The Role of Idiomatic Expressions in Improving 
Communicative Competence of EFL Learners: 
A Case Study of the Students of the Faculty of Education, 
University of Holy Quran and Re-Origination of Sciences, 
Sudan, (2011 -2012)

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A Thesis
Submitted to the University of Gezira in fulfillment of the 
requirements of the Award of the Degree of Doctor of 
Philosophy

in

English Language (Applied Linguistics)

Department of English

Faculty of Education – Hantoub

August, 2015
The Role of Idiomatic Expressions in Improving Communicative Competence of EFL Learners: A Case Study of the Students of the Faculty of Education, University of Holy Quran and Re-Origination of Sciences, Sudan, (2011 - 2012)

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Dedication

To my parents and my family
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Abdel Rahim Hamid Mugaddam, my main supervisor for his infinite support through all the years of investigation. Many thanks go to him for his patience, motivation, and guidance, that without his help, this study would not be carefully structured. I am enormously grateful to my co-supervisor Dr. Awatif Sattie who spared no effort to help me any type of help needed through the study. My gratitudes to the Dean of the Faculty of Education – Hantoub, Dr. Zainab Kassab. Thanks go to the English Department Staff of Hantoub, University of Gezira who helped in a way or another. My warm thanks are for my colleagues of English Department, University of Holy Quran and Re-Origination of Sciences for their encouragement. Special thanks are due to Dr. Mariam Sid Ahmed for her considerable support. Really I feel grateful to all the twenty-one lecturers who, willingly participated in the interviews and gave relevant and valuable information. Students who were the subjects of the study deserve lots of thanks for their patience through a whole semester attending the classes and having tests to ensure the information needed. My gratitudes are for the librarians in different colleges of different universities. I express my profound gratitude to the much beloved family: husband, son, and daughters for whatever help needed. Also, sincere gratitude is expressed to Alsheikh Ali Mousa who bore the difficult task of typing and re-typing the material of the thesis. Surely, many people deserve thanks – I thank them all, I don't mean to ignore anyone.
The Role of Idiomatic Expressions in Improving Communicative Competence of EFL Learners:
A Case Study of the students of the Faculty of Education, University of Holy Quran and Re-Origination of Sciences, Wad Medani, Sudan, (2011-2012).
Awatif Hassan Ahmed Adam.
Doctor of Philosophy in English Language (Applied Linguistics) July 2015
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Abstract

The study handled the area of idiomatic expressions as being important linguistic units for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Idiomatic expressions are expressions each of which consists of two or more words whose meaning differ from the literal meaning of the individual words. These expressions are really a problem for the students majoring in English that they do not understand them. The study aimed at exploring the role of idiomatic expressions in improving communicative competence and whether these expressions have effective role in improving the students' performance in language. The study aimed to highlight idiomatic expressions of English as a foreign language for being basic units of language. The study followed the descriptive analytical methods. The tools used for collecting the data were the interview and two tests. The interviews were conducted with university lecturers from different universities in Sudan who teach English Language. They were twenty-one lecturers. A pre-test and a post-test were conducted for the students majoring in English who were forty-seven students from the department of English, Faculty of Education, University of Holy Quran and Re-Origination of Sciences, Meda. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme was used for data analysis. The study reached many results. The main results revolve around the following: the importance of idiomatic expressions as being important linguistic units for the students of English. There was a significant difference between the students' performance in the pre-test and their performance in the post-test. There was an improvement of the students' performance in the post test after studying the syllabus that included idiomatic expressions that was designed for them. This means the students' comprehension of idiomatic expressions has a significant role in improving their performance in language. The study reached the result that culture is considered 'cornerstone' with regard to enjoyable and effective factors of learning a language. There is a broad consensus on the necessity of the inclusion of idiomatic expressions in university syllabuses (95.2% of the lecturers). The results also show that effective teaching of idiomatic expressions will result in improving the students' communication skills. Another result shows that idiomatic expressions exist within some syllabuses of universities, but they are not taught effectively. The study recommends that idiomatic expressions should be focused on and included within the syllabuses of universities in Sudan, besides adopting effective methods and techniques in teaching such linguistic elements.
دور العبارات الإصطلاحية في تحسين أداء الكفاءة التواصلية لدارسي اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية

دراسة حالة طالب التربية جامعة القرآن الكريم وتأصيل العلوم. ود مدني، السودان (2012،2011):

عوطف حسن أحمد آدم

دكتورة الفلسفة في اللغة الإنجليزية تخصص علم اللغة التطبيقية يوليو 2015

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية
كلية التربية حنتوب
جامعة الجزيرة

ملخص الدراسة

تناولت الدراسة العبارات الإصطلاحية الإنجليزية لأهميتها لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. العبارات الإصطلاحية هي عبارات تكون كل عبارة منها من كلمتين أو أكثر حيث أن معنى كل كلمة من الكلمات المكونة للعبارة إذا أخذ على حدة لا تعطي معنى العبارة. هذه العبارات تمثل أحياناً المشاكل لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية حيث أنهم لا يفهمونها. هدفت الدراسة لاستكشاف دور العبارات الإصطلاحية في تحسين كفاءة الطلاب التواصلية. أما كان لهذه العبارات دور فعال في تحسين أداء الطلاب في اللغة. كما هدفت الدراسة لتسليط الضوء على العبارات الإصطلاحية الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية باعتبارها وحدات أساسية في اللغة. طرق البحث التي استخدمت خلال البحث، الطرق الوصفية والتحليلية. الأدوات التي استخدمت لجمع البيانات هي المقابلات، إضافة إلى اختبارين: قبلي وبعدي. المقابلات أجريت مع أساتذة من الجامعات المختلفة بالسودان من يقومون بتدرّس اللغة الإنجليزية وكذلك عدد من الطلاب المتخصصين في اللغة الإنجليزية. مدى ثقة TARJAMID لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية، جامعة القرآن الكريم وتخصص اللغة، كلية اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة الطب، جامعة العلوم، طرق برنامج الحزم الإحصائي لعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS) لتحليل البيانات، توصلت الدراسة لعدد من النتائج، أهمها العبارات الإصطلاحية كوحدات لغوية مهمة لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية. هناك فرق كبير بين أداء الطلاب في الاختبار القبلي وإدارتهم في الاختبار البعدي. هناك تحسن في أداء الطلاب في الاختبار البعدي بعد دراستهم للعديد من العبارات الإصطلاحية في دور كبس في نتائج أداء الطلاب. كما توصلت الدراسة إلى أن التدريس القوي في اللغة ينتج عن تدريس الطلاب بالعديد من العبارات الإصطلاحية، لما يتعلق بعوامل تعلم اللغة الفعالة الممتعة. هناك اتفاق بضرورة أن تكون العبارات الإصطلاحية ضمن مقررات الجامعات. (95.2% من المحاضرين) أيضاً وضعت النتائج أن الدروس القوية في اللغة الإنجليزية تنتج عن تدريس مهارات الطلاب التوصلية نتيجة أخرى توضح أن العبارات الإصطلاحية توجد ضمن بعض مقررات الجامعات، لكن لا تدرس بطريقة فعالة. أما تدريس الإنجليزية على أن تدّرس العبارات الإصطلاحية الاهتمام وإن يتم إدراجها ضمن مقررات الجامعات بالسودان بالإضافة إلى التي تقوم بالتدريس عناصر لغوية كهذا.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

The phrase «hegemony of English Language» as raised by the Linguist «Bernard Spolsky» emphasized the fact that English has developed into a global language. This study aims to tackle a problematic area in the field of teaching and learning English; English as a foreign language (EFL), the area in question is English idiomatic expression.

Naturally, the chief goal of teaching and learning a language is communication, oral or written communication. To help a learner to be communicatively competent, social and cultural elements of the language should be considered. Surely it is illogical to separate language from its cultural and social context.

There are many cases where someone knows the rule of a language, but still cannot communicate successfully. One may understand what is being said, but fails to respond or participate, or one may understand the literal meaning of what is said, but fail to understand the message. This emphasizes that the knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the language, although essential, is one thing. Other types of knowledge and ability are essential in order to put the grammar and vocabulary into use and hence communicate successfully.

One important type of knowledge is the knowledge of idioms. It is really difficult or rather, impossible to speak or write in English without using idiomatic expressions.

But language learners find idioms difficult to understand and this is not surprising. If a native speaker proposes to «show you the ropes» and you are not familiar with the expression, you might not understand that she/he is going to teach you how to do a certain job. The expression was originally used in the context of sailing where an experienced sailor had to show a novice how to handle the ropes on a boat (Boers, 2008).
Idiomatic competence has recently been discussed in accordance with communicative competence which was inspired by Chomsky (1965), Hymes (1972), Celce-Murcia (1995-2008) and other scholars. In the revised model of communicative competence by Celce-Murcia (2008), the ability to use idioms is regarded as a competent of formulaic competence, which refers to the selection and use of fixed chunks of stretches of language in communication. As part of formulaic competence, idiomatic competence is the ability to appropriately communicate with idioms in the roles of both an addressor and addressee (Buckingham, 2006; Burke, 1988). It helps communicators fully encode and decode the meaning of a conversation.

But, it is a fact that is repeated by nearly the majority of scholars that it is difficult for English native speakers to master English idioms, let alone EFL learners, although they grow up hearing and speaking idioms every day.

Sedil and McMordie (1988) state that since the general tendencies of present-day English are towards more idiomatic usage, it is important to show the learner that idioms are not a separate part of the language which one choose either to use or to omit, but they form an essential part of the vocabulary of the English Language.

Idiomatic expressions have always been a challenge when learning a foreign language. They are problematic and misleading; with many idioms if there is a small mistake in the structure of them, it can sound strange, funny or completely wrong.

Take the examples:

a) Get the move on  →  (get a move on)
b) offhands  →  (offhand)

A non-native speaker pays little attention to such small differences between the two phrases; (get the move on) which is in fact (get a move on), whereas the second idiom (offhand) should be used instead of offhands, which may be used by non-native speakers due to their ignorance.
1.1 Statement of the Problem:

Sudanese students as non-native speakers of English who study English as a foreign language (EFL) do not use English idioms in their speech or writing, or rather, they rarely use them. This is due to their negligence of idiomatic expressions.

The knowledge of idioms gives invaluable assistance to the students to improve their performance in language. Practicing and using idioms make them feel confident that they are able to possess such vocabulary.

Given the fact that idioms are now in such widespread use, the problem of ignoring them or not using them make non-native speakers of English produce unnatural speech and respond inappropriately. This urged the researcher to highlight such area in case some suggestions and recommendations for practical solutions may arise.

1.2 Objectives of the Study:

1. To orientate Sudanese students majoring in English with English idioms.
2. To know to what extent idioms are effective in developing the students communicative competence.
3. To explore the indispensable role of the knowledge of English idioms in teaching and learning English.
4. To investigate the area of idioms in the syllabuses of university in order to approximately know their weight in English language.

1.3 Questions of the Study:

1. Are Sudanese university students majoring in English aware of English idiomatic expressions?
2. Are non-native speakers teachers of English familiar with idiomatic expression?
3. Do teachers who teach English have ample knowledge of English idioms?
4. Are culture-specific expressions important elements for teaching EFL learners?
5. Are idiomatic expressions taught as part of the process of teaching and learning EFL?
6. Do many of the teachers of English have poor knowledge of English idioms?

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study:

1. Sudanese university students majoring in English are, to a great extent, unaware of idiomatic expressions.
2. Many of the teachers who are non-native speakers are not familiar with idiomatic expressions.
3. Some experienced teachers are knowledgeable of culture-bound expressions.
4. Culture-specific expressions are, to a great degree, important elements for teaching EFL learners, English language is best understood through its culture.
5. Within the process of teaching English, idiomatic expressions are not taught explicitly when teaches come across them.
6. A considerable number of Sudanese teachers of English have poor knowledge of idiomatic expressions.

1.5 Significance of the Study:

In pedagogy, there is consensus amongst linguists and language specialists that oral and written communication is the prime goal of teaching and learning a language. Idiomatic expressions exist in the spoken and written English language abundantly. Due to this fact and the fact that the students of EFL have gaps of the knowledge of idioms, the researcher sees the area of English idioms as significant to highlight and explore. The study is expected to help EFL students to develop both spoken and written communicative competence which is compatible with achieving the goal of the language.

The study may also provide information for syllabus designers and the development of language teaching programmes with focus on effectiveness of the incorporation of idioms within the syllabus of EFL.
1.6 Methodology of the Study:

The researchers chooses the experimental analytical method for the study. The tools used for collecting data are two tests: a pre-test and a post-test and interview. The experiment was carried out on a sample of university students in order to obtain information regarding students performance before and after teaching them a course designed for them including idioms. The interview was intended for university teachers in order to obtain information concerning idioms at university level. University teachers were chosen for their experience and competence in English language, besides their direct contact with the sample of the study; university students.

1.7 Analysis of the Study:

The researcher used the Statistical programme for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analyzing the data obtained. The results were exhaustively discussed, tabulated and displayed in chapter four.

1.8 Limits of the study:

The study was conducted within the confines of different universities in Sudan. The sample of the students was chosen from the University of Holy Quran and re-origination of Sciences, besides university teachers chosen from different parts of the country: the University of Gezira, University of Khartoum, University of Al Imam Al Hadi, O.U.S(Khartoum), Ahlia College (Medani) and British Institues (Khartoum).

Other subjects were chosen from the University of Gezira. That sample was intended for piloting the pre –test and post test.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction:

One possible view of the aim of language teaching is to prepare the learner to perform a specific set of roles in a new language and new culture. While the above view is stated by Wilkins (1978: 80), (Doughty et al, 2003) think that the mechanism of learning a language might be simple, but the product is a rich and diverse population of hundreds of thousands of lexical items and phrases. The store of familiar collocation of the native language speaker is varied indeed.

The sheer number of words and their patterns variously explains why language learning takes so long, why it requires exposure to authentic sources, and why there is so much current interest in corpus linguistics in second language acquisition, native like competence and fluency demand such idiomaticity.

Cook (2003: 42) assures that there are many cases where someone knows the rules of a language but is still not be able to communicate successfully in that language. Example, one may not be able to use the language fast enough, or he/she may understand what is being said and what has to say, but still somehow fails to express oneself, or one may understand the literal meaning of what is said, in other words, the knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary, though essential, is one thing, being able to put them into use involves other types of knowledge and ability as well.

The study of cross-cultural communication has often been related to ELT. It seems sensible when learning a language to study the culture of the people who speak it.

As stated by Gebhard (2006: 63-64), the primary goal of communicative class is student development of communicative competence in English. A very important component of communicative competence is socio-cultural competency, which is the ability to use English in social contexts in culturally appropriate ways.

Cacciari (1993: vii) argues that if natural language had been designed by a logician, idioms would not exist. They are a feature of discourse that frustrates any simple logical account of how the meaningful utterances depend on the meanings of
their parts and on the syntactic relations among those parts. According to Cacciari (1993) idioms are transparent to native speakers but a course of perplexity to those who are acquiring a second language. If someone says Mrs. Tatcher has become the queen of Scotland, a response may be ‘that’s a tall story!’ . Pull the other one!’ . As anyone struggling to learn English will assert that stories cannot be tall. They have no height, and so the expressions violate a restriction on the normal sense of the word. Similarly, to pull something is a physical event. Certainly, ‘tall’ has an idiomatic sense that relates to another idiom, ‘to pull someone’s leg’ which means to joke or tease someone.

Foulsham (2007:5) expresses that English is a fascinating language and it is developing all the time. Our communication with others is vastly enriched by the expressions we use, making what we say more concise, more amusing and more interesting. English idioms have many diverse sources, including the Quran and the Bible, folk tales, town and country life, other languages, warfare, politics and sport. Being an island, Britain has generated expressions related to a seafaring life abundantly.

Vocabulary has been traditionally considered as individual words. This, according to Schmitt and Carter (2000:1) is a layman’s view which is considered by them as inadequate because vocabulary includes many units which are larger than individual orthographic words. Schmitt and Carter give examples explaining their argument saying that a single meaning is attached for such examples like: ‘give up’, ‘fish shop’, ‘freeze dry’ and ‘burn the midnight oil’. The two scholars assure that these multi-word lexical units are ubiquitous in language use as shown in corpora. Schmitt and Carter (2000:1) refer to such lexical phrases as ‘strings’. They describe these strings of language as sequences of words that are learned and stored as individual wholes, arguing that lexical phrases are a key element of fluent language production whose role in vocabulary learning is considerable.

Schmitt and Carter refer to Pawley and Syder’s (2002:2) point of view about native speakers of the language and the lexical phrases. They agree with them that lexical phrases are a key element of fluent language production which play an essential part in vocabulary learning.
2.1 Problems with Pinning Down Word Meaning:

Cooper,(2004) states that idioms are the colourful side of languages which are one of the symbols use while people communicate their thoughts and feelings. They are used to give life and richness to the language by the existing words combining them in a new sense and creating new meaning. Unlike novel phrases, idioms are recalled as integral units. Most native speakers frequently use these units in their daily life as they are very important part of any natural language.

Cooper believes that the figurative meaning of idioms is quicker to comprehend than their literal meaning. Native speakers may have access only to figurative meanings of words or of particular word combinations that make up an idiom. For example, the native speaker recognizes the meaning of the idiom ‘hold your tongue’ as figurative expressions that should not be interpreted literally even though such expressions may have literal meaning.

Saeed, (2009: 59) argues that the meaning of a word is slippery, different native speakers come up with somewhat different definitions while they feel that they know the meaning of the word. As he continues, native speakers might have only the vaguest feeling for other words to the extent that they have to check the meaning in a dictionary. Some of this difficulty arises from the influence of context on word meaning.

Cowie (2009: 52) argues that collocations, though considered as a part of idiomatic expressions, differ from idioms. While collocations have a figurative meaning that takes in only part of the phrase as in ‘deliver a speech’ where ‘deliver’ is figurative and ‘speech’ is literal, in an idiom the figurative shift extends over the entire phrase. Example: ‘spill the beans’. It is clearly that the shift extends over the whole parts of the idiom. Both ‘spill’ and ‘beans’ have figurative meaning.

Halliday (1966: 21) draws a comparison between the collocation patterns of two adjectives ‘strong and powerful’ which appear to have similar meanings. Both adjectives can be used for some items, for example: ‘strong argument’ and ‘powerful argument’, yet strong collocates with tea rather than powerful, while powerful collocates with car, a powerful car rather than a strong car.
These collocations as explained by Saeed, (2009: 60), can undergo a fossilization process until they become fixed expressions such as ‘hot and cold’ running water rather than cold and hot running water, ‘husband and wife’, but not wife and husband. Such fixed expressions are common with food: fish and chips, salt and vinegar, curry and rice. A similar type of fossilization results in the existence of idioms; expressions where the individual words have ceased to have independent meanings. In expressions like ‘kith and kin’ or ‘spick and span’, not many English speakers would be able to assign a meaning here to kith or span.

