (36%) agreed, 4 (4%) strongly disagreed while 8 (8%) disagreed with the statement which states that, 'call it a day' is a prevalent English idiomatic expression.

Item 5: The ball is in your court

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	43	43
A	47	47
SD	2	2
D	8	8
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 43 (43%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 47 (47%) agreed, 2 (2%) strongly disagreed while 8 (8%) disagreed with the statement which states that, 'the ball is in your court' is a prevalent English idiomatic expression.

Research Question 2: To what extent is the knowledge of idiomatic expressions important to students of English Department of College of Education, Zing?

Item 1: Students can easily use idiomatic expressions in their communications

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	49	49
A	50	50
SD	0	0
D	1	1
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 49 (49%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 50 (50%) agreed, 0 (0%) strongly disagreed while 1 (1%) disagreed with the statement which states that, students can easily use idiomatic expressions in their communications because of the importance of the knowledge of idiomatic expressions. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Item 2: Students can easily express themselves while displaying speaking skills

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	49	49
A	45	45
SD	5	5
D	1	1
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 49 (49%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 45 (45%) agreed, 5 (5%) strongly disagreed while 1 (1%) disagreed with the statement which states that, students can easily express themselves while displaying speaking skills because of the importance of the knowledge of idiomatic expressions. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Item 3: English students will be outstanding among their colleagues whom are not English students

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	44	44
A	46	46
SD	7	7
D	3	3
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 44 (44%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 46 (46%) agreed, 7 (7%) strongly disagreed while 3 (3%) disagreed with the statement which states that, English students will be outstanding among their colleagues whom are not English students because of the importance of the knowledge of idiomatic expressions. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Item 4: Write-ups put down by English Students will be outstanding

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	51	51
A	34	34
SD	11	11
D	4	4
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 51 (51%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 34 (34%) agreed, 11 (11%) strongly disagreed while 4 (4%) disagreed with the statement which states that, Write-ups put down by English Students will be outstanding because of the importance of the knowledge of idiomatic expressions. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Item 5: Students will be excellent overall English users

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	46	45
A	50	49
SD	2	3
D	2	1
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 46 (46%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 50 (50%) agreed, 2 (2%) strongly disagreed while 2 (2%) disagreed with the statement which states that, Students will be excellent overall English users because of the importance of the knowledge of idiomatic expressions. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Research question 3: What are the challenges encountered by the students of College of Education, Zing in the use of idioms?

Item 1: Idiomatic expressions are difficult to comprehend

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	11	11
A	18	18
SD	30	30
D	41	41
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 11 (11%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 18 (18%) agreed, 30 (30%) strongly disagreed while 41 (41%) disagreed with the statement which states that Idiomatic expressions are difficult to comprehend. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

Item 2: Idiomatic expressions are tough to interpret

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	10	10
A	19	19
SD	29	29
D	42	42
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 10 (10%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 19 (19%) agreed, 29 (29%) strongly disagreed while 42 (42%) disagreed with the statement which states that Idiomatic expressions are tough to interpret. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

Item 3: Insufficient usage of Idioms by English lecturers

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	25	25
A	53	53
SD	13	13
D	9	9
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 25 (25%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 53 (53%) agreed, 13 (13%) strongly disagreed while 9 (9%) disagreed with the statement which states that Insufficient usage of Idioms by English lecturers. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Item 4: Insufficient usage of idioms while interacting

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	30	30
A	55	55
SD	10	10
D	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 30 (30%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 55 (55%) agreed, 10 (10%) strongly disagreed while 5 (5%) disagreed with the statement which states that Insufficient usage of idioms while interacting. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Item 5: Insufficient materials on idiomatic expressions

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	33	33
A	57	57
SD	5	5
D	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table reveals that 33 (33%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 57 (57%) agreed, 5 (5%) strongly disagreed while 5 (5%) disagreed with the statement which states that Insufficient materials on idiomatic expressions. This therefore shows that majority of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Discussion

The study in relation to research question 1 which delved into identifying various English idiomatic expressions, it was found out that the respondents pointed out that the prevalent idiomatic expressions used included beat around the bush, better late than never, come rain or shine, the ball is in your court and call it a day. The idiomatic expressions seem to be prevalent because they portray language expressions that are used almost on daily basis. The findings of the study is in conjunction with the studies of various scholars such as Adam (2015) and Tran (2021) whom identified similar idioms as most prevalent among youngsters and college students.

The study also found out that the knowledge of idiomatic expressions is important to students of English Department of College of Education Zing. It was revealed in the study that idiomatic expressions when properly taught and practiced would help students easily express themselves while communicating in English and more so make the students speak standard and quality English. The finding of the study is in consonance with the findings of Hinkel (2017) and Ellis (2001) whom stated differently but closely that idiomatic expressions are integral part of English Language student's upgrade.

The study also found out in relation to research question 3 that students encounter some challenges in the use idiomatic expressions. The study expounded that some of the challenges faced by students include, insufficient usage of idioms by English lecturers, insufficient usage of idioms while interacting and insufficient materials on idiomatic expressions. The study agrees with the revelations of Brenner (2013) and Al-kadi (2015) whom also closely stated that challenges in the use of idiomatic expressions by students abound at various levels and environments.

Summary of Major Findings

1. The study found out that there are numerous idiomatic expressions but the prevalent ones include; beat around the bush, better late than never, come rain or shine, the ball is in your court and call it a day.
2. The study also found out that the knowledge of idiomatic expressions are important to students of English Department of College of Education, Zing in which it students will be excellent overall English users.
3. The study similarly found out that the challenges encountered by the students of College of Education, Zing in the use of idioms include; insufficient usage of Idioms by English lecturers, insufficient usage of idioms while interacting and insufficient materials on idiomatic expressions.

Conclusion

This study is a relevant and timely study which is unique in its setting and nature. The study observed and after reviewing relevant literatures which was measured by the responses of the respondents, the study can come to a rest with an agreement that idiomatic expressions though a significant block in the development of English Language lack is not sufficiently used by both lecturers and students alike.

Recommendations

The study has put forward the following recommendations:

1. English teachers and lecturers alike should imbibe the attitude of using idiomatic expression during classes and while interacting with their students. This will boost the level of grammar expected from the students.
2. School management should buy enough books on idiomatic expressions for use in the Departmental libraries of English Language.
3. Curriculum designers and implementers should focus on idiomatic exercises and give more time to same for proper teaching and mastery by students.

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