



## AN INVESTIGATION OF VIETNAMESE EFL TEENAGE LEARNERS' KNOWLEDGE OF COMMON ENGLISH IDIOMS: IMPLICATIONS FOR IDIOM INSTRUCTION

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### Abstract:

This article explores the EFL teenage learners' knowledge of common English idioms in a Vietnamese context. Seventy-six teenage students between 14 to 17 years old, including 33 males and 43 females participated in an idiom test. The test consisted of 50 idioms selected from common English proficiency test books and the lists of common idioms by Grant (2007) and Liu (2003). Descriptive statistics showed that the students had very limited idiomatic knowledge. This finding uncovers the needs for idiom instruction. Based on the literature, the current paper proposes an instructional direction for improving their knowledge of idioms.

**Keywords:** English idioms, knowledge, EFL, teenage learners, idiom instruction

### 1. Introduction

Idioms constitute an important part in understanding the implicit meanings of writers or speakers. In fact, natural use of idioms is how high-proficiency speakers communicate outside of the classroom. The C1 band descriptors for CEFR listening skill describe that "I can understand a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms" (Council of Europe, 2012, p. 66). Similarly, according to the IELTS speaking band 7, candidates are expected to be able to "use some less common and idiomatic vocabulary", which is considered as mastery of idiomatic expressions, a criterion of lexical resource (British Council, 2012, p.1). In Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), especially in such books on

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training English proficiency (e.g., TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS, among others), it is easy for English learners to encounter a number of common English idioms.

Knowing fixed expressions is important because individuals who can use idioms are regarded as more competent language users (Boers *et al.*, 2006). The ability to use idioms constitutes part of the communicative competence model by Celce-Murcia (2008). Accordingly, knowledge of idioms may precede the ability to understand speech by advanced speakers. However, in English as foreign language (EFL) settings, idioms may seldom be used (Tran, 2012; Vasiljevic, 2011). Numerous teachers may neglect teaching idioms in their language and teaching (Tran, 2012) probably due to its inherent complex nature as well as their lack of interest in this area. English learners may, partly due to inadequate training, encounter problems when responding to or using idioms.

Despite significant previous studies on approaches to idiom instruction and learning (Cooper, 1999; Lennon, 1998; Levorato, Nesi, & Cacciari, 2004; Prodromou, 2003; Zyzik, 2011), research on the knowledge of the EFL learners in Asia generally, and Vietnam specifically, is limited. This study was conducted at a private language center in the Mekong Delta, aiming to gauge EFL teenage learners' knowledge of English idioms.

## 2. Literature Review

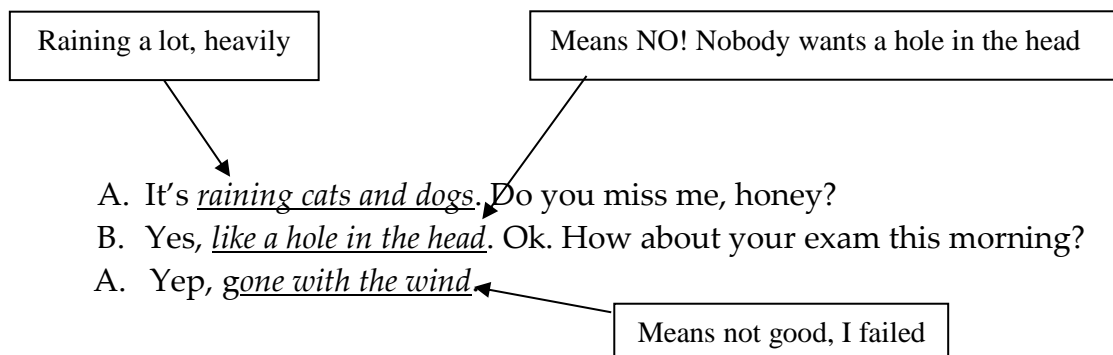
In order to obtain the scope of this study, in this section the insights about idioms are reviewed, focusing on the complexity of idioms, types of idioms and factors influencing learners' acquisition of idioms.