The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms highlights the idiom ‘kith and kin’ which means friend and family dates from the 1300s, and originally meant countrymen (kith meant ‘one’s native land’) and ‘family members. It gradually took on the present looser sense.

Spick and span refers to something being as neat and clean. The two terms spick “means a nail” and span (means a wooden chip) are now obsolete. In the 1500s a sailing ship was considered ‘spick and span’ when every spike was brand-new, then, later the terms transferred to the current sense in the mid 1800s.

Benda (1981: 31) argues that the true nature of language is both stereotyped and creative. He, as well, argues that there is a tendency towards stereotyping, because of man’s penchant for defining things, ideas and concepts. As Benda argues, there are fewer words than there are ideas due to the complexity of life. So people combine words to express new ideas. Thus new collocations are to be formed. These collocations, after a long time, are widely accepted and used by the community. Some of them die out, because they are replaced by new ones, or because human concepts have changed.

Benda, (1981: 33) suggests that teaching idiomatic structures along with guided composition, will contribute to the students understanding of the process of acquiring these ready-made pieces of language.

2.2The Birth of Idioms:

Hockett (1968: 304) states that a speaker may say something that he has never said, and never heard before to listeners to whom the utterance is equally novel, and yet be understood. This is a daily occurrence, and the way in which it came about is
basically simple: the new utterance is a nonce-form, built from familiar material by familiar patterns. However, as Hockett explains, the mere occurrence of nonce-form for the first time does not in itself constitute the creation of a new idiom. An additional ingredient is required: something more or less unusual either about the structure of the newly-produced nonce-form, or about the attendant circumstances, or both, which renders the form memorable. When people react to such new circumstances, they may produce a phrase or an utterance which is understandable only because those who hear it are also confronted by the new circumstances. Alternatively, an individual may react to conventional circumstances with a bit of speech which is somewhat unconventional, only being understood, once again, because of context. Given any such novelty, either of expression or circumstances or of both, the event gives special meaning on the linguistic form which was used and the latter becomes idiomatic.

Here are two examples:

1. A little boy asked his parents ‘what’s a poy?’ This utterance is unusual in its form’ the members of the family who overhear him are to remember the event and tell the story to others. They may even use the new form ‘poy’ in family jargon. Just what the form will mean, will depend on the circumstances in which the boy used it perhaps it will not denote anything but it will certainly have connotations.

   Even if the form is not destined to survive for long or to spread very widely, it is nonetheless a new idiom. Probably, this particular coinage has occurred many times, quite independently, in different family circles in the English-speaking world.

2. The second example is an image of a rather different circumstance: Mrs. X comes home with a new blouse, of one of those indeterminate blue-green shades for which many women have a special fancy name, but which they definitely class as a shade of green, not of blue. Mr. X compliments her by saying ‘that’s a nice shade of blue’. For days thereafter, Mrs. X teases her husband by pointing to any obviously green object and saying ‘that’s a nice shade of blue, isn’t it?’ Here, there is nothing usually about the form of the utterance, only about original attendant circumstance, yet the utterance has taken on, at least temporarily, idiomatic value.

   The total context, linguistic and nonlinguistic, in which a nonce-form takes on the status of an idiom is thus the defining context of the idiom. In the two examples
given above, the defining contexts are informal. But formal contexts of various sorts may equally serve well. (Hockett: 1968: 305).

2.3 Collocations:

Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English (2010: vii) defines collocations as “the way words combine in a language to produce natural sounding speech and writing”, for example: strong wind but ‘heavy rain’.

Collin Cobuild English Dictionary defines collocations as ‘the way that some words occur regularly whenever another word is used’.

Saeed (2006: 60) agrees with both dictionaries; Oxford Collocation Dictionary and Collin Cobuild English Dictionary in the same point of view about collocations.

2.3.1 The Importance of Collocations:

According to Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English language, collocation runs through the whole of the language, no piece of natural spoken or written English is completely free of collocation. A student who talks about ‘strong rain’ may make himself understood, but possibly not without provoking a smile or a correction, while may or may not matter, but, in an exam, he will certainly be marked down for it.

More important, as the dictionary states, language that is collocationally rich, is also more precise. That is because most single words in the English language, especially the more common words, embrace a whole range of meanings, some of which are quite distinct, and some shade into each other by degrees.

The precise meaning in any context is determined by that context; by the words that surround and combine with the core word – by collocation. A student who is able to choose the appropriate collocation will be able to express himself or herself much more clearly, and be able to convey something quite precise, not just a general meaning. For example:

1. This is a good book and contains a lot of interesting details.

2. This is a fascinating book and contains a wealth of historical details.
As the dictionary comments, both sentences are perfectly correct in terms of grammar and vocabulary, but certainly sentence (2) communicates more about the book in question.

2.4 Idiom Lexicons:

Dobrovol’skij (2006: 251) states that there exist numerous dictionaries of idioms for particularly all languages covering a more or less long literary tradition. The first question that must be answered by idiom dictionaries concerns the very notion of idiom. Lexicographers have to know exactly, when working on such a dictionary, what they understand by the word idiom, otherwise they would face serious difficulties deciding which expressions should be excluded. Though idiom research has quite a long tradition and has become an internationally developed linguistic discipline today, still it is difficult to give a definite and generally accepted answer to the question, what is an idiom?’

2.5 Lexical Semantics:

Fromkin et al, (2007: 181) argue that the meaning of an expression is not always obvious, even to a native speaker of the language. Meaning may be obscured in many ways, but the point of view of Cacciari (1993: viii) opposes Fromkin saying that idiomatic expressions are transparent to native speakers.

Fromkin et al, (2007: 181) argue that the meaning of a phrase or sentence is partially a function of the meanings of the words it contains, similarly the meaning of many words is a function of the morphemes that compose it. However, there is a fundamental difference between word meaning and sentence meaning. Fromkin et al (2007: 181) believe that the meaning of most words and all morphemes is conventional, that is, speakers of a language implicitly agree on their meaning, and the children acquiring the language must simply learn those meanings directly. On the other hand, the meaning of most sentences must be constructed by the application of semantic rules.

Fromkin et al, (2007: 181) continue adding that knowing a language includes knowing the metaphors, simple words, compound words and their meanings. In addition, it means knowing fixed phrases consisting of more than one word, with meanings that cannot be inferred from the meanings of the individual words.
2.6 The Importance of idiomatic expressions:

Elkilic (2008: 28) Idioms are an important part of any language and may be said to be an indicator of one’s fluency in that language. Therefore, idioms play a considerable role in both languages, the mother tongue and the foreign language. The foreign learner does not only learn the grammatical structure and the vocabulary of the language, but she/he also learns the idioms to help him/her integrate into the culture of the foreign language.

Elkilic (2008: 29) states that

“as English language is rich in idioms, learning the idioms in English language constitutes the soul of the language. Yet the plethora of human situation makes it imperative to reduce them to manageable proportion”.

Students learning English will inevitably confront difficulties in understanding idioms and will not be accepted as proficient without the knowledge of idiomatic expressions sufficiently.

2.7 Different Views in Defining Idioms:

Many linguists view idioms, agreeing to some degrees with some scholars, and disagreeing with others, yet the matter remains debatable.

Saeed (2009: 59) defines an ‘idiom’ as words collocated in a form that became affixed to each other until metamorphosing into a fossilized term. This collocation of words is commonly used in a group – Saeed re-defines each component word in the word-group and becomes an idiomatic expression. The words develop a specialized meaning as an entity, as an idiom.

McCarther (1992: 494) defines idioms as follows: an idiom is an expression unique to a language, especially one whose sense is not predictable from the meanings and arrangements of its elements, such as ‘kick the bucket’ which has nothing obviously to do with kicking or buckets. The meaning of the idiom kick the bucket is ‘to die’. In linguistics the term idiomaticity refers to nature of idioms and the degree to which a usage can be regarded as idiomatic. Some expressions are more holophrastic and unanalysable than others, for example: ‘to take steps’ is literal and non-idiomatic.
in ‘the baby took her first step’. It also could be figurative, grammatically open and semi-idiomatic in “they took some steps to put the matter right”, and the phrase is fully idiomatic and grammatically closed in “She took steps to see that was done”. These examples demonstrate a continuum of meaning and use that is true for many usages. No such continuum exist; however, between ‘He kicked the bucket out of the way’, and ‘He kicked the bucket’ last night, died. Such idioms are particularly rigid, and not passivized.

McCarthy (2008: 84) states that certain vocabulary such as idiomatic expressions are very important in organizing discourses. But he believes that learners of English find such vocabulary difficult, boring and demotivating. They are the texts that are hardest to unpack. Many researchers have complained that such vocabulary produces a ‘lexical bar’, a serious obstacle to progress in education, even for children learning their first language. So difficulties faced by second language learners should not be underestimated, particularly those who do not come from a Romance or Germanic language background.

The New International Webster College Dictionary defines an idiom as ‘an expression not readily analyzable from its grammatical construction or from the meaning of its component parts’. It is the part of the distinctive from or construction of a particular language that has a specific form or style present only in that language. Wilkens (1987: 79) defines idioms in terms of non-equivalence in other language, so that ‘kick the bucket’, ‘red herring’, and the like are idioms because they cannot be directly transferred into French or German.

Milchell,(1971:57) defines an idiom as follows : “the idiom belongs to a different order of abstraction. It is a particular cumulative association immutable in the sense that its parts are unproductive in relation to the whole in terms of the normal operational processes of substitution, transposition, expansion, etc.’’

Random House Webster’s College Dictionary agrees with this definition, stating that an idiom is an expression whose meaning is not predictable from the usual grammatical rules or from the usual meanings of its constituent elements.

In the American Heritage Dictionary of idioms, Ammer (1992: iv) defines an idioms as ‘a set phrase of two or more words whose meaning differs from the literal meaning of the individual words’, she adds that idioms are the idiosyncrasies of a
language, which often defy the rules of logic, posing great difficulties for non-native speakers. She refers to the origin of many idioms as unknown, giving examples as: ‘by hook or by crook’, commenting on the use of familiar words in obscure ways.

Fellabum et al, (2006: 349) define idioms as ‘a class of multi-word units which pose a challenge to our understanding of grammar and lexis that has not yet been fully met’.

Philip (2007: 1) considers idioms qualitatively different from normal language, but the precise nature of this difference can be elusive. Moreover, Philip thinks that even amongst scholars, it is difficult to find a consensus as what precisely is or is not an idiom, because of the heterogeneity of the class of idiom.

Longman Contemporary Dictionary gives the following definition: ‘an idiom is a group of words that has a special meaning that is different from the ordinary meaning of each separate word’. Whereas Cambridge Dictionary defines an idiom as ‘a group of words in a fixed order that has a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word understood on its own’.

Oxford Advance Learner’s Dictionary’s definition is close to the pervious dictionaries in that an ‘idiom consists of a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words’. The example for an idiom given in the dictionary is: ‘let the cat out of the bag’ which means to tell a secret by mistake.

2.8 Idioms and Arbitrariness

Many linguists used to believe that idioms are arbitrary, that is, their meaning could not be guessed from the words they consist of. Consequently, in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) when teachers handle idiomatic expressions, they just inform their students that the only way to master them is to learn them by heart. Fortunately, Swan, (1980:244) mentions that many idioms can be explained and so they can be learned in a systematic way.

According to Knowles (2004) the learning process of idioms should be grounded :the first step is to familiarize the students with idioms, then comes the second step which is recognition of them and the final phase is the comprehension of idioms which will lead to mastery and automaticity. But learners used to struggle with the first two phrases: familiarization and recognition, which may result in neglecting or avoiding them.
Nippold and Taylor (1995) state that the degree of frequency with which an idiom occurs in a language is often defined as familiarity, which both moderated by culture. Familiarity of idioms demands less conceptual analysis; more frequently used idioms may be more salient.

Cain et al., (2005: 67) demonstrate that there are three factors in idiom comprehension: familiarity, transparency and context. They state that idioms that are presented in context are easier to understand than presenting them in isolation, maintaining that

*Context might facilitate the interpretation of figurative language by providing the necessary semantic information from which the reader/listener can extract or infer the appropriate sense of expression.*

Context is more important for opaque idioms whose meanings are not fully derivable through semantic analysis of phrases.

Research show, as Swan (1988) states, that when idioms are presented as non-arbitrary features of language, students find them much easier to understand and remember.

### 2.9 The History of Idiomaticity Issues:

Kavka and Zybert (2003: 54) consider the history of idioms as relatively short, viewing the studies of idiomaticity issues as important, though sometimes ungrammatical and illogic as stated by Cacciari, 1993 vii. But in fact idioms as described by them as ‘mental monuments’ of history and source of language change.

There is one issue according to Kavka and Zybert that has been neglected in most earlier studies on idiomatology: namely, the history of investigation on this relatively new field. The question that is introduced by Kavka and Zybert is concerned about different seemingly analogous terms. To explain: Is the history to be dealt with concerned with the history of idiomatology, or idiomaticity, or idiomatic or perhaps phraseology?. All these terms, and may be other labels have been used to refer to one. Scholars are expected to state precisely and unambiguously what they mean by the terms they choose when referring to matters they discuss. The example given by Kavka and Zybert (2003: 55) deals with phraseology. They argue that teachers as practitioners may feel fairly satisfied with their pupils keeping by heart lists of useful phrases. They may not realize the fact that idiomatic expressions are based on semantic rather than lexical grounds, or that the very term phraseology is derived from the base-term
'phrase’ which, for modern linguists, has connotations of reference primarily to grammatical structures.

The term idiomaticity and idiomatology can be paralleled to some other expressions such as phonology, morphology, philology and so on. Therefore, the idiomatology makes it possible to regard the discipline as a truly linguistic one and treated as a field of science which has its objectives and its methods of investigations.

Thus as Kavka and Zybert (2011), argue that idiomaticity which is morphologically like regularity or priority will refer to a quality derived from an attribution of constituting or containing an idiom or idioms. But according to (Kavka, S and Zybert J 2011: 55) this explanation does not encompass everything that should be included. Certainly idiomaticity refers to quality, but does not necessarily need to imply that the idiomaticity of an expression depends on its containing of an idiom.

2.10 Key Characteristics of Idioms:

According to Cowie (2009: 51) idioms originate in phrase with a literal meaning which have settled firmly into the lexicon through repeated use. Many literal phrases remain in constant circulation over considerable period, unchanged in form and meaning, for example, (spread the butter, peel the potatoes). It is arguable that many of these sets, rather than being made up a fresh on each occasion of use, are simply stored and recalled as wholes.

Cowie maintains that these phrases pass on into the next stage of development. They are figuratively extended, in terms of the whole expression, but may or may not also preserve their original literal sense. Phrases that originated in the development of railway network, for example, which are not now idiomatic, are among those which will still be understood in both a literal and figurative sense by native speakers. The following examples show such phrases from that period:
- Go off the rails.
- Run off the rails.
- Reach the end of the line.
- Run into the buffers/ hit the buffers.

2.11 Sociolinguistic, Pragmatic and Psycholinguistic views:

Grace, G (1981) mentions that sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspect of language use need to be considered. He is the first to use the term idiomatology. It shows principal features of a science. Kavka, S and Zybert, J (2011) describe Grace’s idiomatology as synonymous, to a certain extent with the generally accepted sense of idiomaticity.

Kavka, S and Zybert, J, believe that Grace’s idiomatology is scientific in the sense that he preferred to avoid unnecessary confusion of social factors, taking care of pure linguistic description. They introduce Pawley and Syder’s (1983), point of view as making a relation between fluency and idiomatic control of idioms. They believe that fluent and idiomatic control of performance in a language, results to a great extent from the knowledge of a set of ‘sentence stems’ which are institutionalized or lexicalized. The ‘set’ is considered as a unit like a clause whose form and lexical content are fixed.

Later, they introduced the notion of ‘speech formula’ which meant a conventional link of a particular formal construction and a particular conventional idea.

Linguists use the term formula in various subtle meanings and specifications, a sort of cover term embracing what might simply be called an idiomatic expression. Thus, according to Pawley and Syder (1983), all genuine idioms are speech formulas, but not all speech formulas are idioms. The two scholars, as Kavka, S and Zybert, J comment, view true idioms as speech formulas that are semantically non-compositional and, to make their view complete, idioms are syntactically non-conforming. They refer to what methodologists say about language and fluency. Methodologists speak of the use of prefabricated language in conversational routines which makes discourse spontaneous, fluent, and really idiomatic.

Crystal (2001: 352), refers to the classic problem in linguistic theory due to the uncertain boundary between semantics and grammar. Many sentences that are used in
habitual manner illustrate this. These sentences are semi-idiomatic in type, falling midway between clear cases of sentences which follow the normal rules of grammar, for example the girl washed the dishes, and sentences such as ‘raining cats and dogs’.

Consider the following examples which revolve round the lexeme ‘think’.

Come to think of it I thought you knew.
What do you think I thought better of it.
Think it over It doesn’t bear thinking about.
Think nothing of it who do you think you are?

The above linguists agree on the point that people have memorized such expressions as part of the process of producing speech, such expressions help them build up fluent connected speech. They are called lexicalized sentence stems.

Wray and Perkins(2000:18) support the above point of view that idiomatic expressions build fluent speech and help understanding messages; they claim that a hearer is more likely to understand a message if it is in a form s/he has heard before and that he can process without recourse to full analytic decoding.

The recent history of idioms shows that there was no true interest in idioms before the 20th century and then, structuralism, ruling in its various forms over the linguistic world, could hardly handle phenomena which appeared odd, exceptional, not fitting the patterns of grammar.

2.12 Swan's point of view

Swan, (1980) (1997 3d: 244) States that idiomatic expressions are common in all kinds of English, Formal or informal, spoken and written.

Havrila (2009: 3-8) mentions that idiomatic expressions create a significant portion of everyday communication. Even at present time people use expressions whose original sense lies far away from their present communicative function, people express the idea of revealing a secret using the idiom ´spill the beans` and use the idiom ´kicked the bucket` when they mean die.

Miko (1989) postulates that idiomatic expressions can help learners to grasp the meaning of life in a more refined communicative manner.
2.13 Functional differences between idioms and single words:

2.13.1 Idioms Facilitate Communication

Idiomatic expressions or any other type of prefabricated speech structures enable the speakers to fix their attention to larger content units of the discourse. If speakers were supposed to focus on individual words as they are pronounced one by one, the desired idiomatic fluency of a native-like speech would be endangered. Thus it could be said that, according to Havrila (2009) that idioms facilitate communication. One of the principle goals of using formulaic and idiomatic language is to facilitate communication in the sense that idiomatic and formulaic language based on holistic processing of phenomena came to be the preferred strategy for coping with a wide range of troubles that could arise in the course of language communication. Where interaction fluency of processing complex utterances might be in danger, formulaic language is drawn upon to meet the communicational shortfall. It is simply in natural human tendency to economize the effort of communication about recurrent human affairs through generation of stereotyped formulae and so avoid processing overload.

