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Developing Students' Ability to Master English Idioms using Songs and Pictures

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Abstract

Learning English idioms is difficult not only for native speakers but also for ESL/EFL learners because they do not mean what they literary mean and the meaning of idioms is difficult to understand except they make use of their cultural understanding. Learning English idioms is a challenging task for Indonesian students who learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL).The objective of this study was to investigate the effect of songs and picturesto teach English Idiomsof University students at University of Muhammadiyah Semarang. To conduct the study, 15 students from the second semester class of English Education Department were choose. Therefore, this research presents the effective learning strategies for EFL learners in Indonesia to learn English idioms effectively. Besides introducing English idioms to the University students using songs and pictures it can be the way to increasing students' motivation and involvement in learning English idioms.

Keywords: English idioms, songs, pictures.

1. Introduction

Learning English idioms is difficult not only for native speakers but also for ESL/EFL learners because they do not mean what they literary mean and the meaning of idioms is difficult to understand except they make use of their cultural understanding. Learning English idioms is a challenging task for Indonesian students who learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The international testing system, for example, TOEFL, TOEIC, and IELTS, the questions about idioms are always appearing so ESL/EFL learners such as pupils, university students, English teachers and lecturers must comprehend idiomatic competence. There are many textbooks, websites, and mass media available for teaching and learning idioms. But even the learners do master the meaning of some English idioms, it is still very hard to study to practice them properly. For example, the idiomatic meaning of she paid through the nose for the bag has nothing to do with the nose in its literal meaning. A native speaker will immediately recognize which meaning is intended, but for English Language Learner is left frustrating to figure out why she can pay through her nose.

Another cause why ESL/EFL learners do not learn idioms is that the lecturers do not teach them well. Idiom teaching might not have received suitable attention in foreign language teaching contexts, yet (Tran, 2012; Vasiljevic, 2011).Few lecturers in Asia are conscious of the roles of idioms in communicative skill. They may have faced complications in selecting a proper teaching method, choosing idioms, and explaining the use of an idiom in its suitable contexts. Many lecturers tend to escape idioms in their language and teaching (Tran, 2012).

In addition, teaching and learning idioms are one of the most problematic parts in second language acquisition because most of them have an illogical nature. Metaphorical idioms are puzzling for ES/EF lecturers and learners because the meanings of many idioms do not arise from the totality of their grammar and lexical parts and this causes complications in the logical instruction of idioms in SL/FL classrooms. As a result, applying an appropriate method to teach idioms has always been of devastating awareness among language lecturers.



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1.1. The importance of the role of songs and pictures in teaching English idioms.

(Rosova,2007) stated that songs have a place in the classroom for helping create a friendly and co-operative atmosphere for language learning, but they can offer much more. He also mentioned the idea that songs are effective tools in education.

According to (Razmjoo, 2012), there is a relation between linguistics and musicology as songs have both the communicative feature of language and the entertaining feature of music. Songs have rhythmic and melodic content representing a specific form of communication in a linguistic sense. He suggests that the use of songs in the foreign language classrooms reflects the inherent rhythmic nature of life.

Picture are placed under the category of visual materials (Wright as quoted by Prasetyanti, 2006). They may be in the form of drawings or photographs, in color or black-and-white, because of their effective role, the communicative way of teaching language seems to fervor their use to develop a context or situation.

Many language teachers these days have had the experience of using pictures to assist them in their class work. The use of pictures in the language class and especially the English class will give the student an opportunity to practice the language in real contexts or in situation in which they can use it to communicate their ideas (Edmundo Mora, 1988 : 28 as quote by Prasetyanti, 2006)

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The participants were the second semester university students majoring English education in a city on the north coast of island of Java, Indonesia. It is the capital city of the province of Central Java. They were aged 19-21. There were 15 students, 13 girls and 2 boys. They were required to take Idioms class once a week, 16 meeting/ semester include pre-test and post-test.

2.2 Instrument

The materials used in this study were a pre and post-test and a researcher-made questionnaire. The pre and the post -test were the same to reach valid and reliable results and the aim was to determine how much the students will be achieved after the treatment. Pre-test was the first reliable and efficient instruments was used at the very beginning of the course. Then at the end of the course, after the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by the lecturers, it was given to the students, in order to know students' preferences about the strategies developed in Idioms-based lexical studies class. The validity of the questionnaire was accepted by some experienced English lecturers.

2.3 Research design

Data collection method in this study was test of English idioms comprehension. Arikunto (2006:53) stated that test is an instrument or procedure which is used to measure a condition with certain rules. The tests referred in this study were pre-test and post-test in English idioms comprehension. A measurement of the learning received during the class as a result of comparing what the student knew before in a pre-test and after the class experience in a post-test. The purpose of these tests were to measure the amount of the pre-existing knowledge and to measure the learning as the result of the Idioms-based lexical studies course by using songs and pictures.




The 3rd
International Seminar On
EDUCATION and TECHNOLOGY - ISET
Collaborative Graduate Schools Conference

Steps to analyze the data were as follows:

- 1). A pre-test was given to the students
- 2). Treatment
- 3). Post-test was administered immediately after the treatment to diagnose the effect of the given treatment. First of all, the pre-test was given to the students who were studying at the intermediate level to know the background knowledge of the students. Result indicated that students knew a little about English idioms. Pre-test and post-test design was as follows:

Session	Design
Session 1	Pre-test
Session 2-15	Teaching along with songs and pictures
Session 16	Post-test

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Design

According to table 1, the entire experiment consisted of 16 sessions; at first a pre-test was administered to obtain some indication of the participant’s prior knowledge. The main experiment consisted of the next 15 sessions. The first session began with the pre-test. All the participants were required to take the test in class without any treatment under the supervision of the researcher.

3. Findings and Discussion

In order to know the background knowledge of the students, a pre-test was applied. After undergoing the treatment, the students took the post test. As mentioned before, the same test were administered as the post-test of achievement to reach reliable and valid results. And from the score we know that before the treatment, the students couldn’t recognize about the English idioms, after the lecturers gave the teaching strategy using songs and pictures, the score of the students is high and the most important thing is they can recognize and understand English idioms.

Some of the important finding are summarized in this section, 15 students completed the questionnaire at the end of 16th week. The students were asked not to write their names and were told to answer the questions carefully. On the last session the learners were given 10 statements, they were asked to rank each statement on a scale of 1 to 5. On this scale 1 meant the learners strongly agreed with the statements and 5 meant that the learners strongly disagreed with the statement.

4. Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of songs and pictures in learning English idioms for university students.

For the purpose of this study 15 students participated in this research from the total population of the second semester students of English Education Department, University of Muhammadiyah Semarang, Indonesia.

Since it is vital for EFL learners to learn English idioms in order to master English, it is important for EFL teachers to design various activities for students to use with English idioms and subsequently acquire them



The 3rd
**International Seminar On
EDUCATION and TECHNOLOGY - ISET**
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efficiently. Moreover, students learn better when they are provided with songs and pictures because they can understand and remember well. Finally, when teachers integrate listening, speaking, reading and writing activities together in teaching English idioms, students can be involved in the application of English idioms in four skills. Thus, it is effective to teach EFL learners English idiom when they are provided with songs and pictures to practice and utilize English idioms in different contexts.

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