### 2.1 The Complexity of Idioms

According to D'Angelo Bromley (1984), idioms are existent in all languages and "*enjoy a widespread use among speakers of every language the world over*" (p. 272). Idioms employ mental images for meaning expression. In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009, p.870) an idiom is defined as "*a group of words which contains a special meaning compared to the ordinary meaning of each separate word, for example, 'under the weather' means being 'ill'*". Idioms are expressions, at least two lexis, but the meaning of an idiom is not that of the combination of meanings from these lexical items (Barkema, 1996). The meaning of idioms is thus very difficult to understand unless we use our cultural knowledge for interpretation or know them before. In other words, idioms can be defined as a type of multi-word units/ chunks, a kind of advanced vocabulary (Cooper, 1999).

According to Nippold and Taylor (2002), "*idiom understanding begins in early childhood and gradually improves throughout the school-age years, adolescence, and well into adulthood*" (p. 384). Idioms are an important part of language acquisition and proficiency. Figurative expressions make a language more colorful and useful to polish the use of language. D'Angelo Bromley (1984) stressed the role of idioms by saying "*[j]ust as idioms are disruptive, ambiguous, and difficult for the language user, so also are they interesting and colorful. Idioms add humor, imagery, and spice to language*" (p. 274). For example, in order to bear in mind concepts people often use words and expressions that relate to our body,

like "[\*A still tongue keeps a wise head\*](#)" means wise people do not talk much. The following dialogue illustrates this pattern. Although the lexical items are not new, the sentence structures are simple, we hardly understand fully the messages unless we know the meaning of these idioms. Without them, in general, we sometimes do not understand the texts or the utterances even though we know clearly every single word in the sentences.



Kalyani (2014) stressed the complex nature of idioms regarding the structure or form, meaning and use of idioms in context. This is also supported by Milton (2009) regarding that types of idioms are considered as one of six variables influencing idiom acquisition, so it is important to get to know about this.

## 2.2 Types and Use of Idioms

The literature reveals significant attempts to classify idioms. Fernando (1996) categorizes idioms into three groups: pure idioms (e.g., kick the bucket, bread winner, spill the beans) are conventionalized, non-literal multiword expressions, and considered to be opaque; semi-literal idioms or ones that use something as a step stone, can have one or more literal constituents and one with non-literal sub-sense, therefore, is considered partially opaque (e.g., foot the bill, fat chance, blue film); and literal idioms, which are either invariable or allow little variation, considered to be transparent because they can be interpreted based on their parts (e.g., of course, in any case, for certain, on foot, on the contrary). Cacciari and Glucksberg (1991) proposed a functional approach mainly related to the degree of compositionality and the semantic transparency of idioms. Idioms can be non-compositional, partially compositional, and fully compositional regarding the dimension of compositionality.

*"In non-compositional idioms, no relations between the idiom's constituents and the idiom's meaning can be discerned, as in the idiom cheesecake to refer to pinup art [...]. In partially compositional idioms, some relationships between an idiom's constituents and its idiomatic meaning can be discerned and exploited. Although one could not infer the meaning to die from the literal meaning of kick the bucket, the idiom's literal meaning does constrain its use and comprehension. [...] In fully compositional idioms, the constituents map directly onto their idiomatic referents, as in the idiom pop the question" (Glucksberg, 2001, p.73).*

It is likely that there is a similarity between these two ways of classifications above related to idiom functions. Subsequently, it is believed that a certain awareness of the existence of different types of idioms can be of great help in the process of recognition, understanding and use of idioms.

Boers *et al.* (2006) stated that figurative competence plays an important role in assessing spoken language competence. Furthermore, the author emphasized some benefits of idiom knowledge to learners. First, they can recall figurative idioms in chunks, which helps them avoid momentary hesitation in their connected speech, so idioms facilitate fluency in speaking. Idioms also help learners achieve native-like performance. It is necessary to understand idioms and their true meaning because idiomatic expressions are used in both formal and informal communications. Unlike non-native speakers, native speakers of English use idiomatic expressions daily, naturally and spontaneously. Non-native speakers of English who are from various backgrounds, in particular Vietnamese students, are found incapable of using idiomatic expressions when using English Language to communicate (Thyab, 2016). It might not be a piece of cake for them to use idioms although it is considered as a vital part of the English language. Thus, non-native speakers of English should learn idiomatic expressions in order to be able to sound more natural and native-like. It could be understood that the more a second language speaker is able to understand and make use of idiomatic expressions, the better proficiency level he or she gets in that language (Rizq, 2015). To conclude, there is a close relationship between the capacity of using idioms and the development of English proficiency. This leads to the needs of learning English idioms for non-native speakers in order to achieve more effective communication and higher proficiency level.