2.13.2 Idioms Contain More Meaning:

Carter (1998) suggests that idioms do not only facilitate communication of stereotyped phenomena and play a maintaining stabilizing role in communication, but also allow for both, larger grammatical units to be built from their base, and modifications resulting in generation of a more creative and cognitively riche speech. According to him, idioms appear to contain more meaning than roughly to their equivalent literal paraphrases. They convey more complex meaning entailments and implicatures at once than single word paraphrases could express in several sentences. To explain, Gibbs maintains that idioms have complex meanings that seem to be motivated by independently existing lively and creative conceptual metaphors that are able to reflect the complexity of human thoughts better than single words can. Therefore, Gibbs refuses the assumption that idioms are dead metaphors as viewed by some linguists.

2.13.3 Idioms Convey Speaker's Commitment and Evaluation.

Besides conveying meaning, idiomatic expressions convey certain evaluative aspect towards the relevant phenomenon. Expressing ideas through idioms
communicates an evaluation of the situation that the speaker refers to. Miko, (1989) mentions that the speaker puts him/herself into a position of a judge of the situation. Idiomatic expression convey a sort of aphoristic truth about the referred issue. The speaker's expressive commitment to the discussed matter through a figurative approximation with an emotional evaluative aspect of the phenomenon is more than a mere stating about the matter of fact. Gibbs (2007) supports the same ideas; he states that speaking idiomatically conveys an interpretation and evaluation of the situation the speaker refers to. Consider the idiom ´skate on thin ice` which conveys in itself the experiential image of movement on thin ice implying a dangerous situation. The perception of danger is strengthened through specifying the movements as intensive movement of skating, which increases the danger of breaking the ice and drowning. Everybody knows that walking on thin ice is dangerous, and performing any more intensive movements on such a thin surface would be qualified (evaluated) as audacious boldness of the person about which the speaker would express his/her attitude.

2.14 Categories of Idioms:

Different scholars contribute to the area of the different categories of idioms. Most of them agree on the most prominent types; transparent and opaque idioms, for example Cain et al (2005). Other scholars introduce different types of idioms other than the two types mentioned; transparent and opaque.

Elkilic, G (2008: 31) identifies four types of idioms:

a. Non-compositional (for example: by and large) which by definition are idioms which are not transparent.

b. Compositional opaque (for example: kick the bucket).

c. Compositional transparent (for example: spill the beans).

d. Quasi-metaphorical (for example: skating on thin ice).

However, Cain et al (2005) mention two types of idioms; transparent idioms and opaque idioms.

Elkilic (2008:31) maintains that transparent idioms are figurative expressions whose meaning can easily be understood.
Kavka, S and Zybert, J (2011: 60) cf Katz, J and Postal, P (1963) that idioms are handled within the transformational generative grammar. Two types of idioms are distinguished: lexical idioms and phrase idioms, defining them on syntactic grounds. The first category is described as syntactically dominated by one of the lowest syntactic (grammatical) categories, namely by noun, adjective, verb. On the contrary, the second category cannot be described like that. Example 1: ‘White lie’ illustrates a lexical idiom while example 2 ‘how do you do’ illustrates a phrase idiom.

According to Kavka, S and Zybert, J (2011: 60) these two types subsume such lexemes as cliches, compounds or even phrasal verbs. Admittedly some linguists exclude compound altogether for example Balint, A (1968) who argues that compounds are not phrases, even though their meaning cannot be arrived at from the meanings of the constituent members for example, ‘bookcase’ is not merely ‘book and case’ put together. They are excluded because their number is so high that their addition would swell the ranks of idioms to unmanageable proportion. Furthermore, there exists overwhelming evidence that neither solid nor hyphenated compounds, present problems in syntactic analysis.

Ifill (2002:13) introduces a further demonstration of transparency; idioms can show variability from a frozen form through modification, which idioms can accept to various degrees. The following example shows a direct adverbial modification.

‘He certainly kicked the bucket’.

The idiom comprises a complete verb phrase, and the adverb ‘certainly’ simply modifies the whole idiom. The adverb works the same way on the verb phrase whether the sentence has an idiomatic reading or not. It is quite simple and does not tell anything about the internal structure. It could be said that idioms could accept modification like that.

Another way for modifying an idiom to serve transparency is through modifying individual words within the idiom. The following example illustrates this type of modification.

They shot huge holes in my argument.

The modification is certainly not a standard part of these well-known fixed expressions, yet it is so easy to get a sense of what the modified constructions mean.
2.14.1 Transparent idioms:

Elkilic, G (2008: 31) defines transparent idioms as figurative expressions whose meaning can easily be understood as compared to the opaque ones. According to Cain *et al.*, (2005: 67) transparency refers to the degree of agreement between the literal and the figurative meanings of an idiom. Elkilic (2008: 31) agree with Boers and Demecheleer (2001) that when the degree of semantic transparency is low, the language learner needs to rely on contextual clue to understand it.

Ifill, T (2002: 11) relates transparency to the capability of syntactic mobility. He claims that the syntax of non-idiomatic version of the phrase directly maps to the syntax of the idiomatic phrase. Each phrase has the same component and the component has the same thematic roles within the phrase in each form.

Huddleston, (1984: 42-43) claims that literal interpretations allow for inserting materials, consider the following examples:

1. ‘Have a leg to stand on’.
2. ‘Tom kicked the bucket’.

With example (1), have a leg to stand on, material between have and the NP which is the object, can be inserted. Thus, it becomes. ‘Have a long leg to stand on’.

The same applies to sentence (2); modifiers can also freely be inserted between ‘the’ and the ‘bucket’ in the literal interpretation for example:

*Tom kicked the bucket becomes:

*Tom kicked the blue bucket.*

*Tom kicked the plastic bucket.*

But in the idiomatic interpretation such modification is virtually excluded.

Philip, G (2007: 1) uses the term motivated for transparent idioms and introduces the transparency of idiom with respect to the ease with which it can be interpreted. This is based on its level of semantic transparency; a transparent idiom yields its meaning easily because there is a straightforward connection between the phrase and the intended meaning. For example, ‘*not see the wood for the trees*’, meaning to focus on small trivial details and fail to understand larger plans or
principles. Philip, G believes that semantic transparency is the criterion for transparency of idioms.

Elkilic, G (2008: 31) argues that if idioms are culture-bound, it is not easy to understand their meaning even if they are transparent. He stresses that the knowledge of idiomacity is not based on linguistic analysis, but it is a matter of cultural awareness. He introduces the following examples:

- Carry coals to Newcastle.
- Bury the hatchet.

2.14.2 Opaque idioms:

Cowie, A (2009: 25) describes opaque idioms as the ones whose words do not contribute to the understanding of the idioms meaning, for Cain et al (2005: 67)

‘the sense of opaque idioms, such as ‘wet behind the ears’ cannot be inferred from the individual words in the phrase or actions they describe’.

Ifill, T (2002: 12) views opaque idioms as those which do not undergo passivization; the elements of the idiom do not have a one-to-one mapping with the elements of the phrase’s actual non-idiomatic meaning. The example that is given by Ifill is ‘kick the bucket’. He argues that the structure of ‘kick the bucket’ is syntactically opaque and the idiomatic version consists of a transitive verb and its direct object, while the non-idiomatic, version as explained by him, is simply an intransitive verb- the bucket corresponds to nothing because ‘die’ does not, and indeed cannot, take any complement. This is why it cannot be passivized.

Philip, G (2007: 1) introduces another term for opacity, he uses the term unmotivated idioms referring to opaque idioms. Opaque or unmotivated idioms according to him, are expressions which have a more arbitrary relationship with its meaning, for example: ‘to go cold turkey’ which means to quit a habit or activity suddenly and completely.

As Philip, G claims, transparency or opacity of an idiom cannot be measured in absolute terms, because it is affected by the individual’s real-world knowledge, awareness of cultural norms and general familiarity with the phrase.
Finally, there is an agreement among scholars that opaque idioms will not convey the same meaning in other language if literally translated.

2.14.2.1 Semantic Opacity:

Ayto, J (2006: 518) stresses that at one extreme there exists some phrases which defy literal understanding, examples:

1. *Cut the mustard* means to come up to the expected standard.

2. *Eat crow*, to admit humiliatingly that one was wrong.

Such idioms may contain fossilized words that have no independent existence in Modern English: for example; pig in a ‘poke’, a purchase which turns out not to be what the vendor claimed, where poke is an old word for a bag or sack. Some fixed phrases may contain elements used in their literal sense in ‘*get down to brass tack’*, to start frankly discussing the essentials of a matter, for instance, (get down to) is broadly speaking being used as it would be in a (small) range of other collocations, for example ‘*get down to business’*.

In some cases, all the main word elements have their literal meaning, and it is only the particular combination in which they appear that confers a meaning beyond the sum of the parts: bread and butter, for example ‘*is bread spread with butter’* and as a fully metaphoricalized idiom, it can also mean a source of income.

Many fixed phrases have a meaning that could not be described as literal, perhaps because their genesis was obviously metaphorical, or because they preserve a usage no longer current in the language, but which nevertheless yield fairly readily to interpretation, for instance ‘*behind the times’*: ‘*old-fashioned’, daylight robbery’*, which mean ‘*a sale at an extortionate price’*, ‘*the talk of the town’* a ‘subject widely or gossiped about respectively.

At the other extreme of the meaning spectrum are institutionalized phrases that are completely semantically transparent; *beneath contempt, from bad to worse, gowrong*. Within this category come many clichés and also so-called ‘freezes’ in which pairs of words are fixed in a particular order, *knives and forks, friends and neighbours*. Their compositional fixity allies them with idioms, but most linguists would exclude them from full membership of the category because of their semantic transparency.
Combinations of this sort shade into collocations, in which the choice of words to express another word’s lexical or grammatical relationships is severely restricted, example, afraid of arrive at / come to / reach a decision.

The closer to the opaque end of the spectrum a multiword construction is, the more likely it is to be regarded as a fully fledged idiom, but assignment to a particular category may depend on the delicacy of judgment applied to the semantics of a particular combination.

2.14.2.2 Compositional Fixity

Ayto, J (2006: 518) argues most idioms that function as verbs or nouns participate in the inflectional variations normal for their word-class; verbs, for example can be marked by a particular person or tense (she has let the cat out of the bag), and nouns can be pluralized (bears with sore heads). However, many idioms are subject to a range of grammatical restrictions and are capable to a greater or less degree of being altered or added to, or having their word-order changed.

The most firmly fixed verbal idioms resist passivization and other standard transformations (Fred kicked the bucket; died) is well-formed. But the ‘bucket was kicked by Fred’, and it was the bucket that Fred kicked are not.

Fixed idioms do not allow insertions or alternations. Example ‘Call it a day’ which means to finish what one is doing, would not be acceptable variation if (another) is inserted: call it another day.

Transitive verbal idioms may allow for a direct object, for example sweep (someone) off their feet; to overwhelm someone suddenly by inspiring a strong emotion of love within them for you. an indirect object example that is acceptable; ‘give (someone) a piece of one’s mind ; or scold angrily. Established norms of fixity are always liable to be set a side by creative language users. Once the basic models are in existence it is perfectly feasible that such utterance could be produced as ‘there will be no ‘bucket kicking’ (dying, violating syntactic fixity, or ‘never darken my patio again’), perhaps said to an unwelcome barbecue guest; replacing door with patio, and thus violating compositional fixity.

A related, but subconscious phenomenon, is the splicing of two or more idioms together, as in ‘count your luck stars, combining count one’s blessings and thank one’s
lucky stars, both invoking gratitude for good fortune, and, ‘don’t burn your bridges until you’ve come to them, combining burn one’s bridges, with ‘cross one’s bridges before one has come to them ‘to act prematurely’.

2.14.2.3 Semantic Function

Ayto, J (2006: 519) Idioms occupy a wide range of syntactic roles, from membership in individual word classes to predicates and entire sentences verbs.

Idiomatic verb phrases function syntactically as verbs in a sentence. Their internal structure is commonly v + o with or without further, elements ‘clap eyes on’ to see, ‘stick one’s neck out’, to take a great risk.

Idiomatic combinations of verb + particle (phrasal verbs) are usually categorized as idioms too: ‘shut up’; stop speaking, ‘take in’; to deceive, ‘root for’: to support enthusiastically, ‘put up with’: to tolerate.

Verbal idioms can frequently function as the entire predicate of a sentence:

(He) threw in the towel: which means gave up,

(The bridge) blew up: which mean was destroyed by explosion.

a) **Nouns:**

Nominal idioms may be formed by premodification of a noun: example ‘the hot seat’: a position of uncomfortable difficulties, ‘salad days’: time of youthful inexperience, ‘monkey business’: dishonest or suspicious activities.

Nominal idioms may also be formed by postmodification, examples ‘fish out of water’ someone in an uncomfortably, unfamiliar or inappropriate situation, ‘salt of the earth’: someone very honest and dependable, ‘manna from heaven’: an unexpected source of relief, ‘any Tom, Dick, or Harry’: any unspecified ordinary person’.

A high portion of nominal idioms are evaluative, quasi-adjectival and as such generally appear as predicates:

*Tom was a real tower of strength*: was very supportive.

*That exam was a piece of cake*: was very easy.
b) Adjectives:

Adjective idioms may be formed by premodification of an adjective:

‘Brand new’ mans (completely new)

‘Dirt poor’ which means extremely poor, or they may be formed by postmodification: examples:

- Dyed – in – the – wool (inveterate).
- Wet behind the ears (unexperienced)

Also they may be formed by conjunctions, examples:

- Hot and bothered (excited and annoyed).
- Tired and emotional (drunk).
- Spick and span (very clean and tidy).

Adjectival idioms based on prepositional phrases are by their nature usually found in predicates: examples

- I’m feeling rather under the weather (unwell).
- They’re in cahoots (collaborating).
- You’re out of your mind (insane).
c) Adverbs:

Many adverbial idioms are compositionally similar to adjectival idioms: examples

- *By and large* (generally speaking).
- *On and off* (irregularly).
- *Once or twice* (a few times).
- *From A to Z* (completely, from beginning to end).

2.14.3 Partial Idioms:

In a sequence where one word has its usual meaning, as expressed by Wilkins (1978:79), and the other word has a meaning that is peculiar to the particular sequence, the sequence is called a partial idiom. Thus, ‘red hair’ refers to hair, but not that is red in strict colour term.

As Wilkins (1978:79) states, comedians have fun with partial idioms of this kind, for example, when instructed to “make a bed” they bring out a set of carpenter’s tools.

He also adds that the adjective ‘white’ is used with coffee, people and wine, so, ‘white coffee’, ‘white people’ and ‘white wine’. The adjective ‘black’ is used only for ‘black coffee’ and ‘black people’ but not black wine, though, in color terms, neither coffee nor people are black. Thus, it can be seen that even partial idiomaticity can be a matter of degree, and in some cases, it may be little more than a matter of collocational restriction.

On a level which is more comic, as expressed by Wilkins, (1978: 80) there is partial idiomaticity in ‘raining cats and dogs’ comparing it in another area which is Wales where the equivalent idiom is ‘it rains old women and sticks’.

Idiom often lead to humour, as expressed by Fromkin*et al* (1976: 186) in the following example:
What did the doctor tell the vegetarian about his surgically implanted valve from a pig? That it was okay as long as he didn’t ‘eat his heart out’.

2.14.4 Katz and Postal's Classification of Idioms:

According to Katz and Postal (1963:275-279) idioms are classified into two types: lexical idioms and phrase idioms. It is the first attempt to deal with idioms within transformational grammar.

2.14.4.1 Lexical Idioms:

The characterization of an idiom as any concatenation of two or more morphemes whose compound meaning is not compositionally derived from the meanings of the concatenated morphemes does not differentiate those idioms that are syntactically dominated by one of the lowest syntactic categories such as noun, verb or adjective.

2.14.4.2 Phrase Idioms:

Phrase idioms are defined by Katz and Postal as morphemes whose syntactic structure is such that no single level syntactic category dominates them.

2.15 Grammatical Restrictions:

Although an idiom is semantically like a single word as expressed by Wilkins (1978: 80), yet it does not function like one. Thus, a past tense ‘kick the bucket’ will not exist. Instead, it functions to some degree as a normal sequence of grammatical words. So the past tense form is, kicked the bucket.

But there are some grammatical restrictions. To explain this, a large number of idioms contains a noun and a verb. Although the verb may be placed in the past tense, the number of the noun can never be changed. Example, the idiom spilled the beans could be used given that (the original idiom is spill the beans) but the form to spill the bean does not exist.

Another example to explain the restriction is (kick the bucket), which could be ‘kicked the bucket’; changing the verb into the past tense, but not kick the buckets. Similarly, as Wilkins continues, (1978: 82) with ‘red herring’, the restriction here is
not to use the comparative with the adjective; while the noun may be plural; red herring may be red herrings but not redder herring.

Syntactic restrictions exist as well. Some idioms have passive, but others do not. The idiom ‘lay down the law’ could be ‘the law was laid down’, and ‘spill the beans’ could be ‘the beans have been spilled’. ‘Kicked the bucket’ should not be used in the passive; the bucket was kicked is not right.

But forms such as:

*It was the bean that were spilled.*

*It was the law that was laid down.*

*It was the bucket that was kicked.*

These restrictions vary, according to Wilkins, from idiom to idiom’ some idioms are more restricted or frozen than others.

Ifill (2002: 2) argues that idioms seem to act very much like normal language, yet they are quite different in many ways. He describes idioms as ‘oddducks’ saying that ‘if natural language had been designed by a logician, idioms would not exist’.

But idioms do exist, presenting a basic vein in language behaviour. Thus, the need arises for theories of language to explain the behaviour of idioms adequately, besides the potential for what analysis of idioms can tell about the language itself.

### 2.16 The Structure of Idioms:

Ifill (2002:3) argues that idioms are not frozen structureless atoms, but they have significant internal structure which is responsible for much of their behaviour.

As he explained, the structure of idioms consists of a relationship between the syntax of the idiomatic phrase and the literal meaning of the idioms. Idioms cannot be described simply as ‘rule-breaking anomalies of little significance’, it is believed that idioms are stored in the lexicon.

Ifill (2002:3) cf Disciullo and Williams (1987), the criteria for being part of the lexicon is listedness arguing that listedness is no more intrinsically characteristic of words than it is of phrase. Some words and some phrases are listed, but infinitely many of each are not listed.
Thus, there is really nothing special regarding the lexicon as DiScuillo and Williams (1987) claim, they add that some older views accepted idioms as being part of the lexicon, but they were odd exceptions; anomalies that were not words, but were reluctantly included with them in the lexicon.

They say that idioms are syntactic objects, and they are listed because of their failure to have a predictable property, mainly their meaning.

