Frozen Expressions and Interference of First Language Ideas

<Samer, Manzoor>[1],

[1]Lahore Leads University,
Lahore, Pakistan
Rosam.star@gmail.com

Abstract: The research has been conducted to analyze the role of idiomatic expressions in reference of second language learning. The paper aims to observe the phenomenon of comprehension and interpretation of idiomatic language among second language learners. It also desired to find out the different complexities and difficulties a learner can face while learning the other's cultural pinned language. The research has concluded the results by choosing the qualitative method that is descriptive and theme-based analysis. The descriptive interpretation has been done by considering respondents both languages' metaphorical, psycholinguistics, cultural, and stylistic aspects respectively.

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1. Introduction

Language is the most common and most widespread phenomenon among humans. It starts from a mere set of signs, symbols and sound and continued with the complex, specific and difficult meaning. As the modernity is growing in other fields of life so language is also facing same complexities and variations. Perhaps the most complex phase of human language is their use of idiomatic and metaphorical expression. English is the global language on the orb and by the time as it used more it getting more complex and difficult for its learners. It's difficult for a novel learner to come across with the difficulties of second language complexities. Idioms appear to be an easy word, but the complex world that lives inside it makes it the most unique feature of any language. The main purpose of idiom is to comprehend the long story in short by introducing a small group of words that hides its entire contextual links behind. This contextual and cultural hiding of a bunch of words

makes it an idiosyncratic difficulty for second language learners. As idioms and figurative expressions used so commonly among native speakers in their formal speech like conferences, presentation and official discussion or even in informal conversation like movies, cartoons, TV serials and daily use language so for a learner came from different background it become obligatory to learn this difficult phase of language with ample interest and intention. While learning a second language the process is entirely different as the learner already has a set system of language in his mind. The existing rules of the first language keep interfering with the new system and then the phenomena of interference produced in the learner`s mind. Languages are not mere means of communication rather it owes deeply rooted cultural and psychological norms. Each language has its own stereotype and perception about words and identification only to its native learners. Idioms most often treated on its linguistic, semantic and syntactic terms by ignoring the fact that as the

Corresponding Author: Name, Affiliation, Email, Tel

most complex counterpart that it deserved to be viewed in its context and psychological background.

1.1. Limitations of the study

As the research was on idioms so as the most difficult genre of language the respondents were less interested to solve the Performa while they all were proficient learners. The study was limited only to 10 respondents who are proficiently skilled in English language use.

2. Related Literature

2.1. Role of Idiomatic expressions in second language learning

Idiomatic expressions often consider being the property of native speakers because of their contextual awareness of this difficult genre of language. Being the most unpredicted feature of any language idioms possesses a dual nature which has distinctive syntactic and semantic meaning [1]. As [2] mentions in his work that by ignoring the importance of idioms while learning a language the learner must unquestionably miss the crucial counterpart of the language. Just imagine the speech without all the popular sayings that are indeed very relevant part of one's culture and vernacular that helps the speakers of a certain age or social group to have a special identity of even a certain private language. In everyday speech people use idioms frequently so the second language learners need at least to understand the common ones. [3] Says that if learners manage to use a few idioms by themselves, they can feel delighted that they are really entering into the spirit of the language. Idioms are used both in spoken and written English and often appear in newspaper articles, films, TV shows and daily conversation. They are frequently utilized by native speakers who feel language as inborn genetic ability. The scholar [4] describes that idioms are one of the most effective ways for students to improve new words and expressions into their language. Once learners are able, they not only understand idiomatic expressions, but also to produce them that make them highly proficient language learners. Idioms are habitually used in writing or speech to make the expressions more vibrant. They are capable to mark learner as a fluent speaker of the language and able to interact with native speakers more effortlessly. By means of using idioms appropriately in oral and written

discourse generates confidence in students and admiration in those with whom he came into interaction.