### **2.3 Factors Affecting Idiom Learning**

Despite the importance of idioms, both teachers and students seem to be reluctant to teach and learn idioms. Students in Vietnam, as a result, encounter considerable difficulty in understanding speakers in the inner circle because of a number of idiomatic expressions. Learning idioms is one of the most difficult tasks in English, as claimed by many teachers and students in Vietnam (Tran, 2012). Additionally, D'Angelo Bromley (1984), for example, reported that idioms "*add confusion and difficulty to the learning of language*" (p.272). Outside of an educational environment, the risk of students misunderstanding an idiom, for example, is higher. The students might end up in a difficult situation and get into trouble when using the idioms in the wrong context.

In order to enhance idiom learning, both teachers and students should have knowledge about factors affecting students' idiom acquisition. Cooper (1998) declares that "*idiom acquisition research [...] has uncovered a number of findings that have pedagogical implication for idiom instruction*" (p. 255). The author also claims that there are six variables important for idiom comprehension and learning. The first variable is the age of learners. This reconnects to Piaget's theory of cognitive development – a child moves through different stages of mental development and he or she has to reach a certain level of maturity before being able to acquire certain knowledge. Cooper (1998) shows that

*“[y]oung children up to the age of about nine generally tend to interpret idioms (and other figurative expressions) literally”* (p. 256). The second variable is teachers’ use of figurative language in classrooms. As it is stated in Cooper (1998, p.257) that *“...by the eighth grade, 11.5 percent of a teacher’s utterances, or about one out of ten, contained idioms”*. Should teachers use idioms frequently, they can encourage learners’ figurative comprehension. Besides, the frequency of an idiom can determine whether it is easy or not for learners to acquire them. Another aspect that has to be taken into account is the closeness between the idiom’s literal and figurative meanings (the metaphoric transparency). The fourth factor refers to the context in which an idiom occurs, whether there are adequate clues for learners to interpret the figurative meaning. Additionally, it is suggested that grouping idioms according to a theme, *“according to the main word they contain, such as verbs”* or *“according to their underlying metaphorical themes”* such as *“argument is war, e.g., I’ve never won an argument with him”* can enhance learning (Cooper, 1998, p. 258). The last factor concerns L1- L2 difference. According to Cooper (ibid.), previous research has shown that idioms that were identical in the first and the second language, and similar idioms from the first language were the easiest to comprehend and produce while idioms that were completely different in both languages were the hardest both to comprehend and produce.

Due to its complex nature, the process of idiom learning takes time, following the five steps described by Knowles (2004), starting from familiarization, recognition, and comprehension to mastery and automaticity. Reaching automaticity, students are able to communicate confidently in the language they are learning. Knowles (2004) also argues that automaticity can be attained through the practice of phrases and thought groups and the exposure to the target language. This implies that language learners should be exposed to idioms and should have intensive practice to be able to obtain the idiomatic knowledge.

## **2.4 Idiomatic Knowledge**

As mentioned above, it is necessary for students to have wide knowledge of idioms, which has recently been deliberated along with communicative competence, which was inspired by Chomsky (1965), Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), and Celce-Murcia (1995, 2008). Celce-Murcia (2008) revised a model of communicative competence to include the ability to use idioms as part of formulaic competence, or the selection and use of fixed chunks or stretches of language in communication (Celce-Murcia, 2008).