Jackendoff (1997: 153-154) asserts that idioms and other fixed expressions are important in terms of the knowledge of the language. Discuillo and Williams agree with him with regard to the importance of idioms pointing to the great wealth of such expressions. Disciullo and Williams (1987) and Jackendoff (1997) of regard idioms as part of the lexicon.

Ifill (2002: 4) highlights some questions: how do speakers recognize that a phrase needs to be computed idiomatically, and how exactly do idioms get processed, and is it different from how normal phrases are handled?

The term idiomaticity is used for semantic and structural irregularity of phrasal idioms. Understanding the term in its broader sense, it can be said that an expression is idiomatic if it is judged intuitively by native speakers as usual, natural and commonly acceptable.

Ifill believes in the necessity of idioms, describing them as representing significant aspects of language behaviour. He argues that placing idioms in the lexicon makes sense, because as far as phrases and usage go, idioms are nothing special. They cannot be detached as abnormalities, because it is evident that they are quite normal. Moreover, as Ifill continues, placing idioms within the lexicon allowed them to have internal linguistic structure, which they really do have.

**2.17 Fixedness of Idioms and Internal Structure:**

Disciullo and Williams (1987) claim that accepting idioms listemes permits them to have internal structure of some kind. If an idiom is a phrasal listeme, it represents a linguistic unit, it will have internal linguistic structure, syntax, semantics, morphology and phonology.
As Jackendoff (1997: 154) expresses, a phrasal listeme is by definition a phrase, so it will have the same kind of linguistic structure that a phrase has. The most direct method of refuting the notion that idioms are atomic units which lack internal structure is by examining how fixed they are and in what way.

Fromkin et al (2007: 183) agree with Jackendoff confirming that idioms are similar in structure to ordinary phrases except that they tend to be frozen or allow the word order to change. Thus:

1. She ‘put her foot in her mouth’ (meaning say something foolish).
2. She ‘put her bracelet in her drawer’.

But:

‘The drawer in which she put her bracelet was hers’.

‘Her bracelet was put in her drawer’, are sentences related to sentences (2). The mouth in which she put her foot was hers. Her foot was put in her mouth, do not have the idiomatic sense of sentence (1), except perhaps humorously.

Ifill (2002: 10), gives more examples proving that idioms have internal structure:

1. We will take them to task for their irresponsibility.
2. John and Sue have their ups and downs.

Example (1) ‘take NP to task’.

Example (2) ‘have one’s ups and downs’

It can be seen from looking at the verb forms of the idioms in both examples (1) and (2) that these phrasal listemes are not completely frozen in form. These differences in the conjugation of the verb may seem minor at first, but they are the first key piece of evidence which indicates that these idioms must have internal structure of some kind; in other words the idiom ‘take to task’ is not a completely frozen atomic unit of language or free of internal structure which then gets inserted wholesale into a sentence.

If this were so, ‘take’ would not even exist as an individual verb, not to mention be able to undergo such modifications.
2.18 Synonymy and Idioms:

I fill (2002: 8) states that it has been widely noted that the individual words in an idiom cannot be replaced by synonyms and still retain the idiomatic reading of the phrase. This is what qualifies idioms as fixed forms. In most non-idiomatic discourse, a speaker can use synonymy to produce a new sentence with the same semantic meaning. This is not the case of idioms. Thus, the sentences below indicate how the individual words of an idiom are part of the fixed form of such idioms:

a. John kicked the bucket.
b. John kicked the pail.
c. They have had their ups and downs.

I fill signifies that the words ‘kicked’ and ‘bucket’ are required to convey a particular sense, not only conveying the concept of dying when knocking over water vessels with one foot.

Idioms can have interchangeable synonyms. The following examples show some of these exceptions:

a. Hit the sack or (hay) (go to bed).
b. Pack a punch / wallop / rear/. (be capable of a forceful blow/ have a powerful effect)
c. Stretch / strain a point (extend/ exaggerate)
d. stop/ turn on a dime (stop suddenly / come to a stand still).
e. Pick / punch / poke/ shoot holes in an argument (find flaws in something by close examination / criticize sharply).

Though these idioms, demonstrate a capacity for some of them to show individual lexical variability, yet they are still largely fixed. Still that lexical variability is limited to only a few options.

All of the options for variability are semantically similar, but not all semantically similar words can fit.
2.19 Idioms and Passivization:

Wallace, (1982: 118-9) states that it may be useful to indicate what changes the idioms can undergo, and this often relates to the underlying meaning of the idiom. Consider the following example: ‘Let the cat out of the bag’ this idiom can undergo passivization, the cat has been let out of the bag. This is possible because the underlying meaning (reveal a secret) can also be made passive (the secret has been revealed). An idiom like ‘it was raining cats and dogs’ obviously cannot undergo passivization because the underlying meaning (it was raining heavily) cannot be made passive.

Yagihashi (2011) cf Newmeyer (1974: 330) discussing idioms passivization; introducing the following examples as idioms that can be transferred into the passive construction:

- Break the ice.
- Lay down the law.
- Pay the piper.

Idioms such as ‘kick the bucket’, ‘let off steam’ and ‘shoot the breeze’ cannot undergo passivization without losing their idiomatic interpretation.

From the semantic point of view it is proposed that idioms such as ‘kick the bucket’, ‘sit on pins and needles’, ‘shoot the bull’, and ‘blow one’s top’ cannot be passivized because their synonyms are intransitive: die, wait nervously, talk, fly into a rage respectively.

Ifill (2002: 10) claims that many idioms do not undergo transformation which similar non-idiomatic construction can readily undergo while retaining the same sense of the construction. For examples:

1. a. John kicked the bucket.
   b. The bucket was kicked by John.

2. a. They have had their ups and down.
   b. Ups and downs were had by them.
Sentence (1-a) is not idiomatic and sentence (b) is the passive for it.

Sentence (1-a) describes an actual bucket – kicking even which is done by John! The passivization of the sentence would lead to a new sentence with the same sense; with non-idiomatic reading.

A passive version of the idiomatic verb phrase just does not make sense idiomatically.

As argued by Ifill, it seems to be an argument for the frozenness of idioms, but there are many idioms which are not frozen in this way, and are able to undergo passivization. For instance:

1. a. Roger kept tabs on them.
   b. Tabs were kept on them by Roger.
2. a. I spilled the beans.
   b. The beans were spilled by me.
3. a. He laid his cards on the table.
   b. His cards were laid on the table by him.

The passive version of the verb phrases of the above sentences retain their idiomatic status.

Such idioms which are capable of this syntactic mobility have something different about their structure; it is the issue of transparency. Some idioms have a more transparent structure than others, that is, certain idioms seem to resemble their non idiomatic counterparts closely. But opaque idioms cannot. Consider the following examples:

1. Keep tabs on NP: maintain surveillance of NP.
2. Spill the beans: reveal a secret.
3. Lay one’s cards on the table: make one’s feeling known.
4. Kick the bucket: die.
Examples 1, 2 and 3 represent idioms which are syntactically transparent. The syntax of the non-idiomatic version of the phrase directly maps to the syntax of the idiomatic phrase. Each of these phrases is constituted of the same components, and the components have the same thematic roles within the phrase in each form. In example 1: ‘keep tabs on x’ is a verb phrase consisting of a transitive verb, the verb’s direct object theme, and a prepositional transitive phrase which relates the idiom to the person or persons it is referring to. This is the same structure as its non-idiomatic (correspondent maintain surveillance of x) has. The phrases map on to each other syntactically. Thus, the idiom is considered transparent. Examples 2 and 3 hold the same transparency relationships. But example 4 ‘kick the bucket’ is different. Its structure is not transparent in this way. It is syntactically opaque and hence cannot undergo passivization. In other words the element of the idiom do not have a one-to-one mapping with elements of the phrase’s actual non-idiomatic meaning. The idiomatic version as Ifill explains, consists of a transitive verb and its direct object, while the non-idiomatic version is simply an intransitive verb, ‘the bucket’ corresponds to nothing because die does not and cannot take any complement. This is why it cannot be passivized.

It is important in this place, as Ifill continues, to note that no synonyms for ‘die’ can take a direct object either, for example ‘perish’ or ‘expire’. So, it is not the case that just the choice of the word ‘die’ as a paraphrase is what holds this opacity up. Moreover, another idiom which simply means ‘die’, ‘John bit the dust’, as expressed by Ifill, and which has the same syntactic structure as ‘kick the bucket’, the hypothesis that syntactic transparency is necessary for an idiom to be able to undergo passivization, predicts that they too would not have an idiomatic reading in the passive. Consider the examples:

a. John bit the dust.

b. The dust was bitten by John.

Syntactically opaque idioms lack the ability to retain their idiomatic reading when they are transferred into passive.
2.20 Passivization in Idiomatic Structure:

As expressed by Fromkin et al (2007: 184), some idioms can undergo passivization. The words of some idioms can be moved without affecting the idiomatic sense:

- *The FBI kept tabs on radicals.*
- *Tabs were kept on radicals by the FBI.*
- *Radicals were kept tabs on by the FBI.*

Another scholar, Huddleston (1984: 43), participates in the issue of passivization in idiomatic structure. He introduces the following sentences:

a. *Tom kicked the bucket.*

b. *The bucket was kicked by Tom.*

Sentences (b) allows only the literal meaning interpretation.

1. *They finally buried the hatchet.*

2. *The hatchet was finally buried.*

Sentence (1) which in the active form is ambiguous.

Sentence (2) has the same ambiguity of sentence (1).

Huddleston (1984: 43) argues that co-occurrence within an idiom deprives the component parts of some of the syntactic independence. For example, consider the changes in the order of the component parts.

‘He hasn’t a bed to sleep in’ is in paradigmatic variation with, he hasn’t a bed in which to sleep.

There is no corresponding variation with idiomatic sense:

‘*He hasn’t a leg to stand on*’.

Huddleston refers to the ambiguity between literal and idiomatic interpretations by introducing the following examples:

‘*Tom kicked the bucket*’ which may be interpreted both as literal and idiomatic.
But the bucket was kicked by Tom, and, ‘the bucket Tom kicked’ allow only literal interpretation.

As Huddleston (1984: 44) argues, lexical items are not always introduced into sentences as constituents, and with regard to idioms this point becomes more clearer.

In ‘Borg pulled the set out of the fire’, the idiom involves the pull component of pulled and the past participle out of the fire – ‘the set’ is not part of the idiom.

2.21 Idioms in People's life:

Idiomatic expressions are widely used in all aspects of the life of English people; they are part of their heritage and culture.

People use idiomatic expressions naturally and without thinking of their origin. As current research has shown, when people are encountered with problems for instance, they automatically resort to idiomatic expressions to describe the type of problem they face. A person may articulate such expression as ‘I've come against a brick’, referring to something that blocks him/her from doing what he/she wants to do. A problem can also be described differently with much more degree of an informal idiom ‘I put my foot in it’ describes a situation in which a person has said something tactless and embarrassing. Someone is going to `face the music or´ to be left holding the baby' in reference to a situation where someone has to accept criticism or punishment for what he/she has done, or to deal alone with a problem respectively. Music is an important part of culture and traditions and there are many English idioms that relate to it.

In situation in which it is impossible to succeed because of conflicting rules or conditions the idiomatic expression ‘catch-22’ is used, example:

Getting your first job is catch-22 because companies want someone with experience, but how can I get experience unless someone gives me a job.

Idioms including the word time’ are the most common, ‘the last second/minute/hour’ and ‘the eleventh hour’ are expressions used to refer to something happening at the latest possible time it could; if a student finished a paper one or two minutes before it was due, this expressions would be appropriate. Finally, the famous expression ‘time is money’ which indices that time is a valuable `commodity is versatile and frequently used in everyday situation .
A wide range of idiomatic expressions are used to describe people for their positive or negative qualities. ‘She has a heart of gold’ qualifies a ‘she’ who is, very kind and generous, and ‘he is as good as gold’ qualifies a person, usually a child who is generous, helpful, and well-behaved. The use of the word ‘gold’ indicates the value of the person who referred to.

Money is one of the areas that is used abundantly with reference to idiomatic expressions in description of people’s conditions; whether they are poor or rich. ‘to be on the bread line’ means very poor. Bread is in fact the minimum requirement for living, so the idiom is quite expressive of the situation. The researcher’s native language is full of such figurative language.

The phrase ‘make a killing’ refers to a quick and easy way of earning money. Such comments as the new …………………… could be heard nowadays.

2.22 Previous studies:

Reviewing potential studies in similar area, the researcher found some related studies.

“Problems Facing Undergraduate English Students in Understanding Multi-words Units” was the title of a study carried out in 2001 at the University of Gezira, by El-Mikashfi, L. The study was conducted for the degree of PhD. The main objective of the study was to investigate the problem of the lack of comprehension for such units of words with focus on ‘opaque phrasal verbs’. The sample was a multiple one: Secondary Schools’ students and teachers in Medani area, university students who were majoring in English at Hantoub Faculty of Education, University of Gezira, and a sample of students who were studying English language at Ahlia College. The data was collected through a diagnostic test for the students and questionnaire for Secondary schools’ teachers in Medani town.

Secondary objectives

- To find out the reasons that made idiomatic multi-words units a puzzle for non-native speakers.
To investigate some of the cultural differences between the two cultures: English and Arabic culture which might cause the difficulty when dealing with idioms.

The results of the study showed that the majority of the students majoring in English failed in recognizing multi-words units. Depending on the oral test results it could be said that most of the sample of Sudanese students majoring in English did not exploit multi-word units when speaking or writing English themselves, as the researcher described as (bookish English).

The researcher observed six batches of the student of English at the Department of Foreign Language, Faculty of Education (Hantoub), the University of Gazira during period 1995-2000. The results were as follows:

Most of the students had a tendency to use complete sentences when speaking English, besides, the researcher noticed that the students did not use idiomatic expressions. Also, absence of filled pauses, (er, erm.) as well as the absence of fillers such as “well”, “you know”. Contracted forms and ellipses were absent in responses. The final observation was that students used to transfer Arabic syntax into English.

The results showed that the majority of secondary school English language learners face difficulties in understanding and using English opaque phrasal verbs in written or spoken English. The researcher attributed the reasons of those difficulties to the difference between the students’ mother tongue (Arabic language) and the English language. Teachers assured the importance of opaque phrasal verbs.

The researcher recommended fifteen points in order to improve their performance in idiomatic English.

The contribution of Shammat, L. to the same field, idiomatic expressions, was titled “Idiomaticity and Language Learning and Teaching” which was done at the University of Khartoum in 2003 for the degree of PhD. in English language teaching.

The objectives of the study were to investigate the relationship between the knowledge of institutionalized expressions (idiomatic expressions) and effective learning and communication of English as a foreign language. Besides, also to investigate the effect of lexicalized forms on students’ performance, and whether the subjects are knowledgeable of idioms or not, and the influence of it in their learning...
process. The researcher’s final aim was to try to find out how such material could be integrated into university syllabuses.

The data was obtained through a questionnaire intended for university lecturers. Results showed the unsatisfactory performance of the students in idioms, due to deficiencies inherent in methodology. Besides, the data obtained showed teachers admittance of the lack of the required familiarity with idioms, this is due to living and learning in a monolingual environment. A final result was concerned with adequate exposures to English which would enhance the motivation of learners.

A third study conducted on ‘English Collocations as a Problematic Area for the Students at Secondary Level’, by Mohammed, M. at the University of Gezira in 2007 for the degree of M.A in English language teaching (ELT).

The objectives of the study were to measure secondary schools’ students’ ability in producing English most common patterns of collocations, and see whether those students notice such vocabulary. In addition the researcher tried to find solutions for the problem.

The findings:

- The majority of the participants memorized words in isolation.
- The awareness of the importance of noticing collocations is important when learning them.
- Some students’ errors stem from L₁ interference.
- Exercises designed for the students were insufficient.

Recommendations suggested by the researcher were: The necessity of familiarizing the students with the noticing of collocations, and teaching them with their Arabic equivalents. There was also a suggestion concerning the syllabus which must include collocations and exercises to practice them.

Hassan, A. handled a study titled “English Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs as a Problematic Domain for Students at Secondary School Level”. It was conducted in 2009 at the University of Gezira for the degree of Master of Arts. The researcher’s main objectives were to shed light in the area, attempting to locate the problem which
encounters the students in using phrasal verbs. Detecting the problems, the researcher tried to find some solutions and suggested some techniques for teaching idiomatic phrasal verbs.

The findings of the study:

- Eighty (80%) of the students who participated in the study did not know idiomatic phrasal verb.

- The syllabuses of secondary schools (3rd year) do not include ample idiomatic phrasal verbs.

- Eighty-six (86%) of the participants could not differentiate between idiomatic and non-idiomatic phrasal verbs.

- Poor knowledge of culture from the side of the students caused misunderstanding of idiomatic phrasal verbs. Fluency in English, could not be attained without training the students to use idiomatic and non-idiomatic phrasal verbs.

The study suggested some recommendations summed in the following:

Idiomatic phrasal verbs should be taught effectively within secondary schools’ syllabuses, and teachers should encourage students to use them. Teachers should train their students to differentiate between idiomatic and non-idiomatic phrasal verbs.

The study recommended the necessity of including English literature within secondary schools syllabuses for the reason that literature is rich in idiomatic phrasal verbs, besides, it conveys the culture of the English community in which idiomatic expressions constitute a large portion of their language.

A study has been undertaken by GasmElseed, A (1998). It was for doctorate degree titled “The Impact of Attitudes towards an Understanding of Foreign Language Learning”.

The researcher attempted to find out whether foreign culture has positive or negative effect on learning; whether the foreign culture hinders or facilitate learning the foreign language. The researcher arrived at the results that culture plays a considerable role in grasping the full meaning of a foreign language content, beside its
role in facilitating foreign language learning through motivating the students towards it.

Eltayeb, S researched the area of English idioms which constitutes a problem for Sudanese University students of English. The study was titled: “Idiomatic Expressions: A Problematic Area for Sudanese University Students of English as a Foreign Language”. The study was conducted in 2006 at the University of Gezira.

The research aimed at investigating the nature of the problems and difficulties that the learner of English as a foreign language encountered. Besides, the study aimed to draw the attention of the teachers’ of English as a Foreign Language Learners to the vital role of idioms in the English language and their role in improving the learner’s perspective and productive skills.

The findings were as followed:

- Idiomatic expressions are vital part of the language; they are in a common place in speech as well as they are used in writing.
- The nature of the problems imposed by the idiomatic expressions are attributed to their specific uses, meanings and specific structures, in contrast with irrelevant practice.
- A final result was that studying English idioms will show the difference between the two cultures: Arabic and English culture, that is because idioms are culture–bound.
- Effective teaching of the idiomatic expressions is an invaluable technique for promoting university EFL learners’ performance.