2.2. Phenomenon of comprehension and interpretation of idiomatic language

Language is the most common phenomenon among all human on the globe while its region, culture, context and speakers give it a different dimension and meaning. Language is deeply rooted with its culture and this cultural impact that produces a cultural impact that produces a unique feature of language which are known as idioms [5]. Idioms consist of a block which comprises of a long set of words that linguistically and psycholinguistically have different semantic and syntactic meaning. The proponent of transformational grammar Noam Chomsky [6] said that idiom is the complex unit of language that falls in two linguistic categories i.e., syntactic and semantic. In traditional studies several models were introduced by different linguists and psycholinguistics which were based on the literal meaning of an idiom, but they didn't explore the figurative illustration of it. The researchers [7] introduced a literal processing model that formulates the idea of recollection of words from the brain by processing the idiomatic mode. Almost the same idea was given by [8] in his three stage model of metaphor comprehension, that says that user first go for semantic meaning of the idiom, but if he doesn't feel comfortable in it then choose an idiomatic mood for the metaphorical meaning of the idiom.

2.3. Idioms and compositionality

In past years of research idioms was considered under the principal of compositionality. It's a problem for an idiom to play the role of a compositional lexical item of language. Because compositional principal deals with whole and its parts, but idiom doesn't follow it [9]. The researchers [10] claim in their research that idioms fall in three different subclasses that based on its compositionality, conventionality and transparency. The compositionality feature of the idiom says that the meaning of the idiom says that the meaning of the idiom couldn't be assumed by dividing it into parts. The conventionality feature of the idioms links to idioms contextual meaning and transparency feature of the idiom says that meaning is drawn by the apparent meaning of the words. The researcher [11] describes in his study about idiom

as an intensive figurative speech that has two chief functions one is pragmatic and other is referential. The pragmatic function first click the cognitive sense of the user and then go for aesthetic sense. The referential function of the idiom is to mention the mental process that describes the quality of an action with some exaggeration. The scholar [12] describes in her book "A corpus-based approach that because of the inconsistent ways of idiom's use it is considered to be an obscure term. Another researcher [13] mention in her work that idioms as a frozen expression don't change their meaning in any circumstances, the meaning that exists inside it couldn't be described by its mere parts.

The last few decades have observed several psycholinguistic approaches in idiom comprehension processes. The main concern of these approaches is to find that in idiom comprehension processing, whether the literal or figurative meaning is recalled or both. In this regard [14] conducted a research to find among speakers of literal or figurative process activation and the result of their research failed to produce any marked discrimination. They describe the result that in idiom comprehension processing at first the literal meaning is activated and after its failure figurative meaning is recalled. [15] Came with the idea of parallelism. According to them both of these processes get activated at the same time. Gibbs [16] founds in his research that if idiom used in a particular context, then there is no need of literal meaning the user instantly derive the idiomatic meaning. [17] Proposed the configuration model and said that during idiom processing the literal meaning remain activated. The researchers [18] described another hybrid model of idiom understanding. Their findings tell that during idiom processing both literal and figurative meanings are activated by the individual automatically. They used in their research the term of idiom decomposition. While in case of non-decomposable idioms it takes a bit longer time for processing because both longer time for processing because both literal and figurative meanings remain distinct from each other.

All these researches are done in first language perspective. A scholar [18] introduced a model named as dual idiom representative. The other models observe the idiom processing in only native speaker's perspective while [18] tried to propose a model that deals with both natives and non-natives. According to this model idiom recognition is required for each non-decomposable idiom while in case of decomposable idioms, its constituents could draw its meaning and idiom entry is additional. The DIR model deals not only with the lexical level of idiom, but also with conceptual representation and considers it with the parallel existence of both idioms and its parts. The progression of an idiom relies on its decomposability while non-decomposable ability requires the frequent entries of idiom for its development in the lexicon.