As a component of formulaic competence, idiomatic competence is considered as the ability to communicate appropriately with idioms in the roles of both an addressor and an addressee (Buckingham, 2006; Burke, 1988). It allows communicators to fully encode and decode the meaning of a conversation. As a vital part of idiomatic competence, idiomatic knowledge is the ability to recognize idioms in forms and understand their meanings as well as use them in particular contexts appropriately. Similarly, since idioms pertain to a kind of advanced vocabulary, idiom knowledge

involves being able to use an idiom properly and effectively in a foreign language (Milton, 2009, p.13).

## **2.5 Measuring Idiom Knowledge**

Although the aspects of recognizing or knowing a word can be academically described, measuring multi- words or chunks like idioms tends to be challenging (Zareva, Schwanenflugel, & Nikolova, 2005). Some commonly used models for measuring vocabulary knowledge focus on two dimensions – the size and the quality (Nation, 2001; Richards, 1976). Also, the three-dimension model by Henriksen (1999) on the quantity, quality and receptive-productive control could be considered. The size or breadth of vocabulary, refers to the number of words a learner knows, whereas vocabulary quality, the depth knowledge, denotes how deeply a learner has knowledge of a word, which the learner needs to possess minimal knowledge of the meaning of the words (Qian & Schedl, 2004; Qian, 2005). Vocabulary depth knowledge may include different elements, for instance, spelling, pronunciation, meaning, frequency, register, and syntactic, morphological traits (Qian, 1998, 1999). Similarly, Milton (2009) suggested effective ways to determine the breadth and depth of words in terms of the learner ability to comprehend and use them in particular contexts. These dimensions can be followed to design a test of idiomatic knowledge since idioms are considered multi-unit words or a kind of vocabulary. Nation (2001, p.27) also divides lexical knowledge into 3 categories: knowledge of form, knowledge of meaning, and knowledge of use.

In the current study, an Idiom test is designed to gauge the learner's quality (the depth) of idiom knowledge of form, meaning and use, with reference to previous studies like Tran (2013) and Fotovatnia & Khaki (2012). Fotovatnia and Khaki (2012) employed fill-in-the-blanks and multiple-choice as techniques to test the participants' recognition of idioms' form and meaning. Likewise, Tran (2013) made use of gap filling and matching techniques to measure form, meaning and use of idioms. This study relies on three techniques namely fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and matching (in addition to rewriting).

In summary, idioms are figurative expressions which are used frequently in daily life and therefore necessary to be addressed by teachers in order to help students develop their communicative competence. Learners must become familiar with the meanings and the use of the idioms. In this study, we want to investigate the English idiom knowledge of teenager learners of English in an EFL context. The next section discusses how the study aim was achieved.

## **3. Research Methodology**

The study attempts to answer the following research question: To what extent do EFL teenage learners know the commonly used English idioms?

### **3.1 Participants**

The participants involved 76 teenage students from the age of 14 to 17, including 33 males and 43 females, at a private language center in the Mekong Delta. These participants had experienced at least 7 years of learning English by the time the data was collected. Based on the results of placement tests before assigned to the same English classes, they were judged to be at the same pre-intermediate level of English.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The design of this research is a descriptive survey. According to Brown & Rodgers (2002), people's characteristics, perceptions, and viewpoints can be explored and described by descriptive statistics research. Thus, the research questions mainly focus on investigating the students' understanding of English idioms. The answers to the research question in the present study are drawn from a test on idiomatic knowledge.

### **3.3 Idiom Test**

In order to collect adequate data for the study, an idiom knowledge test was used. The test is designed in alignment with previous research on measuring vocabulary and idiom knowledge. In detail, this study is focused on measuring the depth of idioms, so the techniques used in the idiom test adapted from Nation (2001), Milton (2009), McGavian (2009), Fotovatnia & Khaki (2012) and Tran (2013).

First, the list of 50 frequently used idioms was selected through synthesizing previous studies. Part 1 – the first set of 20 idioms was chosen from Grant (2007); Liu (2003); Simpson and Mendis (2003); and adapted from Tran (2013). The second set of 30 idioms was selected from materials for English teaching in Vietnam available online, and especially TOEIC materials. All of these 50 idioms were then checked again for their popularity by using advanced Google Search to estimate the number of their occurrences.