Recommendations:
1. It is strongly recommended that idiomatic expressions should be given more emphasis. They should be included in university syllabii.
2. Adequate exercises and practices are very interesting and should be tools for improving the students’ performance.

An investigation was carried out by Abaker, E. at the University of Gezira in 2002, titled “Investigating Metaphor Awareness and Understanding among Sudanese EFL Students of the University of EL Fashir”.

The objectives of the research centres around the following:
• To specify the level of metaphor awareness and understanding among EFL students and to ascertain the importance of the role of metaphor in language.

The main findings of the study were:

• The majority of the participants had little awareness of metaphors.
• Most of the participants ascribed literal reading to metaphoric items in the test assigned to them.
• Most of the candidates achieved better scores on the conceptual metaphor known as “A is B” metaphor types (examples, life is journey, time is money, a project is a race,....).

The final results showed that the achievement on the variable of understanding was relatively better than the achievement on the variable of awareness.

Hamad Alneel, T, has conducted a research for Master of Arts Degree titled “Difficulties Facing Pupils in Understanding Opaque Phrasal Verbs at Secondary Education”. The study was carried out at the University of Gezira in the year 2010.

The objectives of the study were to show the importance of using phrasal verbs in everyday language, find out the difficulties that faced the pupils in understanding and using phrasal verbs, besides investigating the causes of difficulties and suggesting solutions.

The findings of the study showed that the majority of the pupils face difficulty in using phrasal verbs in speaking; and that the difference between the two languages; Arabic and English language caused some of the difficulty due to the factor of interference. Also, negligence of English opaque phrasal verbs in the syllabus of secondary schools caused most of the difficulty, besides employing effective technologies in teaching opaque phrasal verbs to overcome some of the difficulties.

The researcher recommended that teachers should make the students aware of the importance of using phrasal verbs in their speech and writing, besides incorporation of them in the syllabus.

Ismail, E, conducted A Master of Arts Degree study at the University of Gezira in 2011. The title of the study was “EFL Learners’ Performance in English Phrasal Verbs: A case study of Iboom Secondary Schools, Gezira State”.

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The objectives of the study were to find out whether students at secondary schools are aware of English phrasal verbs, and to measure their ability of using English phrasal verbs.

Another objective is to investigate the problems that affect students’ performance when using phrasal verbs and suggest solutions.

The findings of the research showed that the majority of the students were unaware of the concept of English phrasal verbs. They are unable to use them due to the difficulty that surrounds such expressions. The study also explored the factor of difference in the two languages: Arabic and English as a factor that has a role in causing most of the difficulty.

The absence of English literature from secondary schools syllabuses inevitably contributed to the problem.

The researcher recommended that teachers should motivate the students to listen to dialogues and participate in conversations that include elements of phrasal verbs. Besides, elements of English literature should be taught at secondary schools.

Through surveying the websites for related studies, the researcher found the following studies.

“Strategies for Translating Idioms and Culturally-bound Expressions within the Human Development Genre” presented by Balfaqeeh, N (2009). It was submitted for the degree of Master of Art. The research was conducted at the School of Humanities of the University of Birmingham.

The study aimed to investigate in the area of translation of idioms comparing between domesticated and foreignized translation.

Findings:

Literal translation of idioms is not recommended, literal translation scored a minor percentage across the questionnaire, and paraphrasing would be sufficient and acceptable to the target audience (Saudi readers) if direct equivalents for idioms or culture-bound expressions are not available.
Recommandations:

- Further research could be done to investigate how translators tend to translate idioms and culture-bound expressions and the reason behind choosing one strategy rather than the other.

An other study was conducted at Hamline University, Saint Paul, Minnesota in December 2010, titled “The Role of Cultural Awareness on L2 Comprehension and Retention of Culture – Specific Idioms”. The researcher was Bjornson, K who submitted the study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English as a second language.

The main objective of the research is to address and answer the question: Can providing cultural background of culture-specific sports idioms using both words and visual images, improve adults English language learners’ comprehension and retention of these idioms?.

The results showed that memorizing the figurative meaning and connecting it to the literal meaning and its culture context resulted in a higher rate of comprehension.

A study conducted at the University of Kasetsart titled, “A Study of Kasetsart University Students’ Comprehension of English Idioms Appearing in Editorial Columns in the Bangkok Post and the Nation”, Bangkok Post and the by Puimom, S and Tapinta, P.

The aims of the study were to investigate the common linguistic types of English idioms used in the editorial columns in the ‘Bangkok Post and the Nation’ and to examine Thai readers’ abilities and perceptions in their comprehension of English idioms, besides investigating whether idiomatic expressions are hindering factors for comprehension of English editorial texts.

The findings revealed that most of the idioms found in this study in any type of topic were literal idioms.

Grammatical construction of idioms did not play an important role in the comprehension process of these expressions. Thus, the comprehension of idiomatic expressions would be mainly semantic framework.

When idioms appeared in contexts, they are comprehensible
A study titled “The Best Way to Teach Phrasal Verb: Translation, Sentential Contextualization or Metaphorical Conceptualization” was conducted at the University of Chabahar Maritime, in 2011, by Ganji, M. The aim of the study was to explain the distinctive role of conceptual metaphor in explaining the underlying link between the part of phrasal verbs and the meanings of idioms. The study also aims to make a comparison between contextualization, and metaphorical conceptualization, and to measure the degree of effectiveness with which memorized, retained, and predicated through these methods of teaching.

The results of the study showed that that there were significant differences between the performance of the students taught through the technique of translation, sentential contextualization and metaphorical conceptualization in the prediction of the meaning of untaught phrasal verbs. In other words different methods of teaching phrasal verbs influenced the ability of the students in predicting the meaning of untaught phrasal verbs.

A Master of Arts degree thesis titled “Problems of Idioms in Translation – Case Study: First Year Master” was conducted in 2010 at the University of Mentouri – Constantine – Faculty of Letters and Languages, by: Meryem, M.

The main objective of the study was to examine the type of difficulty students of English face in translating idioms, and try to suggest solutions and identify strategies that might help to limit or avoid those difficulties.

The results:

The results revealed that the degree of idiomaticity has a great influence on the percentage of the students’ familiarity and unfamiliarity with English idioms. The highest score was recorded for transparent idioms. Semi-transparent idioms also recorded a high score and came in the second position.

Ssemi-opaque and opaque got low scores and came in the last position.

A study was conducted at the University of Kristianstad – Sweden titled “Measuring the Impact of Cultural Context on Chinese ESL University Learners’ Comprehension and Memorization of Figurative Idioms” carried out by Chunks, Z in the year 2001. The study was a paper which focused on the description of the results of a study conducted on ten Chinese University students ESL learners to investigate
whether cultural context has a significant impact on University students’ ability to remember and understand English figurative idioms as part of English a second language instruction in China.

The result showed that cultural context was an effective aid to help promote the understanding of figurative language. Provision of cultural contexts clearly facilitated the comprehension of figurative idioms. Providing information about the origin of idioms also contributed significantly to the retention of the figurative idioms.

Samani, E and Hashemian, M conducted a study at the Islamic Azad University, Esfahan, Iran which was titled “The Effect of Conceptual Metaphors on Learning Idioms by L2 Learners”. It was conducted in 2011 and published in February 1, 2012 on the International Journal of English Linguistics – Volume, 2 No, 1, February 2012.

The main objective of the study was to examine the effect of conceptual metaphors on learning idioms by L2 learners.

The main result was that the effect of conceptual metaphor on learning idioms was more than that of traditional instructional methods.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Chapter three is assigned to highlight the methodology of the study; the chapter is an explanation of what tools and methods were employed to obtain the data needed for the study in order to answer the research questions about the area of idiomatic expressions which proves difficult and problematic.

3.1 Tools and Methods Used

The researcher used qualitative and quantitative methods

The tools used were an interview and two tests: a pre-test and a post-test which were conducted before and after teaching a syllabus that was based on idiomatic expressions.

3.1.1 The Syllabus

The syllabus (App. 4) was predetermined, photocopied, and distributed for the sample (the students). It includes different types of idioms. The course material was composed of the main types of idioms, transparent and opaque idioms, collocations and phrasal verbs. Some exercises followed each lesson for the purpose of practice. The duration of the course was between the 3rd of May (the starting date) and the 23rd of June during which two lectures per week were conducted. A pre-test preceded the teaching of the course and a post-test was administered following the completion of teaching the course.

The procedure consisted of a 30 minutes teaching sessions preceded by a pre-test and followed by a post-test. The sessions started with a brief explanation of the concept of the word idiom, giving some equivalents in the students' mother tongue i.e. Arabic Language. The students seemed excited with such material.
The purpose behind teaching the course was to familiarize the sample with idiomatic expressions in order to know whether they have a significant role in promoting communicative competence.

3.1.2 The Pre-Test

One of the tools intended to collect data was a pre-test (App.2). The purpose of the pre-test was to measure the students’ performance before they were subject to the process of teaching. It was based on idiomatic expressions. The content of the pre-test were main six questions with thirty sub-questions.

The pre-test was administered on the first of May. Sixty students attended the first sessions of the syllabus taught they are level three and level four. Level three were forty-one students whereas the rest of the sample were level four all of which were females. Only forty-seven (47) students continued up to the end of the sessions, the rest of the students were absentees. All the sample were non-native undergraduate students, who comprised 47 students.

3.1.2.1 The Pre-Test Reliability

A pilot test was conducted with a group of fifteen students at the University of Gezira who studies English as a foreign language. The students were at semester six (Batch 32) they are non-native speakers who were majoring in English who were demographically similar to the students sample of the study.

They performed the test on the eleventh of April, 2011. The very same sample of the students performed the test (re-test) for the second time within two weeks. It was administered on the twenty-fifth of April 2011: The two tests were marked and the reliability of the differences between the ranking of the students scores in the test that was administered twice is shown below:

The formula of spearman rank difference method is:

\[ R = \frac{1 - \sum D^2}{N(N^2 - 1)} \]

Where \( D \) = the square difference between pairs of ranks.
N = the number of individuals.

The coefficient of correlation varies from zero (absence of relationship) to a high of (1.00) indicating perfect relationship which is very rare.

Correlation between (0.7-0.9) is not available to make accurate prediction.

The following table shows the reliability of the test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table (1): The Reliability of the Test</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D²</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[1 - \frac{6(\sum D^2)}{N(N^2-1)} = 1 - \frac{6(11^2)}{15(15^2-1)} = 1 - \frac{726}{3360} = 0.78\]

Thus the test was considered reliable according to the result shown.
3.1.3 The Post-Test

The post-test (App. 3) was one of the tools intended for collecting data the post-test aimed mainly to measure the influence of the knowledge of idiomatic expressions on their communicative competence after having the course material taught for them.

3.1.3.1 The Contents of the Post-Test

The post-test (Appendix III) was composed of thirty items. Various types of questions were used in the test which covered most of the items taught through the experiment. Face validity of the post-test was checked by the supervisors and other experts.

The test was administered on the twenty-six of June 2011.

3.1.4 The interview

The interview (App. I) was considered the second source for data collection. It was in-depth interview which allows the interviewees to have more control of it in order to explore their feeling about the issue being explored; idiomatic expressions. The researcher avoided leading questions, open-ended questions were introduced to help elicit a varied number of responses which will contribute to the study.

The interview was composed of nine questions all of which were open-ended questions. Face validity of the interview was checked by two expert university lecturers, then the final version of it was issued.

The questions introduced revolve around teachers' familiarity of idiomatic expressions, their existence within university syllabuses, whether they are taught. Besides, the researcher asked whether teachers of English consider idioms important elements of language and their idea whether those elements promote the student's communicative competence.
3.5 The sample

The data needed for the study was collected by two tools: an interview and two tests; a pre-test and a post-test. Consequently two samples participated in the study: university lecturers and students.

3.5.1 The lecturers

Twenty lecturers were chosen to participate in providing data. The researcher contact all the lecturers, took permission, and was given consent from all of them. Time was fixed with the lecturers to conduct the interviews.

Interviews were conducted in the period between the 12th of June 2011 and the 14th of July of the same year (2011). Expert university lecturers from different Universities willingly participated and enriched the study with their point of views. Lecturers from University of Gezira, University of Khartoum, University of Holy Quran and Re-origination of Sciences, University of Al Butana, Ahlia College comprise the sample.

While conducting the interviews, the researcher took notes, then later she transcribed them.

3.5.2 The Students:

The study subjects were chosen randomly. They were homogeneous group of undergraduate non-native students who were majoring in English. They were sixty (60) at the beginning of the sessions held inside the classroom, but the total number of the students who attended all the classes were forty seven (47) all of which were female students. They were nearly of the same age and have nearly the same linguistic background. Luckily, they all had positive attitude towards the course.

Ethical standards are important part of the research. So, the research was conducted in a sensible and ethical manner, the sample were not exposed to danger or embarrassment.
3.6 The Analysis of the Study

The data obtained by the means of the interview were analyzed manually and by the use of the computer programme (SPSS). In addition, the data obtained through the two tests were analyzed using the computer Programme – Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Chapter four shows the results obtained.
CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis, Presentation and Discussion of the Results

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate and explore the role of idiomatic expressions in improving communicative competence of Sudanese university students majoring in English.

The study was conducted in different universities in the country, which include English departments.

All the lecturers involved participated willingly in the interview giving their invaluable experience.

The tools used to obtain the data were: an experiment and interview. The experiment was a course that was designed and, then preceded by a test (a pre-test), and followed by a test (a post-test) after teaching the selected material that was based on idiomatic expressions. The interview was conducted in different universities with highly experienced lecturers. The data obtained by the means of the two tests (the pre and the experience post-test) and the interviews were processed by the computer using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The results will be presented in tables and figures and then discussed exhaustively.

4.1 The Results of the Pre-test:

Table (4.1) below shows that the results of the pre-test that the students took before the teaching of the course material designed for them. The students who were the sample of the study attended the classes happily and enthusiastically.
Table (4.1): The results of the pre-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test scores</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.3</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
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<td>13</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (4.1) shows the results of the pre-test were so low; all the respondents scored poorly, no student passed the test. Ten students out of forty-seven gained only one mark. Two students scored two scores, while twelve students scored three marks. The highest mark in the test was thirteen (13) out of fifty which was achieved by only one student. The simplest first question that were the student asked about the meaning of the word «vocabulary» show the ignorance of what vocabulary includes. Students were unaware of idiomatic expressions as a genuine category of vocabulary.

It is apparent from the results of the pre-test that the students ignore the area of idiomatic expressions which support hypothesis (1). Hypothesis one: Sudanese university students majoring in English lack the knowledge of English idioms:

The results of the pre-test confirm hypothesis one above. Cook (2003) states that learning a language requires the knowledge of the culture of the people who speak
it. Gebhard(2006) supports Cook’s view expressing that socio-cultural competency is a very important component of communicative competence.

Schmitt and Carter (2000:1) support Cook and Gebhard opposing the point of view that vocabulary is considered as individual words. They consider such view as a layman point of view. According to them vocabulary includes many units which are larger than individual orthographic words. Idiomatic expressions are good example for such vocabulary that should be learnt by second language learners.

The researcher agrees with Schmitt and Carter in that vocabulary includes many units, but this is not the case with regard to the students; out of personal observation and experience, vocabulary is understood and dealt with as individual words. The results of the pre-test (table 4.1) support this observation, the students’ performance of the pre-test was very weak. This is attributed to the test-items that were all idiomatic words. Students used to well recall and keep by heart the meaning of individual words, which their teachers used to teach them. The apparent interpretation of table (4. 1) is that university students majoring in English prove to lack the knowledge of idiomatic expressions. A quick survey of the contents of the pre-test (Appendix I) shows that the test includes different types of idiomatic expressions, mainly opaque and transparent idioms.

Question (2) of the pre-test includes opaque idioms, while question (3) of the same test includes transparent idioms. The answers of the students on question two were all wrong. This is attributed to the elements of the question which were all unfamiliar idioms; idioms such as: *hit the sack, spill the beans, kick the bucket, odds and ends*, account for the poor performance of the students.

The findings of a study conducted by El Mikashfi, L (2001) showed that university students failed to recognize multi-word units. The researcher’s result supports the present study, the students performance in the test that included multi-word units was very weak. The conclusion of the results reached at shows that Sudanese students majoring in English did not exploit multi-word units when speaking or writing English.

The present study introduced a question’ question (1): *why is the knowledge of the grammar and individual – word vocabulary of English language not sufficient for communicative competence?* The result of pre-test shows weak performance of the
students, though those students have a considerable knowledge of the grammar and individual-word vocabulary but, still according to the researcher, they lack the knowledge of idiomatic expressions that include multi-word units. So the result of the pre-test gives reasonable interpretation for “why the knowledge of the grammar and individual-word vocabulary is not sufficient for communicative competence and accounts for such ignorance.

Another study supports hypothesis one, Shammat, L (2003) carried out a study on “Idiomaticity and Language Learning and Teaching”. Her main findings showed the lack of the knowledge of English idioms on the part of the students. More than that, Shammat stated that even teachers admit the lack of the required familiarity of English idiomatic expressions.

The present study apprehensively asked a question about teachers’ familiarity with idiomatic expressions. (Question three of the interview). Most of the responses of the teachers to the question of the interview agree with Shammat in that the majority of the teachers who teach English are unfamiliar with idiomatic expressions. Only two interviewees responded positively that teacher are familiar with idiomatic expressions, while eight interviewees (8) out of twenty-one (21) who represents (38.1%) ascertain the teachers’ lack of the knowledge of idioms. So, not only the students lack the knowledge of English idiom as hypothesized by the present study, but also previous studies mentioned above proved some teachers’ unfamiliarity with idiomatic expressions.

El-Tayeb’s results of her study on idioms proves hypothesis (1) as well, she found out that university syllabuses in Sudan lack idiomatic expressions. All this, besides what was mentioned above assert hypothesis (1).

Chunks, Z (2001) reached at the same result of the present study, that idioms are difficult area for a non-native learner. A glance to table (4.2) shows the total lack of the knowledge of opaque idioms which is regarded a commonplace for such area.

The researcher honestly admits that she avoids teaching idiomatic expressions when encountered bearing in mind their complicated nature which may hinder the learning process.
Table (4.2): Results of Question (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test scores</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to question (3) which includes transparent idioms, the answers of the students were still poor. But compared to the students’ answers on question (2), there seems to be some improvement according to the answers of such transparent idioms, but not their knowledge that explains their performance. It is expected that students might have guessed the meaning. This could be applied to transparent idioms which students might succeed to guess which is really remote to attain with opaque idioms.

Table (4.3): Results of Question (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test scores</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
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<td>59.6</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>85.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is slight difference between the answers of the students on question (2) which was opaque, and their answers to question (3) which was transparent. Considering an example for an opaque idiom 'odds and ends' which was question 2, the data obtained shows that all the students' answers were wrong. Compared to question (3) the data collected shows that there was little improvement; few students' answers were correct. This, according to the researcher, is a matter of guessing; question (3) includes transparent idiom such as 'ladies and gentlemen' and 'fish and
chips’ which allow for guessing whereas question(2) includes opaque idioms which require definite knowledge, being far beyond the reach of guessing.