2.4. Complexities and difficulties faced by second language learners

The researcher [3] claims that without learning idioms a non-native speaker remains an outsider and cannot understand the desired language fully. As idioms considered to be the most confusing genre of any language but at the same time this confusing genre is the most essential one. Researchers claim that as idioms are the most essential part of classroom language so the students who face difficulty in its learning and are considerably weak have bad impact in their academic concert. Another researcher [19] conducted a study in which he found three factors that are involved in the transfer of a linguistic item. The first one named as psychotypology that describes the perception of the learner about distance in both languages. The second one is prototypicality which describes the learner's opinion of the chief word of a linguistic item in native language and then in target language. The third factor is of learner's proficiency in L2. He believes that while learning a new language learner always perceives idiomatic expressions in context of his already acquired language. [19] In his research gave the idea that idioms are that language specific lexical items that cannot normally transfer. Those idioms which have a high prototypical nature have probably less transferable degree. Idioms are the genre of language that has both figurative and formulaic nature that really causes difficulty for a novel learner. This formulaic nature of idiomatic expression makes it frozen and fixed expression of the language. The researcher [20] proposed a hypothesis named as contrastive analysis hypothesis that says the similarity between L1 and L2 caused the positive transfer while differences between L1 and L2 lead to negative transfer. Researchers have investigated the linguistic

phenomena governed by second language learners and noticed the difficulties and problems they faced while learning. The two distinguished variables decomposability and translatability cause much hindrance in learning about idioms. As decomposability linked to the whole meaning composed of the lexical items of the idiom while translatability of an idiom gave the idea of degree of allowance of translation from one language to another. The linguist [21] observed this difficulty by conducting a research on Spanish people who were learning a new language i.e. English. She categorized idioms in three different forms; identical idioms, similar idioms and different idioms. By taking a multiple choice test and open ended question test she concluded the result that identical idioms are the easiest form for L2 learners. Similar idioms can also tackle easily, but with the glimpse of interference of first language. While different idioms were the less attempted part of the test, but at the same time it also shows less range of interference. The scholer [9] has also categorized idioms while observing cross linguistic influence into three different types; 'normally analyzable, abnormally analyzable and unanalyzable'. Normally analyzable idiom meaning lies in its parts, abnormally analyzable idioms need a contemplation process by knowing the figurative and constituent relationship and unanalyzable idioms are those which have no or very small degree of literal and metaphorical relationship. The linguist [22] categorized idioms into four different types named as 'non-compositional, compositional opaque, compositional transparent and quasi metaphorical. Non-compositional idioms have no literal and figurative relationship. In compositional opaque idioms the literal and figurative relationship exists, but it's not apparent. Compositional transparent idioms have direct literal and idiomatic meaning relationship and quasi metaphorical idioms have implied, and indirect meaning relationship because of its metaphorical nature. In conclusion idioms are not only complex in its very nature, but it also confuses the researchers as well.

3. Methodology and data analysis

The present study is a survey type research where respondents were selected randomly. The respondents were all proficient language users and all were the university students. The survey was conducted through distributing questionnaire where respondents have to define the given idiom according to their understanding and have to mention the degree of familiarity of that particular idiom in their language. The respondents were multilingual that they know English, Urdu and Punjabi. Their multilingual background helped the researcher to find the interference of first language ideas in their second language. The questionnaire was designed with the combination of four types of idioms that was introduced by [5] in their research.

1. Idioms with close literal and figurative meaning
2. Idioms with clear literal and figurative meaning
3. Idioms with metaphorical context
4. Idioms that have an equivalent in the first language

4. Findings of the study

The present study was desired to check the interference of first language in comprehension of frozen expressions of the second language. The study was aimed to find different psychological and cultural factors while translating the frozen expression of a second language. Idioms were categorized into four different types and the Performa has comprised of each type of idioms. The findings of the study gain an average response from respondents and the difficulty level was also typical. This response of the student shows the prototypical nature of the words they have in their mind. This not only shows the interference of first language, ideas, but also their built-in schema's interference. While interpreting a simple sentence learner find it an easy task then to define an idiomatic phrase. A simple sentence can be interpreted by parsing the sentence into parts but while interpreting an idiomatic expression; it's not a simple process by assigning meaning to its constituents. For example the idiomatic expression 'Bury one's head in the sand' almost each respondent interpret it differently. Interpretation depends upon each word of the phrase and they are collectively linked to each other. This also confirms the idea [7] gave about idiomatic expressions that they fall into both semantic and syntactic categories at the same time. To see the discourse-cognitive interference considers another idiom 'the grand climacteric' provides a quite clear elaboration. The respondents made multiple inferences of this idiom according