All the idioms achieved over two million times of appearance.

The test lasts 60 minutes and includes 3 parts with 50 idiom items (appendix). Part 1 is completing 20 idioms based on their meanings. The focus is on checking students' knowledge of idiom forms. The second part consists of 15 multiple choice items of 5 options, aiming to promote the reliability of the test, eliciting a focus on meaning of idioms. Part 3 involves 15 given idioms and the learners were asked to put them to use appropriately in the given situations/contexts.

To validate the test, the researcher asked two experts in TESOL for their feedback on the clarity of instructions and item design. Then the test was revised before being administered. In order to have the objective data for this study, the researcher asked her colleagues who were teaching seven teen classes at the same workplace but in different working shifts (2 classes on WED-FRI, 2 classes on TUE-THU, and 3 classes on SAT-SUN) to administer the test. These teachers explained the purpose of the test and asked their learners for voluntary participation to do the test. All the data of 76 participants was accumulated and run in SPSS software to check these participants' knowledge of idioms.

Each correct answer was assigned 1 point, and the incorrect one 0. The idiom test data is highly reliable since Cronbach's alpha was 0.90 (Cronk, 2019).

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

The results show that these participants had little knowledge and understanding about the frequently used idioms. Most of the selected idioms were unfamiliar to the students. They rarely learned and used these idioms in their conversations, although the majority of the students acknowledged the importance of idioms and learning idioms in their process of learning EFL.

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics of participants' scores on idiom test

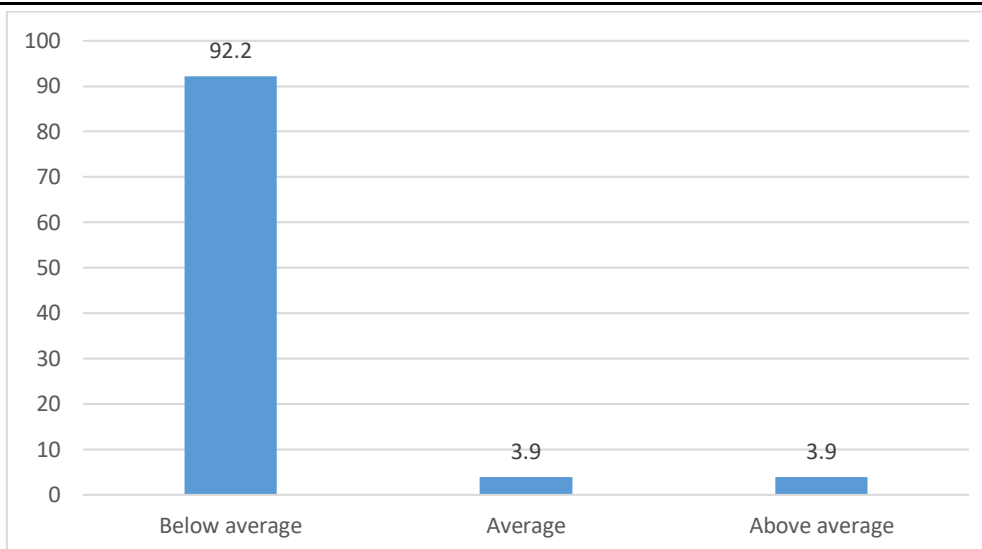
	Number of items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TOTALWHOLE	50	1	35	12.24	7.83
TOTALPART1	20	0	11	3.85	3.76
TOTALPART2	15	0	15	7.22	3.84
TOTALPART3	15	0	11	1.17	2.21

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the collected data from 76 participants taking the test, which includes 50 items. Generally, the mean score was quite low, 12.24 correct answers out of 50, and there was a significant variation in the students' knowledge of English idioms (SD = 7.83).