It is viewed that the area of idioms is perplexing. Elkili, G (2008) states that idioms are culture-bound, and it is not easy to understand their meaning even if they are transparent. He maintains that the knowledge of idiomaticity is not based on linguistic analysis, but it is a matter of cultural awareness. This gives reasonable interpretation for the responses of the students on both question (2) and question (3).

Based on the fact that idioms are culture-bound expressions, and on the data obtained and shown on table (4.3), nevertheless, it could be deduced that table (4.3) shows the students ignorance of idioms despite the slight improvement achieved.

A study conducted by Meriam, M titled “Problems of Idioms in Translation” 2010, agreed with the present study. The main results of the study revealed that the degree of idiomaticity is has a great influence on the percentage of the student's familiarity and unfamiliarity with English idioms. According to the study, the highest score was recorded for transparent idioms with a percentage of (69.84%) for familiar idioms, and (30.15%) for unfamiliar idioms. Semi transparent idioms also recorded a high score following familiar idioms. Meriam, M results were in complete agreement with the present study: opaque idioms got the lowest scores in both studies as they represent a completely difficult area. Another study titled, “Measuring the Impact of Cultural Context on Chinese ESL University Learners’ Comprehension and Memorization of Figurative Idioms” agrees with both Meriam, M and the present study. The study was carried out by Chunks, Z. All the learners failed to answer the nine questions of the pre-test, they got all the answers wrong.
4.2 The Results of the Post-test:

The post-test was administered after completing the teaching of the course that was designed for the students. Table (4.4) clearly displays the scores of the students.

**Table (4.4): The Results of the Post-test:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test scores</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>63.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>87.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>93.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results displayed on table (4.4) show the students’ improvement in the post-test. An overall look at table (4.4) shows that there is a slight improvement in the performance of the students on the post-test compared to their performance on the pre-test. Twelve students (12) out of forty-seven passed the test, with a percentage of twenty-five point five (25.5%) which indicates a significant improvement in such an area of language which is considered an area of ‘perplexity’.

Cacciari (1993) describes idiomatic expressions as a “Course of perplexity” to those who are acquiring a second language. Moreover, structuralists consider idioms as odd, exceptional, and not fitting the patterns of grammar. Thus, such improvement which is actually slight, could be regarded, according to the researcher, as positive, progressive, and significant.

Considering the data obtained, the researcher noticed that most of the students answers on the questions 'look up to' and 'down and out' were incorrect. Out of the researcher's experience, it could be said that Sudanese students majoring in English used to give word to word equivalent of such expressions. Actually idiomatic expressions do not allow such translation. But, still, there seems to be some improvement: table(4.4) highlights such improvement. This means the teaching of idiomatic expressions that followed the pre-test proved to be, to some extent, successful; in other words students communicative competence has, to some extent, improved. According to the results shown on table(4.4), there seems to be a relation between the teaching of idiomatic expressions and students communicative competence in language. This accounts for the students performance in the post-test which is in accordance with hypothesis (4) of the study, that teaching idiomatic expressions might result in improving students communicative competence.

4.3 Comparing the Two Tests (The Pre-test and the Post-test):

Reviewing table (4.4) again, it is seen that only one student scored one mark (1), while ten students (10) scored the same mark (1), on the pre-test. Three students (3) scored three (3) marks with a percentage of six point four (6.4%), while the same grade (3) was obtained by twelve students (25.5%). Ten students got five marks (5) on the pre-test while only three students got five (5) grades on the post-test. The results of the pre-test (Table 4.1) show that the number of the students who scored between (1 – 5) marks is relatively big. The number is thirty-eight students which is aggregate of (10
+ 2 + 12 + 4 + 10) who scored (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) respectively. To compare this result with the post-test result, it is clear from table (4.4) that only eleven students (11) revolve around the same range of marks between (1 – 5) marks. The valid conclusion shows that there is marked improvement of the performance of the students on the post-test. Again this indicates the effectiveness of teaching such expressions which are viewed essential for foreign language learners. Gebhard (2006:63-64) reports the necessity of idiomatic expressions being genuine elements in language.

**Table (4.5)** The Results of the Pre-test and the Post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2.633</td>
<td>0.384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>12.28</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7.649</td>
<td>1.116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (4.5) clearly displays the mean and the standard deviation of the two tests, besides the standard error mean. The mean for the pre-test is (4.02), while it springs up to (12.28) in the post-test. This result appears to indicate the students’ considerable improvement in performing the post-test. This is attributed to the experimental teaching of the experiment syllabus prepared for them.

Ganji, M (2011) agrees with the present study in that the performance of the students improved on the post-test compared to their performance on the pre-test. The mean scores of the students were high, and there was significant difference between the performances of the students on the two tests.

Samani, E and Hashemian, M (2012) came up with the same result agreeing with Ganji, M and the present research; the result of the post-test were encouraging. The difference between the pre-test scores and the post-test scores showed that there was a significant difference between the means of the two performances (t = 20.822, df = 39, a = 0.05, p = 0.00).

To sum up, most of the studies surveyed in this area agreed with the present study concerning the role of idiomatic expressions in improving university students performance in language. As discussed, some of those studies were conducted locally and others were conducted outside the country.
4.4 The Results of the Interviews:

The interviews were the second tool used in this study. They were conducted with many experienced lecturers in different universities in Sudan. The lecturers who were interviewed provide the study with invaluable data, their experience at universities through the years is shown in their responses to the interview question. On the basis of the data collected and processed electronically by the means of the computer using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) programme, the following results were obtained:

4.4.1 Question 1: For how long have you been teaching at the university?

The main purpose behind asking this question is to know whether there is true relationship between teachers’ experience and their knowledge of idiomatic expressions. The following table shows the results.

Table (4.6): Experience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 – 10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As manifested on table (4.6) above, the teachers who were interviewed were twenty-one (21). Their experience ranged between four to thirty-three (4-33) years of teaching at universities. Six lecturers have a considerable experience which is ranged between (4-10) years of teaching. Twelve lecturers have long experience ranges between eleven to twenty (11 – 20) years. Besides, there were three (3) lecturers who have invaluable experience of teaching English at universities. Their experience ranged between twenty – one to thirty-three (21 – 33) years.

The interpretation of table (4.6) shows that there seem to be low correlation between teachers’ long experience and the knowledge of idiomatic expressions. This
result was recognized from the responses of the teachers to some of the interview questions, mainly question (3). This seems to be an opposing result which is not in favour of hypothesis three; the researcher hypothesized that some experience teachers are knowledgeable of culture-bound expressions. Teachers themselves admitted the lack of the required familiarity with idiomatic expressions which are important elements in language. They attributed that to many factors such as the syllabuses of English which lack such items, this is due to living and learning in a monolingual environment. So, no exposure to native speakers genuine language which actually includes such items abundantly. This may explain, according to the data obtained, why there is no relation between experience and the knowledge of idiomatic expressions. It is, as well, observed that teachers who live in England, even for some short time, know and use to some extent, such expressions. But still, idiomatic expressions are considered far more elusive elements even for native speakers according to some scholars’ point of view.

**4.4.2 Do you think teachers of English who are non-native speakers are familiar with idiomatic expressions?**

The following table clearly displays the answers.
Table (4.7) Familiarity with idiomatic expressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (4.7) shows that most of the lecturers agreed on the ignorance of idiomatic expressions from the side of the teachers. Ten teachers out of twenty-one responded ‘no’ to the question; that represents (47.6%) of the total participants. Ten teachers responded ‘to some extent’, for the same question (47.6%), and only one lecturer responded ‘yes’, that teachers of English who are non-native speakers are familiar with idiomatic expressions, (4.8%). Thus, it could be interpreted that teachers of English are not familiar with idiomatic expressions. According to the researcher the, option “to some extent” which was chosen by ten lecturers may be attributed to some
hesitation. While carrying out the interviews, the researcher noticed that this option “to some extent” was not used promptly from some lecturers.

This result supports hypothesis (2) that hypothesizes: Many of the English teachers who are non-native speakers are not familiar with idiomatic expressions. Familiarity with idiomatic expressions does not require experience; a layman native speaker or an illiterate person could have rather considerable knowledge of idioms for the reason that idioms are culture-bound expressions. This gives a reasonable interpretation of table (4.7).

4.4.3 What are some of the key principles which promote effective and enjoyable learning according to you?

The question was included in the interview with the intention to receive various opinions that teachers of English could participate with. The researcher expects ‘culture’, ‘authentic material’ and ‘literature’ as some of the key principles that help promote the process of learning English language. Factors such as culture, authentic material and literature are the source for idiomatic expressions. The following table, (table 4.8) displays the results.
Table (4.8): Key principles which promote effective and enjoyable learning (according to the lecturers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer number</th>
<th>Key principles for promoting learning according to lecturers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Varying techniques – encouraging students – culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Awareness of language – patience – culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Exposure to language – games – discussions – authentic material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teaching literature – spoken language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Healthy classroom atmosphere – a good prepared syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Authentic material – culture – modern techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Eclectic methods – motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A competent teacher – best techniques – motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Environment – improving students’ standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Learners’ needs – teaching aids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Competent teacher – good syllabus – teaching aids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Balancing the four skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Culture – friendly atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Communicative approach – involving students (participation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Involving students – friendly relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Varying methods and techniques – good syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Authentic material – jokes, involving students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Environment – relationship between teachers and students – involving students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Know how to use dictionaries – ability of guessing meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Motivation – cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Enjoyable material – learning environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses of the teachers varied widely as it is seen in table (4.8) above. Surveying the table 4.9, it could be noticed that seven (7) lecturers (33.3%) mentioned ‘culture’, literature, and authentic material as basic principles for effective learning. Past research has shown that culture plays a considerable role in grasping the full
meaning of a foreign language content, besides its role as a facilitating element in foreign language learning. (GasmElseed, A 1998).

Table (4.9): culture-authenticmaterial-literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of lecturers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticmaterial-culture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticmaterial</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

El-Tayeb, S, explored that idioms are peculiar to the language; language could not be separated from its speakers as it carries their internal interaction and conventions in every aspect of their lives.

Pawley and Syder’s (1983) confirm strongly that idioms are institutionalized sets, which refers to their establishment in the society till they become part of their culture.

Literature reflects different nation cultures; it is the rich and natural heritage, so it carries every aspect of language including idiomatic expressions. A considerable number of the teachers who were interviewed considered literature and culture as key principles for promoting learning; literature and culture are two sides of the same coin.

Hassan, A. (2009) agrees with the lecturers who considers culture as key-principle for promoting effective learning. One of his main results is that students’ poor knowledge of culture causes misunderstanding of idiomatic phrasal verbs.

Other basics for effective learning were mentioned by some lecturers such as classroom atmosphere. Four lecturers state that the learning environment should be healthy in order to achieve effective learning, (19%).

Table 4.10 shows that six teachers (28.6) see that techniques and teaching aids help promote effective learning. Three teachers (14.3%) attribute successful learning to the teaching methods used. Many studies support those teachers point of views .Samani, E and Hashemian, M (2011) strongly advocate that using traditional methods
result in poor learning. Ganji, M (2011) reached the same conclusion that the method of teaching has an influence in the process of learning. More than that, he adds that the methods of teaching idiomatic expressions influence the students’ ability of predicting their meaning. Benda (1981) considers the role of the teaching method used as crucial in obtaining good results, suggesting that teaching idiomatic expressions will enhance the students’ understanding and acquiring of those units of language.

Table 4.10: Techniques - teaching aids

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Number of lecturers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Techniques</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching aids</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, varying techniques and teaching aids together with the methods of teaching used to teach idiomatic expressions result in effective learning of such expressions.

One of the important principle of effective learning, according to some lecturers is motivation, four (4) teachers consider motivation as an effective aid to help promote the learners’ understanding of what is taught. McCarthy (2008) believes that idiomatic expressions are difficult, boring, and demotivating. Based on this point of view, the researcher recognizes the vital role of motivation in improving learning. Personal experience shows that motivation plays important role in enjoyable and good learning. The same point is highlighted by GasmElseed, A (1998), who believes in the knowledge of the foreign culture as a facilitating element of learning the language through motivation. Shammat, L (2003) is in line with the previous researchers including the present researcher regarding motivation. A final result in her study is concerned with adequate exposure to English which would enhance the learners’ motivation.

Involving the learners in discussions and participation is thought to be one of the key principles for effective and enjoyable learning. The result of question (2) shows that six (6) lecturers (28.6%) are in favour of involving the students in the lessons. According to the researcher, if the students are directly and actively involved in the lessons, they will achieve successful learning (especially if the students are called by
their names!). Ismael, E (2011) refers to the necessity of involving the learners in the lessons.

Table 4.11 shows that two lecturers (9.5%) think that the main element that helps improve the students and achieve good learning is the competent teacher. A communicatively competent teacher is expected to help promote the students’ performance as he/she has the knowledge of most of the aspects of language.

**Table 4.11: competent teacher**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of lecturers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competent teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This indicates that a competent teacher is liable to have a good knowledge of idiomatic expressions. Contrary to what the researcher has found, idiomatic expressions are culture-bound elements that require a native-teacher or a teacher who lived in a bilingual environment one of which is an English-speaking country.

A further survey of table (4.8) above shows that there still remains some of the key principle that promote effective learning, but they represent low percentage. Examples are: a good prepared syllabus which was the response of two (2) lecturers (9.5%).

In his study, Hassan A, (2009) founds out the syllabuses do not include idiomatic expressions except for some phrasal verbs. Different studies show the central role of a good syllabus which should include idiomatic expressions which will promote effective learning.

El Mikashfi, L, (2003) states that idiomatic expressions are essential part of the language, she noted that the syllabuses are poor of such items of multi-word units. This supports the present study's researcher.

Friendly relationships between the teacher and the students were the response of only one teacher (4.8%), games, and the ability of guessing meaning each of which is suggested by one lecturer.

With regard to the last key principle which is ‘the ability of guessing meaning’ which was the response of one of the lecturers and on the basis of the researcher’s
present experience through conducting the study, it could be said that achieving such principle within such area; the area of idioms, is extremely remote. Idioms structure is not easily decomposed if translated, the constituents of an idiom will not give the meaning. Hence, the researcher does not agree with the lecturer with regard to guessing meaning. A student who is asked to guess the meaning of ‘kick the bucket’ would never choose an option of ‘die’.

4.4.4 Question (4) Do you think that idiomatic expressions exist within the syllabuses of universities in Sudan?

The answer to the above question is shown on table (4.12) below.

**Table (4.12): Existence of Idioms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly one third of the lecturers who were six (6) of the total participants which comprise (28.6%) confirmed that idiomatic expressions exist within the syllabuses, but they represent small portion. Seven (7) teachers negate their existence in the syllabuses of English, which represents a considerable portion of (33.3%). Eight (8) lecturers who comprise (38.1%) responded that idiomatic expressions are ‘to some extent’ found in the syllabuses. The researcher agrees with the first group that responded positively to the existence of idioms. Through conducting the present study, the researcher found some idioms within literature, spoken English, drama, and some English courses that include phrasal verbs, collocation, and other idiomatic expressions. Shammat, L (2003) refers to the English language courses in Sudan as being constructed on constructrual lines with grammatical pedagogic organization. She admits the existence of few idiomatic expressions in the syllabus.

El-Tayeb, S (2006) disagrees with the aforementioned teachers, she comes up to the result that syllabuses lack idiomatic expressions. Considering the responses of
the participants in the interview and the previous studies surveyed with regard to the above question, it could be concluded that university syllabuses apparently do include idiomatic expressions, but they are not found abundantly.

The researcher sees the existence of idioms within the syllabus as crucial for the fact that idiomatic expressions are genuine elements of the language.

4.4.5 Question (5) Are idiomatic expressions taught at Sudanese universities?

Question (5) above is a searching question that is intended to know whether idiomatic expressions, if they exist, are taught at Sudanese universities. The responses of the lecturers from different universities in Sudan are shown in the following table (Table 4.13):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To someextent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrasalverbs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintentionally</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A quick survey of table (4.13) shows that a considerable number of the lecturers responded ‘no’ to the teaching of idioms. Nine (9) teachers out of twenty-one stated that idioms at not taught (42.9%). Only two (2) lecturers answered positively for the teaching of idioms, with a percentage of (9.5%). Four (4) of the teachers (19%) appeared to hesitate before responding ‘to some extent’. Quite a few teachers who are three (3), representing (14.3%) declared that only phrasal verbs are taught but ineffectively, that is to say without satisfactory practice. Three (3) lecturers (14.3%) mentioned that idioms are unintentionally taught.
Hypothesis (5): Idiomatic expressions are not taught explicitly when teachers come across them.

A glance to table (4.10) above asserts hypothesis (5). With a view of analyzing the data obtained, it could be recognized that four (4) teachers (19%) said ‘to some extent’ that idioms are taught, besides three (3) lecturers (14.3%) admitted that only phrasal verbs are taught. In addition to three (3) lecturers who used the term ‘unintentionally, meaning that idioms are not taught explicitly. This makes the number of lecturers ten (10) who represents (47.6%), with the aforementioned nine (9) teachers who declared that idiomatic expressions are not taught (42.9%). The accumulative percentage springs up to (90.5%).

On the basis of the information received from the different university lecturers, it could be interpreted that idiomatic expressions are not explicitly taught at Sudanese universities for student majoring in English. This proves hypothesis (5):

A previous study done by El-Tayeb, S is in accordance with the result of the data obtained. The researcher noticed that English idioms are not dealt with and are not used in writing, reading, or speaking. That was one of her main results that she reached.

The researcher of the present study agrees with the majority of the lecturers who were interviewed, stating that idioms are not taught explicitly when teachers come across them. These items of language are difficult and complicated, as Cacciari (1993) expresses, idiomatic expressions are an area of perplexity. Consequently the teaching of idioms is ignored. This is one reason; the difficulty that the learners encounter in learning such items. Another reason is concerned with the teachers themselves: while conducting the interviews, the researcher observed the majority of the lecturers admit the difficulty of idiomatic expressions even for them. The researcher attributes the negligence of teaching idiomatic expressions for the reasons mentioned.

An answer to question (6) of the interview supports the researchers’ view about teaching idiomatic expressions: one lecturer thinks that such expressions are difficult assuming that such difficulty may hinder the process of learning, but still (95.3%) of the lecturers support the idea of including idiomatic expressions within the university syllabuses.
4.4.6 Question (6): According to your experience, do you think idiomatic expressions are important elements that they should be included in the syllabus?