Bury one's head in the sand	To insult someone	Make dead to an alive person	Defeat the person	Putting someone in trouble	Create problem for someone	One face the hardship	Hide from something	Put someone in danger
To clear the decks for action	To make easier possibilities for something	Ready for action	Prepare for the action	Create space for others	Clear the way	To make measurements for difficult time	Ready to start something	
Come to one's ears	To say something	Hear about someone	Tell something to other	Strong bonding b/w two people	See situation from other's mind	To know	Something you want	Very abundant
For a rainy day	For often happening	To save money for trouble	For hard day	For some specific day	Savings for bad times	For bad conditions	Blessed day	
Dixie land	Luxurious land	Land of dwarfs	Any state or place	Controversial land	A form of jazz	World of illusions	Jazz land	
Fit to drop	Extremely tired	Drop down	Tired	Small	Success to failure	Adjust in any situation	To loose	Ready to go
The irony of fate	Chaos of luck	To build castles in air	Bad luck	Something very strict and firm to believe on	Truth of fate	Cosmic irony	To have good luck	The concept of God, fate

Table 1-Idioms with close literal and figurative meaning

Table-2 Idioms with clear literal and figurative meaning

The grand climacteric	About atmosphere	One who change situation	Rapid change	Big trouble	Eighty first year of someone's life	Critical period		
From the cradle	From childhood	Something underneath	From the first step of life	Something melodious to start from birth	From birth	From the beginning	From the start	
The prince of darkness	Remain in illusions	A devil	Full of evil deeds	King of evil	Hidden quality	Satan	Man of some evil spirit	
The evil eye	Bad eyes of criminal	Bad intentions	One who can destroy one's pleasure just by seeing	Someone who had bad intentions	Bad person	A gaze	The bad people	A look of evil
To loose one's nerves	Became frightened	Lose your nerves	Lose temper	Lose temperament	To make angry	Lose trust	Out of control	
Night cap	A cap worn in bed	Night suit	A bed time drink	Change in night	Something lightening	Nightmare	Strange things	
Remain at peace	Place of peace	Remain calm	Cool & relax	Keep calm	Remain contented	Peaceful		

Table-3 Idioms with metaphorical context

Pigs in clover	Hidden enemy	Stuck in problem	Some hidden threat	Double faced	Someone who is very happy	Excited	Reason of happiness	
Under a cloud	In care	In difficulties	Always saved from problem by luck	Someone protected	Difficult time	Someone done wrong	Under observation	Trouble
Dead sea apple	Useless thing	Not in use anymore	One who find betterment even in bad situation	Something tasteless or full of salt	Precious apple	A fruit supposed to dissolve in salt	Apple of sea	
Give a person the air	Giving someone a suggestion	To complain about someone	Give space to a person	Helping someone in trouble	Give someone such importance that he don't deserve	Tell the person something	Give some space to other	
The acid test	Check for behavior	Most difficult one	Very important test to get result	The condition in which if one fails can lose life	Difficult test	Too much sour	Chemical test	The hard test that prove your values
Cupboard love	A blessing	Show affection to get something	Show of love by selfish	Hidden love	Inside	Love as burden		
Double-dyed	Double personality	To dye twice	Double faced	Bad get more worst	Double minded	Mean	Double profit	
Draw the sword	End the war	Prepare for the fight	Ready for war	Ready for fight	To initiate a fight	To move away	Move to proceed	
Pigeon livered	To set free some prisoners	Small potential	A strong man	Someone on high position	Mildly	Gentle		