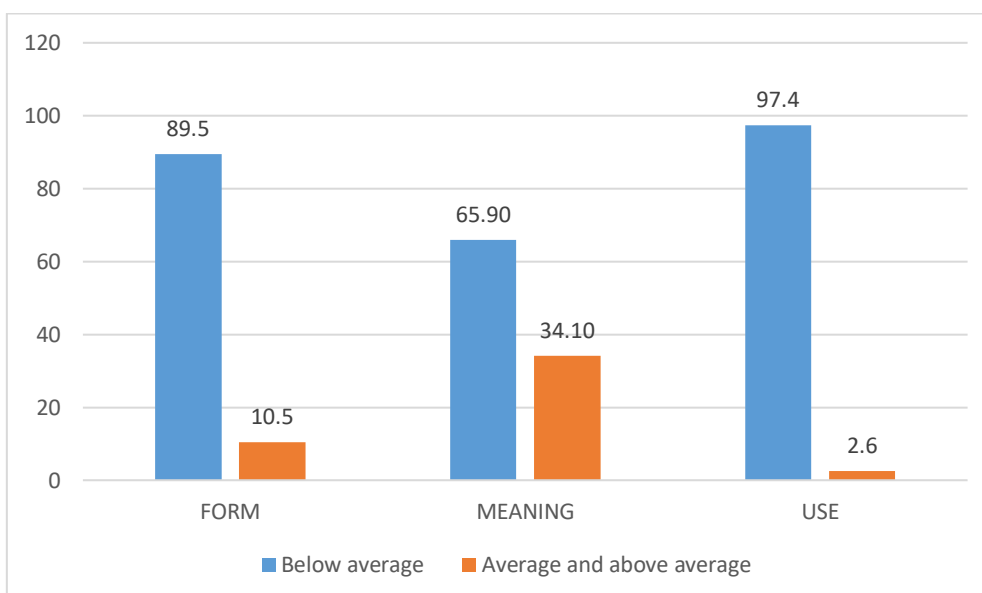
There was a noteworthy variance between the mean results of 3 parts. The mean score of part 1 (M = 3.85) for the correct answers out of 20 was very low, whereas for part 2 (M = 7.2), the score shows the average tendency. Significantly, these students had an extremely low score for part 3 (M = 1.17). This means most of the students have a limited knowledge about the forms (part 1) and the use (part 3) of idioms; however, they seemed to be more knowledgeable in the meanings (part 2) of idioms. The maximum scores showed that a few of the students had quite high scores of correct answers in the forms (11/20), the meanings (15/15), and also the use (11/15) of idioms.

Moreover, the results from analyzing the frequencies on SPSS added details about the percentages of participants' knowledge of idioms. Overall, as can be seen from figure 1 below, there was a disparity in participants' comprehension of idioms when most of the participants (92.2 %) were under average, only 7.8% achieved an average and higher score. Also, the information from figure 2 showed that the majority of teenage learners obtained absolutely high percentages of below-medium-scores on idioms' structure (89.5 %), meaning (65.9 %) and use (97.4 %). The remarkable limit in their ability to use of idioms was demonstrated by only 2.6 %.





**Figure 1:** The students' performance on the idiom test (%)



**Figure 2:** The students' performance on form, meaning and use of idioms (%)

One sample T-test was run to check whether there was a difference between the participants' level of knowledge of idioms ( $M= 12.24$ ) and the average test score of 25 in light of the test design. The result shows that a significant difference between the participants' level of idiom knowledge and the standard test value was observed ( $t= -14.214$ ,  $p= .00$ ). This indicates that the participants' level of idiomatic knowledge was far below average.

Similarly, an independent sample test was employed to test if there was a difference between the two groups, 33 male ( $M= 12.45$ ) and 43 female ( $M=12.07$ ) students' performance on idiom test. The result shows no significant difference of these two groups' level of idiomatic retention ( $p= .838$ ).

Finally, three paired- samples Test was used to analyze if there was a difference between the level of students' performance on part 1 ( $M=3.86$ ) and part 2 ( $M= 7.22$ ) as

pair 1, part 1 (M= 3.85) and part 3 (M=1.17) as pair 2, part 2 (M= 7.22) and part 3 (M=1.17) as pair 3 of idiom test. The result states that a significant difference of students' level of idiomatic knowledge on those three parts was shown ( $p= .00$  of 3 pairs).