A closer look at table (4.11) reveals entire lecturers consensus (with the exception of one lecturer) on the necessity of including idiomatic expressions within the syllabuses, they are twenty (20) teachers representing (95.2%). Only one lecturer (1) who thinks that it is inadvisable to include idiomatic expressions in university syllabus, commenting that inversely idiomatic expressions are complicated elements of language which may hinder the process of learning. Crystal, (2001) has an opposing view, he thinks that such expressions are part of the language that should not be ignored. Kava and Zybert, (2011) agree on the importance of including and teaching such expressions that help produce and build up connected speech. Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) support the above views. They claim typical English people use idiomatic expressions in their daily speech or writing, stating that a learner who avoids using idioms will be pointed out as a foreigner. Thus the researcher believes, according to the data obtained, that idiomatic expressions have a crucial role in improving communicative competence.

Elkilic, (2008) is in line with Kharma and Hajjaj(1989). He reflects on the difficulties that confront EFL learners in understanding idioms, stating that they will not be accepted as proficient without knowing idiomatic expressions sufficiently. This point of view refers to the importance of including idioms within the syllabuses assigned for undergraduate. Ifill, (2002) stresses the necessity of idiomatic expressions for a language learner describing them as items representing significant aspects of language behaviour. He adds that idioms are ‘nothing special’, they are genuine elements of the English language.

The researcher completely agrees with the previous views concerning the inclusion of idiomatic expressions in the university syllabuses. Idioms should not be detached from the syllabus as far as they constitute a genuine and considerable body in the English language. They are used abundantly in everyday discourse, newspapers, magazines and television.
Past research that has been done in the same area has stressed the importance of including idiomatic expression within university syllabuses. In her research for PhD degree, Elmikashfi, L, (2003) recommended that idioms should be included in the university syllabus, in addition to practising ample exercises. These studies are in favour of the inclusion of those basic elements of language. El-Tayeb, S’ main findings focused on the importance of idioms which necessitates their inclusion for undergraduates.

4.4.7 Question (7) Do you think Sudanese teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) have poor knowledge of idiomatic expressions?

The answers received from the lecturers are shown in table (4.14) below:

Table (4.14): Knowledge of Idioms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reponses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To someextent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that twelve (12) lecturers who comprise fifty-seven point one (57.1%) state that a considerable number of Sudanese teachers who teach English have
poor knowledge of idioms. Two (2) lecturers responded ‘to some extent’, representing (9.5%) of the lecturers.

Lecturers who promptly deny poor knowledge were seven (7), with a percentage of thirty-three point three (33.3%). , teachers who responded ‘to some extent’, meaning that teachers have, poor knowledge of idioms admitting the poor knowledge. This interpretation is recognized due to the teachers responses to the question. Thus, the number of the teachers who have poor knowledge is fourteen (14) teachers comprising sixty-six point six (66.6%) of the total percentage. This considerable percentage supports hypothesis (6) which was: A considerable number of Sudanese teachers of English have poor knowledge of idiomatic expressions.

The researcher observed, while teaching and conducting this study that the area of idiomatic expressions among teachers is vague. It is also an unapproachable area. When interacting, teachers do not use idiomatic expressions. The researcher deliberately used many idioms while conducting the research, trying and meaning to interact with teachers of English. While interacting, some teachers did not react, or did not know how to react. The researcher does not bring discredit upon teachers of English by attributing ignorance to them, but in fact idioms are culture–bound expressions which makes it difficult to non-natives to know them. More than that, according to some scholars, as mentioned before, idiomatic expressions are even an area of difficulty to some native-speakers of the language.

The present study researcher had, as well, a poor knowledge of idioms before indulging in the study. One major reason for having such poor knowledge as Shammat, L (2003) states, is that teachers of English lived and learned in a monolingual environment. This, and the fact that idiomatic expressions are culture-bound, account for the results shown in table (4.12) above, and figure (4.2) below.
Fromkin et al, (2007) state that the meaning of most words and all metaphors is conventional. This means the speakers of a language implicitly agree on their meaning. Ammer, C (1992) describes idioms as defying the rules of logic; using familiar words in obscure ways posing great difficulty for non-native speakers. Another point of view about idioms complexity expressed by Elkilic, G (2008), confirming that idioms are culture-bound, that it is not easy to understand their meaning even if they are transparent, stating that the knowledge of idiomaticity is not based on linguistic analysis, but it is a matter of cultural awareness.

Ifill, (2004) considers idioms as part of a language that is judged intuitively by the native speakers of that language. The researcher completely agrees with the above points of views, pointing out, according to the reviewed literature that one of the reasons for idiomatic expressions to prove somewhat elusive, is the various categories they include. Collocations, phrasal verbs, dictums, cliches, proverbs, in addition to the idioms themselves with their various types, are all types that are included within the area of idiomatic expressions. While conducting the study, the researcher finds out that some idioms are nonce-forms; an idiom might have appeared in the context of a particular point in time and context, then as the time passes, it becomes fixed and then prevails. Afterwards it is used without the knowledge of its origin. Even more, the nonce form may not be known for all people. Consequently it could be said that
sometimes the meaning of an idiomatic expression is not always obvious even for native-speakers of the language. This gives reasonable interpretation for such obtained responses for non-native teachers to have poor knowledge of such items of language.

This fact is reached by the researcher while the extensive reviewing of literature on the subject. Fromkin et al, (2007) express the same point, the researcher agrees with Fromkin et al pointing out the enormous diversity and great difficulty that encompass idiomatic expressions even within the researcher’s mother tongue; Arabic language. An idiom might be familiar and known in one area in Sudan, but in a remote region it might seem entirely unknown. The researcher gives the following evidence:

1. عشا البالياتات
2. آذي الليك ومسم بطون كر عيك.
3. أبو سلومبوي ولا كدكاي زول
4. عطلة مزين
5. عايرة وأدوها سوط
6. الخيل تقلب والشكر لي حماد
7. يداك أوكتا وفوك نفخ

The researcher discussed the above Sudanese idiomatic expressions with different Sudanese persons including teachers. The result is surprising; no person or teacher knows all the above idioms. An idiom like "أبوسلومبوي ولا كدكاي زول" is known in western part of the Sudan, but it is extremely unfamiliar in other different parts of the country. As introduced before, such culture-bound expressions reflect the culture of the group of people who share a geographical region. Idioms prevail in some parts of a country, others are known in most parts of the country, and some are only confined to particular parts. This is also applied to English idiomatic expressions which make it even difficult for native-speakers. For non-native teachers of English they usually face difficulty when teaching literature as it reflects the culture of the British island, and as a rich source of such culture-bound expressions. All that is mentioned proves the nature of such culture-bound expressions, which supports the result on table (4.12) above about the teachers’ poor knowledge of idiomatic expressions.
4.4.8 Question (8) Do you think teaching idiomatic expressions will promote the students’ communication skills?

The researcher asked the above question in order to know the impact of teaching idiomatic expressions on improving students’ communicative skills. According to the expert lecturers who were interviewed, Table (4.15) and Figure (4.3) clearly show the results.

Table (4.15): The Role of idioms in promoting students’ performance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>95.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure (4.4): The Role of Idioms in Promoting Students’ Performance

Twenty (20) teachers out of the total number which was twenty-one (21) lecturers, comprising a percentage of ninety-five point two (95.2%) agree on the importance of teaching idiomatic expressions. This broad consensus amongst the lecturers interprets and asserts the relationship between the teaching of idiomatic expressions and the improvement of the students’ performance in communication skills.
Only one lecturer who responded ‘no’, arguing that idiomatic expressions might greatly hinder the students’ language learning.

Doughtleyet al (2003) agree with the majority of the lecturers; they are in line with teaching idiomatic expressions as a factor of improving student performance in language, maintaining that learning a language requires exposure to authentic sources. They refer to the importance of idiomaticity in second language learning which helps to achieve native-like competence and fluency. In line with Doughtleyet al., are Pawley and Syder (1983). They hold the same preconception that there exist a direct relationship between fluency and control of idiomatic expressions. They believe that fluent and idiomatic control of performance in language result, to a great extent, from the knowledge of a set of ‘sentence stem’ which is considered a clause whose form and lexical contents are fixed.

More than that, Elkilic (2008) argues that students majoring in English who confront difficulty in understanding idiomatic expressions will not be accepted as proficient without knowing the idioms sufficiently.

Regarding question (8), the researcher’s point of view corresponds closely to the above different scholars participations. After teaching the syllabus containing idiomatic expressions, the students were subject to a post-test. The results showed the students’ improvement in performance, compared to their performance in the pre-test before receiving the teaching of idioms. Idioms are ubiquitous; they are part of everyday speech, besides being considerably used in papers, magazines, journal, movies, and literature. Hence, teaching idioms will surely result in the improvement of (EFL) learners.

Past research, too, supports the above scholars and researcher’s views. Bjornson, K (2010) confirms that English language is rich in idiomatic expressions that are used by native-speakers, thus, as he states, there is a practical need for non-native speakers to find ways to reading, comprehend, and retain common idioms which will improve their communication skills.

El-Tayeb, S (2006) reports as one of her findings that the best way of solving the problems of idioms is through effective teaching and practice, hence EFL learners’ performance will improve.
According to the above participations from different lecturers who were interviewed, and the participation of the scholars in the literature reviewed, side by side with the previous studies correspond to those views, including the researcher’s point of view, it could be concluded and interpreted that the students’ performance in language will improve if idiomatic expressions are taught which proves that hypothesis(7) is accepted.

4.4.9 Question (9) With regard to idiomatic expressions, what advice would you give to the teachers who teach EFL learners?

With regard to question (9) above, the researcher aimed to succinctly summarize the lecturers’ point of views concerning idiomatic expressions, trying to obtain constructive, useful and helpful advice for the teachers of English.

The lecturers willingly provided professional advice which really needs to be acted on. The result is shown on table (4.16) and Figure (4.4) below:

Table (4.16): Advice of lecturers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advice</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teach and practice</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach in context</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrasalverbs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to native speakers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure (4.4): Advice of lecturers:

![Bar chart showing advice to teachers]

Viewing table (4.14) and figure (4.4) above, varied advice are suggested: the lecturers advise teachers of English varied pieces of advice, one of these is to teach the students and get them practice idiomatic expressions.

A considerable number of the lecturers (13), (61.9) percent think it is advisable to teach idioms.

This could be interpreted as a clear evidence for the importance of teaching idiomatic expressions which was hypothesized and confirmed in this study.

A considerable number, (13) lecturers, comprising (61.9%) suggested training and teaching the students idiomatic expressions. As it is previously discussed , there is great consensus on the issue of teaching idiomatic expressions. Cook, (2003) supports the issue of teaching idiomatic expressions stating clearly that the knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary is not sufficient for successful communication referring to the knowledge of idiomatic expressions.

Benda, (1981) agrees to the teaching of idiomatic structures adding that teaching such items of language will contribute to the students’ understating of the process of acquiring these ready-made pieces of language.

Fromkin et al, (2007) are in accordance with the above scholars, they report that the knowledge of the language requires the knowledge of multi-word units.
The researcher of the present study is in line with the above scholars’ views about teaching idioms, idioms are units of language that are found and used by native-speakers abundantly in every aspect of life.

Three lecturers (14.3%) advised teachers of English to teach literature. Literature is considered the major resource for the students to encounter idioms, as they are culture-bound units of language.

Teaching phrasal verbs is also an advice that is suggested by one lecturer (4.8%). Phrasal verbs are genuine elements of idiomatic expressions. The researcher observed that they are ‘to some extent’ found within the syllabus, but they represent an area of difficulty for the learners, and out of the researcher’s experience, they are even difficult for many teachers.

Teaching idiomatic expressions in context is suggested by one lecturer (4.8%) which, according to the researcher could be added to the advice of training and teaching, which raises the number of the lecturers and their percentage to (14) and (66.7%) respectively.

Two lecturers (9.5%) advised the teachers to listen to native-speakers. As it is discussed in question (6) above, idioms are ubiquitously found and used in everyday speech and writing and on columns of papers, on television, and on radio. Thus, listening to native-speakers will familiarize non-natives, mainly students, with such expressions.

On the basis of the great consensus amongst the lecturers who were interviewed, and in addition to the different scholars who participated in the literature reviewed regarding the matter of teaching idiomatic expressions, it really seems surprising for the researcher the point of view of one participant of the interviewees. His reaction to the question of teaching idiom was to ‘avoid them’ explaining that such items of language may hinder the process of learning.

The researcher agrees to the matter of idioms difficulty, but disagrees with avoiding teaching them. The experiment that was conducted by the researcher as a tool for collecting data, proved the central and crucial role of idiomatic expressions as key–elements for communicative competence. This was exhaustively discussed.
Through reviewing the relevant literature and surveying past research done in the same area, no scholar or researcher suggested avoiding idiomatic expressions. All teachers interviewed (with the exception of one) and different scholars support the exploration of the area of idiomatic expressions, including them in the syllabuses, familiarizing students with them, using them and practising them thoroughly. While conducting the research and carrying out teaching of the syllabus intended for the students, they seemed very enthusiastic and willing to attend such lessons. Though difficult, the area of idioms is in fact approachable. To fully summarize the chapter, the following main results and findings are introduced:
4.5 The Findings:

The present research findings are summarized and reported as follows:

1. There is a significant difference between the performance of the students in the two tests; the pre-test and the post-test, that is to say, there is a considerable improvement with regard to the students’ scores. (30%) of the students passed the post-test in idiomatic expressions. This means the role of the knowledge of idiomatic expressions in improving students' performance in language.

2. There is no close correlation between teachers’ experience and the knowledge of idiomatic expressions.

3. The key principles of effective and enjoyable learning vary, according to the participants, culture comes in the first place (23.8%), environment of learning (19%), using authentic materials (9.5%), competent teacher (9.5%), and interest in language, enjoyable material, encouraging learners, patience, considering the four skills and guessing meanings, each of which has percentage of (4.8%).

4. There is an entire precedented consensus on including idiomatic expressions in university syllabuses, idiomatic expressions are too frequent to be worthy of inclusion in the syllabuses. This high ratio is given by (20) lecturers out of twenty-one (21) which represents (95.2%). Parker, J (1933), states that in order to master correct usage, a learner should read and listen to informed people such as professionals who are the leaders in the use of language. To keep up with current usage, one should listen to news broadcasts.

5. Idiomatic expressions actually exist in the university syllabuses. (66.7%) of the lecturers are aware of their existence.

6. The answer to the question of teaching idiomatic expressions seems uncertain, nine (9) teachers out of twenty-one (21), state that idiomatic expressions are not taught, comprising a percentage of (42.9%). The remaining proportion (57.1%) say that only phrasal verbs are taught. A low ratio think that idiomatic expressions are taught unintentionally (only 14.3%).

7. An appreciable proportion of teachers who teach English have poor knowledge of idiomatic expressions, they comprise (66.6%) of the interviewed sample.

8. Effective teaching of idiomatic expressions will result in improving the students’ performance in language (95.2%).
9. There is great consensus amongst the lecturers who were interviewed and the different scholars who participated in the literature reviewed about the vital role of teaching idiomatic expressions as factors of improving communicative competence. They are twenty lecturers out of twenty-one (95.2%).
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion, Recommendations and Suggestions

The present chapter is devoted to briefly restate the findings of this research study, suggest some implications for both curriculum design and teaching methodology. The chapter also presents some directions for future research.

5.0 Introduction

Most English speakers, as stated by Pollio, (1977: 140) use idiomatic expressions which is referred to as formulaic competence heavily. They utter about ten (10) millions novel metaphor per life-time. This works out to about 3,000 novel metaphors per and 7,000 idioms per week.

Formulaic competence is a counter balance to linguistic competence. It refers to those fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that speakers use heavily in every day interactions. Idiomatic expressions is an example type.

Formulaic competence has grown in importance; it is now acknowledged that fluent speakers of a language draw on formulaic knowledge of the target language as often as they use systematic linguistic knowledge (Murcia cf. Hunston, 2002).

Al Hassan, (2014: ii) reports that research has increasingly highlighted the effectiveness of formulaic sequences in improving second language learners academic writing skills because those chunks of language function as frames to which L 2 learners resort when approaching a writing task to compose an academic piece of writing.
5.1 Findings:

- The results of the Pre-test and the Post-test show that there is considerable improvement with regard to the performance of the students.
- The students’ marks on the pre-test were low. After teaching idiomatic expressions, students took the post-test and gained better scores.
- Culture is considered ‘cornerstone’ with regard to enjoyable and effective factors of learning as viewed by the interviewees (32.8%).
- There is an entire preceded consensus on the inclusion of idiomatic expressions within university syllabuses. This high ratio (95.3%) is given by twenty (20) lecturers out of the total number which was twenty-one (21).
- Idiomatic expressions actually comprise part of university syllabus, but it is ignored, that is to say not taught.
- An appreciable proportion of the teachers who teach English, according to the interviewees, have poor knowledge of idiomatic expressions. (66.66%) of the interviewees stated that.
- In addition, the result show that effective teaching of idiomatic expressions will result in improving the students' communicative competence. It is known amongst scholars that the absence of formulaic language may be what marks out competent language learners as non-natives. Smith and Carter (2000:1) consider idioms as key-elements of fluent language production whose role in vocabulary learning is considerable.
5.2 Recommendations

○ Language instructors may be able to upgrade `L2 learners´ everyday communicative competence by introducing different idiomatic expressions that serve various functions, and by raising `L2 learners´ awareness of the importance of this language phenomenon.

○ Syllabus designers and material developers could compile a basic list for idiomatic expressions to serve as a basis for teaching and learning these expressions as far as their important role for EFL learner is agreed upon by the majority of the linguists.

○ Teachers of English should be encouraged to include such items of language as part of the teaching-learning process.

○ Learners should be familiarized with idioms, despite the complexity that associated with them.

○ Syllabus should include a considerable portion of formulaic language.

○ It is quite beneficial to use effective methods when teaching idiomatic expressions such as: using stories, teaching idioms in context, using rich illustrations such as pictures and diagrams.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Studies

○ More empirical studies are needed in the area of idiomatic expressions (the area of teaching-learning).
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Appendix I

Interview for Lecturers of English at University, College or institution Level

Dear Colleagues:

I am conducting research in applied linguistic concerning idiomatic expressions and their role in communication. I need your participation in answering few questions and it is highly appreciated. Thanks so much.

Kindly please ask the following questions:

Q1: For how long have you been teaching at the university?

Q2: Do you think that teachers of English who are non-native speakers are familiar with idiomatic expressions?

Q3: What are some of the key principles which promote effective and enjoyable learning in students?

Q4: Do you think that idiomatic expressions exist within the syllabus of universities in Sudan?

Q5: Are idiomatic expressions taught at Sudan universities?

Q6: Expressions are important elements that they should be included in the syllabus?

Q7: Do you think Sudanese teachers of English as a foreign language have poor knowledge of idiomatic expressions?

Q8: Do you think that teaching idiomatic expressions will promote the students’ communication skills?