Table-4 Idioms that have an equivalent in the first language

Crocodile tears	Fake tears	False tears	In heavy sorrow	False tears	Fake	A person who don't cry but big tears come through eyes	Artificial tears	Fake tears
Die game	Must to do task	Useless game	The most difficult one	A situation where you have to win or lose	End of the game spirit	Hard game	Difficult	Die after struggle
To have eyes bigger than the belly	A greedy person	Want more than your needs	In state of shock and remain staring	To know the secrets	Demands more than needs	Those who can see everything		
Four oil on the fire	Heat up somebody's fight	Create more destruction	At the peak	Something bad get more worst	Make situation more worst	To have someone in problem	Fire extinguisher	Almost in danger
Kill the goose that lays the golden egg	To miss a golden chance	Kill the people that are bad	In greed of more things lose what you have	End of main source	Kill the leader	Spoil the way which give profit	To create problem for one who is successful	
Guerilla warfare	Horrible people	Armed leader	When you are not fighting					
Cold war	Apparently friends but actually enemies	Slow work	War at its peak	No actual war but political tension among two countries	Play the game silently	A state of political tension	State of hostility	
A bitter pill to swallow	Unpleasant facts to be accepted	Difficult to do but useful	Unwantedly taking something you don't want	Do that task what one has no other choice	Difficult to understand	Has to face hardship of life		

to their understanding and linked meaning they perceived. The meaning deduced mostly from the word 'grand' and 'climacteric'. The literal processing model is used by learner while they define any idiomatic expression. In this model the meaning of an idiom was drawn by recollection of the idea that already in mind about the words of the particular idiom. The respondents tried to apply this model that they first go for the literal meaning of the words present in it, but later if they are not comfortable change it according to the next possible figurative meaning. Those idioms which have an equivalent idiom in the first language of the respondents get the high range in correction. As the learners were already familiar with these idioms in their first language so they produced almost exact meaning. Here in this type of idioms they didn't even try to consider the parts of the idioms they simply define it according to their pre-build schema about the particular expression. The most difficult type of idioms for learners is considerable the figurative idioms that have no other option of explaining except figuratively done. So, most of the respondents inferred it wrongly.
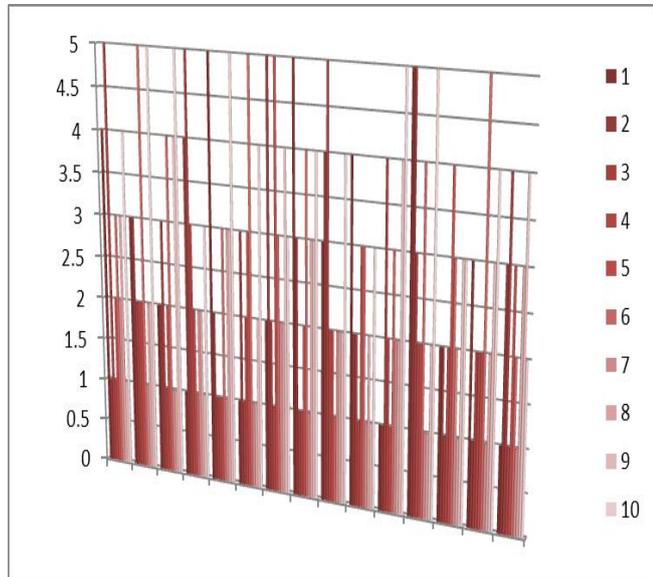
Degree of use/ familiarity

Figure 1. Average result of degree of use = 2.73125

5. Conclusion

The study shows that while defining idiomatic expressions the respondents mostly interpret it through the main or head word of the expressions. The activation of their cognition provided them already built-in schema that they have in their

mind about that particular word. The cognitive semantic processes it through path image schema in which people try to draw meaning from their everyday experience almost all respondents applied the same process while interpreting the idiomatic expressions. To define an idiom is rather a difficult task for respondents than to define a simple clause because this genre of language contains metaphorical context behind and embedded with sociolinguistic and semantic aspects of a particular culture. The nature of the idiom can also misguide the reader that in spite of knowing the meaning of the constituents of expressions the layman is unable to conclude the exact meaning because of its figurative nature. The study also shows that whether you are most skilled person in your professional language, but still there is a difficult pattern comes from idiomatic learning. The learners do not deal with a single methodology while comprehending idiom of second language while they go through multiple strategies. In the process of this comprehension, they mostly use contextual clues that they already have in their mind.

Acknowledgment

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Author Profile

Samer Manzoor received the M.A ELTL degree from University of Punjab and M.S. degree in English Linguistics from Lahore Leads University in 2010 and 2014, respectively. Her one research article is published in a renowned journal while 3 articles are in process.