In general, the data analysis show that the EFL Vietnamese teenage learners had a low performance on the idiom test. This finding unveils the hidden gap in teenage learners' knowledge of English idioms in three main aspects: structure, meaning, and use of idioms. This means they seem to have very limited ability to recognize, understand, and use common idioms. The finding is in line with previous studies in Vietnam (Tran, 2013) and other studies outside Vietnam (Burke, 1988; Buckingham, 2006), which found that students were not able to communicate appropriately with idioms as addressors and addressees. According to Knowles (2004), the learning process should be sharpened from familiarization, recognition, and comprehension to mastery and automaticity. Accordingly, the learners in the current study are still laboring with familiarization and recognition. There definitely remains a big distance for them to reach automaticity in using idioms. Besides, in terms of the measurement mentioned by Richards (1976) and Nation (2001), regarding the depth of idioms, the participants' idiomatic knowledge is significantly low. Similarly, with reference to the model by Henriksen (1999), referring to the quality, the students' limited idiomatic knowledge is considerably observed. Therefore, the learners' needs for being taught idioms are stressed.

## 5. Implications and Suggestions

The finding of this study implies that there is a need to improve the idiom knowledge for Vietnamese EFL learners. In this respect, previous studies placed a great deal of focus on methods of teaching idioms both implicitly and explicitly (Buckingham, 2006; Cooper, 1999; Lennon, 1998; Tran, 2012; Vasiljevic, 2011; Wray, 2000; Zyzik, 2009). These studies have devoted effort to examining effective measures on teaching idioms for language learners in both ESL and EFL contexts. Nevertheless, it could be seen from these studies that explicit instruction was employed mainly and effectively in most cases (Buckingham, 2006; Cooper, 1999; Tran, 2012; Vasiljevic, 2011; Wray, 2000; Zyzik, 2009). For example, Zyzik (2009) focused on techniques, such as using contextual clues, using pictures to illustrate meanings, matching idioms to their meanings, filling in blanks with the appropriate idiom, replacing underlined expressions with an idiom, etc., for teaching idiomatic comprehension regarding literal and figurative meanings. Likewise, Tran (2012) suggested four-skill-integrated tasks for teaching idioms. Vasiljevic (2011) recommended that applying conceptual metaphors and code switching to learners' first language in idiom meaning discussions may be effective methods for instruction. This is additionally supported by theories of Lexical Approach by Michael Lewis in the early 1900s. The findings of Fotovatnia & Khaki's study (2012) showed evidence for significantly positive effects of the type of instruction that deploys L1 translation, L2 definitions and synonyms, and pictures, on learning both meaning and form of idioms. Further experimental studies on how to enhance the EFL teenage learners' knowledge of

idioms as well as their idiomatic retention are necessary in idioms learning and teaching practices, especially in Vietnam. On the other hand, the research from Lennon (1998) showed the success of implicit idiom instruction, employing problem-solving approach and providing clear samples of exercises which were mostly suitable for advanced learners. Further research focusing on lower level of proficiency students can consider the use of implicit instruction and be careful with a change of using these exercises.

## 6. Limitations and Conclusion

The current study has some limitations. The reliability of the findings would have been increased if item difficulty and discrimination had been analyzed and items were revised before the data collection. Another limitation concerns the lack of other measures such as interviews in helping the researcher to triangulate the findings from the test performance. Despite these limitations, this study raises an alert about the low idiomatic knowledge of Vietnamese EFL teenage learners. Future studies should attempt to explore learners' ability to use idioms in authentic productive language situations. Also, longitudinal studies should be conducted to comprehensively assess the idiomatic competence of EFL language learners as well as experimental research to test the effects of idiom instruction. The study revealed the low idiomatic knowledge of Vietnamese EFL teenage learners. Their poor idiomatic understanding was consequently derived from a lack of exposure to idiomatic language in their learning programs, inadequate guidance in learning and using idioms from teachers, and an insufficient habit of learning idioms (Tran, 2012; Tran, 2013).