Q9: With regard to idiomatic expressions what advice would you give to the teachers who teach EFL learners?
Appendix II
A Pre-test
Answer all the questions

Question one:
a) What is vocabulary
b) Give an example for vocabulary items of different classification.

Question two:
A: 1. Hit the sack .................................................................
2. spill the beans .................................................................
3. Kick the bucket.................................................................
4. Odd and ends......................................................................
5. Take a back sit ....................................................................
B. a) allow another to be in control                   b) reveal a secret 
c) go to bed                           d) die             e) small pieces which have small value

Question three: complete the following using the word:

1. Ladies and .................................................................
2. Fish and .................................................................
3. be as clear as .................................................................
4. to bite the.................................................................
5. use dark colours, but don’t use .................................................................
colours

Question four: Give ONE word to show the meaning of the following underlined word:

1. I always put off going to the dentist.
2. She has put aside a good sum of money.
3. please keep the ball rolling in order to achieve peace.
4. He is serious, he keeps a straight face.

Question five: Try to find equivalents in your own language for the following:

1. To make money.
2. She goes there now and then
3. To talk Turkey
4. Stir things up
5. He wants to buy an expensive car, so he has to pay through the nose.
6. I could eat a horse.
Question six: Choose one word or phrase to complete the sentence:

1. you’ve got to give it to him! He may be lying, but he can certainly ……. a story
   a. make out
   b. make up
   make over
   d. make through

2. I’m phoning to complain………………………...the delivery today.
   a. about
   b. for
   c. from
   d. to

3. I expect every student to be punctual. I know I can count …………… you
   a. in
   b. one. about
   d. over
Appendix III

A post-test

Kindly please answer the questions

Q1: Give brief definitions for the following terms:

a) vocabulary

b) an idiom

Q2: Give an example for each of the following:

a) Transparent idiom
b) Opaque idiom

c) a binomial

Q3: Complete the following:

1. She has a heart

2. He is rather a cold

3. You are no eating enough; you are as thin as

4. Don’t me up. I know you are praising me falsely.

Q4: Give the equivalents for the following (in your own language):

1. Kicket the bucket.

2. Spill the beans.

3. Look up to.

4. Pay through the nose.

5. Feel down in the nose.

Q5: Give the idioms for the following meanings:

1. The students misunderstood the teacher

2. If you don’t, take care he will take your job

3. This room has poor standard but you can stay in it until your office is ready
Q6: Match A with B:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To have a head like a sieve</td>
<td>a) without a home or many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Has seen better days</td>
<td>b) very happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. be over the moon</td>
<td>c) very badly done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. a pain in the neck</td>
<td>d) a bad memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. down and out</td>
<td>e) dressed in a showy way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. a dog’s dinner</td>
<td>f) rather old and broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. a dog’s breakfast</td>
<td>g) a bad person, irritating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q7: Give one word from the given words that communicates with the other (clear – considerably – malaria – general – fully – diet)

1) ........................................education.
2) ........................................agree.
3) ........................................agenda.
4) Catch ........................................
5) Balanced ........................................

Differ ........................................

With all the best
IDIOMS

Idioms are fixed expressions with meanings that are usually not clear or obvious in their original sense. The individual words often give you no help in deciding the meaning. The expression *to feel under the weather*, which means «to feel unwell», is a typical idiom. The words do not tell us what it means, but the context usually helps.

Everyday spoken language is full of fixed expressions that are not necessarily difficult to understand (their meaning may be quiet ‘transparent’) but which have a fixed form which does not change. These have to learnt as whole expressions. These expressions are often hard to find in the dictionaries, so listen out of them.

**Example for idioms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has seen better days</td>
<td>It's rather old and broken down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get the wrong end of the stick</td>
<td>To misunderstand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poke your nose into</td>
<td>To interfere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be over the moon</td>
<td>Extremely happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall down in the dump</td>
<td>Depressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kid's stuffs</td>
<td>Easy and not challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kick the buckets</td>
<td>Die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spill the beans</td>
<td>Reveal a secret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get to heart of</td>
<td>To go straight to the point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the move</td>
<td>Very active</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exercise**

Fill the following gaps with the suitable idiom. Pick from the following options:

*(Red herring, spill the beans, on the move, kid's stuffs, poke you nose into, has seen better days, Get the wrong end of the stick, feel down in the damps, kick the bucket, be over the moon)*
Idiom are rather informal and include an element of personal comment on the situation. They sometimes humorous or ironic.

Example: how do you do Mrs. Watson? Do take the weight of your feet. (Sit down).

SIMILES: - as ….. as / like

A. as …. As

Similes are easy to understand. If you see the phrase as dead as a doornail, you don’t need to know a doornail is, simply that the whole phrase means totally dead but, remember, fixed similes are not 'neutral'; they are usually informal/colloquial and of humorous. So, use the with care, and keep them generally as part of your receptive vocabulary.

Creating a picture in your mind can often help you remember the simile:

As blind as a bat, as thin as a rake, as strong as an ox, as quiet as a mouse

Some can be remembered as pairs of opposites.

As heavy as led = as light as feather
As drunk as a lord = as sober as judge
As black as night = as with as snow

Some can be remembered by sound patterns

As brown as berry
As good as gold
As cool as cucumber

Some other useful as …. as …. Phrases.

The bed was a hard as iron and I couldn’t sleep.
I’ll give this plant some water. The soil is as dry as a bone.
He’s as mad as a hatter. He crossed the Atlantic in a bathtub.
She told her teacher, as bold as brass, that his lessons were boring.
you’ll have to speak up, he’s as deaf as a post.
Don’t worry. Using the computer’s as easy as falling off a log.
She knew the answer as quick as a flash.
When I told him, his face went as red as a beetroot.
Sometimes the second part can change the remaining meaning of the first.
The princess’s skin was as white as snow (beautifully white).
When he saw it, his face went as white as a sheet. (Pale with fear/horror).
The fish was bad and I was as sick as a dog. (Vomiting).

B. Like
My plan worked like a dream, and the problem was soon solved.
Be careful! The boss doesn’t see you; she has eyes like a hawk.
No wander he’s fat. He eat like a horse and drink like a fish.
Sorry, I forgot to ring him again. I’ve got a head like a sieve.
The boss is like a bear with a sore head today. (In a very bad temper).
She goes around like a bull in a china shop. (Behaving in a very clumsy, insensitive way).
Criticizing the government in his presence is like a red rag to a bull. (Certain to make him very angry).
Exercise 1

Complete the following as … as … similes.

1. Rose is as mad as ...............................................; you wouldn’t believe the crazy things she does.
2. You are eating enough but you’re as thin as a ..............................................................
3. He never say a thing; he is quiet as a ..............................................................
4. you’ll have to shout; she as deaf as a ..............................................................
5. I’m afraid I can’t read this small print; I am as blind as a ..........................................................without my glasses.

Different similes contain the same word. Fill the gap with the appropriate words:

1. I feel great now. I .................................................. like log.
2. No! it's as easy as .................................................. Off a log.
3. After eating that bad cheese, I was as sick as a ..............................................................
4. I knew she had swindled me. I felt as sick as a ..............................................................
5. The old man's hair was as white as ..............................................................
6. Her face suddenly went as white as ..............................................................

Put the correct number on the right –hand gaps to complete the similes, as in the example. There are two that are not on the left-hand page. Try and guess them.

1. Quick - daisy
2. Red - ox
As 3.Flat - Flash
4. Fresh - beetroot
5. Strong - pancake
Binomials

Binomials are expressions (often idiomatic) where two words are joined by a conjunction (usually 'and'). The order of the words is usually fixed. It is best to use them only in informal situations, with one or two exceptions.

Odds and end: small unimportant things, e.g. let's get the main things packed; we can do the odds and ends later.

Give and take: a spirit of compromise, e.g. every relationship needs a bit of given and take to be successful.

A. You can often tell something is a binomial because of the sound pattern.

The boss was ranting and raving at us. (shouting/very angry)
The old cottage has gone to rack and ruin. (ruined/decayed)
He's so prim and proper at work (rather formal and fussy)
The hotel was a bit rough and ready (poor standard)

B. Sometimes the words are near-synonyms.

You can pick and choose; it's up to you. (Have a wide choice)
My English is progressing in leaps and bounds (Big jumps)
It's nice to have some peace and quiet (Peace/calm)
The doctor recommended some rest and recreation (Relaxation)
First and foremost, you must work hard (First/most important)

C. Many grammar words combine to form binomials.

There are cafes here and there. (Scattered around)
We've had meetings on and off. (Occasionally)
I've been running back and forth all day (To and from somewhere)
To and fro can be used just like back and forth.
He is unemployed and down and out. (without a home or money)

She ran up and down the street (in both directions)

D. Your language probably has many binomials. Make sure those which look similar in English have the same word order as your language. These four are very neutral binomials and can be used in formal or informal situations. Try translating them

A black and white film, please.
She ran back and forth.
There was hot and cold water in every room.

E. Binomials linked by words other than and.

you've got your sweater on fack to font (The wrong way)
He won't help her; she'll have to **sink or swim** (Survive or fail)

**Slowly but surely,** I realized the boat was sinking (Gradually)

**Sooner or later,** you'll learn your lesson (Some time/day)

Well I'm sorry that's all I can offer you; **take it or leave it.**

It's about the same distance as from here to Dublin, **give or take** a few miles. (Perhaps a mile or two more, or a mile or two less)
Exercise 2

Here some binomials. Join them with AND. Then check your dictionary to know the meanings.

Prim     dine     ruin     rough     dry
Rack     ready     proper     sound     safe     wine

Now use them to fill the gaps in the sentences.

1. I was left ................... and ................... with no-one to help me.
2. The room's a bit ............ and ................., but you are welcome to stay as long as you like.
3. I'm glad you're ................... and ................... after such a dangerous journey.
4. My host ................... and ................... me at the best restaurants.
5. Our old house in the country has just gone to ............ and ............ nobody looks after it now.
6. The secretary is always so terrible .............. and ............. the whole atmosphere always seems so very formal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She has a heart of gold</td>
<td>She's as hard as nails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(very kind, generous)</td>
<td>(no sympathy for others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He's as good as gold</td>
<td>He's rather a cold fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(generous, helpful, well-behaved</td>
<td>(distant, unfriendly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>used generally for children)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note also:

He's such an awkward customer. (difficult person to deal with)
She's a pain in the neck. Nobody likes her. (nuisance, difficult)
He gets on everyone's nerves. (irritates everybody)

Exercises

Try to complete these idioms from memory if possible:

1. She does a lot of voluntary work; she has a heart ........................................
2. Don't expect any sympathy from the boss; she's as hard as.........................
3. I'm sure Gerry will help you; he's as good ..............................................
4. I was too late to get on that course; I was a bit slow ................................
5. You want find him very friendly; he's rather a cold ...................................
6. Tell him to hurry up! He's such a .................................................................
Learn these idioms and complete the blanks using them:

- one's head screwed on [be sensible]
- A head for heights [not suffer from vertigo]
-To have A head like a sieve [bad memory]
- A good head for figures [be good at maths]
- One's head in the clouds [unaware of reality]

1. I'd better write in my notebook. I have ........................................
2. Ask Martha to check those sum. She has.................................
3. Don’t ask me to go up that tower. I'm afraid I don’t ..............
4. She's very sensible and knows what she's doing. She ............
5. He's quite out of touch with reality. He really .....................

Saying people are good at something:

Some expressions with idiomatic compound nouns, non-phrases and compound adjectives:

She's a dab-hand at carpentry, just like her father. (Usually for manual skills).
She's a really first-rate/top notch administrator, the very best.
When it comes to grammar, she's really on the ball (knows a lot).
Bill has a way with foreign students. The other teachers envy him. (good at establishing good relations/motivating them, etc.).
He really has green fingers: look at those flowers! (good at gardening).
Let him do the talking; he's got the gift of the gab. (good at talking).
He was dressed up like a dog’s dinner (over-dressed in a showy way).
I'm sorry, this essay of yours is a dog's breakfast. (a mess/very badly done).
Mary wants to have her cake and eat it! (wants everything without any contribution from her side).
I think he's just trying to butter me up. (give false praise in order to get something).
Express the opposite meaning to these sentences using the above idioms:
She was dressed beautifully, just right for the occasion.
He is **no good at talking to people** at all.

Mick **doesn’t get on with** the secretaries, just look at how they react when he wants something done.

She said I was the best boos they'd ever had. It was obvious she was **praising me sincerely**. I wonder what she wants?

**Good talk, bad talk:**

The boss always **talks down to us.** (talks as if we were inferior).

My work-mates are always **talking behind my back.** (saying negative things about me when I'm not here).

It was just **small talk,** nothing more, I promise. (purely social talk, nothing serious).

Let's sit somewhere else; they always **talk shop** over lunch, and it bores me rigid. (talk about work).

**Talk in discussion, meeting, etc:**

- Who's going to **start the ball rolling?**
- I want to **speak my mind** today.
- **To put it in a nutshell,** this is a waste of time.
- Derek's so **long-winded.**
- I hope we **wrap up the discussion** by 12.30.
- Iris always **talks rubbish.**
- I hope they **get to the point** soon.
- I hope he will speak he always **talks sense.**

**Idioms based on names of the parts of the body:**

He's **made quite a bit of headway** with his maths lately.

We **had to pay through the nose** for those ticket. (pay a huge amount).

I hope you didn’t mind me telling you. I just had to get it off my chest. (tell something that's been bothering you a lot).

Oh, he's got a finger in every pie. (is involved in many different things).

You've got to hand it to her; she's a great singer. (acknowledge/admit).

**Exercises:**

**Complete the sentence with the appropriate preposition:**

1. The long journey brought ................................ labour and the baby was born on the bus.
2. She brought……………………………. Six children all on her own.

3. He always looked up to his father (respect).

This diagram illustrates some of the most useful phrasal verbs formed with «look». The meaning of the phrasal verb is given in brackets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrasal Verb</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to</td>
<td>He always looked up to his elder brother. [respect]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Into</td>
<td>The police are looking into the case. [investigate]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
<td>Could you help me look for my keys, please? [try to find]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back on</td>
<td>I look back on my schooldays with great pleasure. [recall]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look Up</td>
<td>Look her town up in the atlas. [find information in a book]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>She is very good at looking after her sister [take care of]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward to</td>
<td>I'm looking forward to starting work. [expect with pleasure]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out</td>
<td>If you don’t look out he'll take your job from you [take care]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are a few more useful phrasal verbs on look. All of them are illustrated below in a business context but they can also, of course, be used in other situations.

Please look through the proposal and let me know what you think [examine].

I've looked over your proposal but I still need to read the fine print. [examined quickly].

Business is looking up at last. [starting to improve].

When you go to New York, be sure to look up our representative there. [find and visit].

We are looking to the Far East for an increase in sales. [depending on].

The company seems to be looking ahead to a bright future. [planning for the future].

What words you need to complete the sentences below?

1. I look .............................................. that summer with some regrets.
2. He has a great respect for his colleagues but he doesn’t really look .............................................. his boss.
3. you're going to London? Do look .............................................. my sister when you're there.
4. The government inquiry is looking .............................................. the cause of the accident.
5. We are looking .............................................. you to bring the company successfully out of the recession.
6. I'm sorry to hear you lost your job. I do hope that things will look .............................................. for you soon.
7. Six nurses look .............................................. patients in the ward.
What is collocation?

Collocation is the way words combine in a language to produce natural-sounding speech and writing. For example, in English you say *strong wind* but *heavy rain*. It would not be normal to say *heavy wind* or *strong rain*. And whilst all four of these words would be recognized by a learner at pre-intermediate or even elementary level. It takes a greater degree of competence with the language to combine them correctly in productive use. To a native-speaker these combinations are highly predictable to a learner they are anything but.

Combinations of words in a language can be ranged on a cline from the totally free-*see a man – car – book-* to the totally fixed and idiomatic – *not see the wood for the trees*. This idiom is not only fixed in form, it also has nothing whatever to do with wood or trees. Between these two extremes, there is a whole range of nouns that take the verb *see* in a way that is neither totally predictable nor totally opaque as to meaning. These run from the fairly «weak» collocation *see a film* (which elementary students learn as a `chunk´ without posing to the reflect that this is not quite the literal meaning of *see*) through the `medium strength´ *see a doctor* to the `stronger´ collocations of *see – danger – reason – the point*. All these combinations, apart from those at the very extremes of the cline, can be called collocation. And it is combinations such as these – particularly in the `medium - strength´ area – that are vital to communicative competence in English.

Examples for collocations:

Here are some words and some of their collocations:

- **Admit** collocates with: freely readily, frankly, honestly, openly, reluctantly.
- **Agenda** collocates with: heartily, strongly, fully, entirely, completely.
- **Diet** collocates with: balanced, healthy, good, adequate, strict, slimming.
- **Difference** collocates with: big, broad, considerable, major, real.
- **Educated** collocates with: highly, well, badly, poorly.
- **Education** collocates with: decent, excellent, first – class, private, adult, further, higher, pre-school.
- **Information** collocates with: accurate, correct, precise, relevant, valuable, useful.
- **Question** collocates with: awkward, difficult, embarrassing, simple.
- **Shortage** collocates with: serious, severe, acute.
- **Successful** collocates with: astonishingly, highly, extremely, very, outstandingly.
**Website** collocates with: internet, official, design, develop, make, set up, upload, update.

**Exercise:**
Choose the correct option to complete the following sentences:
1. Their attempts have been ……………… successful [extremely - strictly].
2. People can fight infection more easily if they have …………………… diet. [powerful - adequate].
3. A ………… agenda will win votes in the next election. [clear - different].
4. I was …………………. a website all yesterday. [preparing - designing].
5. I noticed a ………………… difference in her attitude. [real - marginal].
6. There is …………………. shortage of English teachers. [obvious - acute].
7. The journalist asked the guest …………………… Question about his finance. [embarrassing - endless].
8. He ……………… admitted that the head taken a bribe. [highly - reluctantly].
9. Books give …………………… information. [valuable - healthy].
10. I …………………… agree with what you said. [generally - fully].
11. She seems intelligent and ………………… educated. [dramatic - well].
12. …………………… education is expensive. [private - poor].

**Illnesses:**
You can **have** any illness or disease:
I'm warning you – I've got a bad cold.
Have the kids bad chickenpox yet?

**Get** can be used with disease or illnesses that you often have:
He gets really bad hay fever every summer.

**Suffer from:** is used in more formal context and with more serious diseases:
This medicine is often recommended for patients who suffer from arthritis.
On **attack of** flu, nerves, shingies: an asthma **attack**.
A bout of bronchitis, coughing, flu, pneumonia, sickness a coughing, an epileptic **fit**.
Catch: a cold, a caught, flu, German measles.
Develop: aids, an allergy (to something), high blood pressure, heart/liver trouble.
Suffer: a breakdown, a heart attack, a stroke
Injury: bad, major, serious, terrible, minor, slight.