To enhance the situation of teenage learners' low acquaintance of idioms, both teachers and students should be aware of their significant role in the language learning and teaching process. Students should be more frequently exposed to idioms from inner- and expanding circle contexts as well (Canagarajah, 2006) as English is no longer the possession of inner-circle (Kachru, 1992). This study has drawn attention to the students' limited of idiom knowledge, the important role idiom competence, and the needs for idiom instruction by pedagogical methods. Consequently, the learners hope to be more confident in communicating with figurative idioms in everyday conversations, and at higher level of English proficiency.

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**Appendix: Idiom Test**  
**(Duration: 60 minutes)**

Please write all your answers onto the answer sheet!

I. Write ONE or TWO words to complete the idioms based on their meaning in the next column.

Example: Hit the \_\_\_\_\_. Meaning: to go to bed in order to sleep.

Answer: Hit the \_\_\_sack\_\_\_.

No. Idioms	Meaning
1. Have _____ in	The right to express your opinion and influence decisions
2. All of _____	Quickly, unexpectedly
3. Be over _____	Too difficult or complicated for me to understand
4. _____ of thumb	A practical method of doing or measuring something, usually based on past experience, not based on science or exact measurement
5. Push the _____	Go beyond the limits of what is allowed or thought to be possible
6. A piece _____	A thing that is very easy to do
7. Not my cup _____	Not what I like or am interested in
8. _____ to the fire	Make a bad situation worse
9. _____ your mind	To decide what to choose
10. Off _____ of my head	Recall / speak something without preparation
11. Down _____	All the way, throughout
12. Get to the _____ of things	Figure everything out
13. Have _____	Change your opinion after thinking about something again
14. Out of _____	In a way that was not expected, unexpectedly
15. I can take it or _____	I do not hate something, but don't particularly like it either
16. Bits and _____	Small objects or idioms of various kinds
17. Thinking on _____	To be able to think and react to things very quickly and effectively without any preparation
18. Draw the _____	Distinguish between two closely related ideas
19. Take _____ for it	Believe me, trust me, I am telling you the truth
20. It goes _____	Used to say that something proves something

II. Choose a correct meaning for each of the following idioms.

21. if all else fails

- A. if it is a difficult problem or person
- B. if someone makes the others uncomfortable
- C. if it is a difficult position
- D. if all other plans do not work
- E. if someone else forgets you

22. in your shoes

- A. in your position
- B. in one place
- C. in value
- D. in your views
- E. in a hard situation

23. on top of the world

- A. very brave to confront a problem or challenge
- B. very direct to express ideas without planning
- C. extremely happy
- D. very difficult to please someone or to do something
- E. greatly excited to travel somewhere

24. make it big

- A. be very direct or frank
- B. be sure about a problem that is no longer a concern
- C. be in a crowded place
- D. be famous or successful
- E. be in a spacious place

25. be snowed under

- A. be very happy
- B. be very busy at the moment
- C. be very late
- D. be very skillful to handle the work
- E. be very cold

26. speak your mind

- A. state your opinion very clearly and openly
- B. install and use something easily
- C. be close to the deadline
- D. improve, update, or change for the better
- E. tell someone to do something

27. cross your mind

- A. do more than one thing at the same time
- B. cause troubles
- C. stop thinking of ideas or products
- D. think about something for a short time
- E. share your opinion



28. in the long run

- A. for saving money or time
- B. for long hours
- C. for a long time from now
- D. for only the available time
- E. early to go for a run

29. at the end of the day

- A. finally
- B. lately
- C. simply
- D. firstly
- E. early

30. black and white

- A. impressive
- B. written, not just spoken
- C. better or faster
- D. difficult, not able to achieve
- E. meaningful

31. wouldn't hurt a fly

- A. be easy to use
- B. be totally harmless
- C. be achievable
- D. be communicative and interactive
- E. be easy to obtain

32. your bread and butter

- A. a very high goal that is hard to obtain
- B. a big mistake that you make
- C. an activity or job you do to earn money
- D. an effort that you make and never give up
- E. a kind of food that you really like

33. go for the gold

- A. try for a difficult goal
- B. have no radical views
- C. prepare for what's coming; ahead of schedule
- D. make sense; result in something
- E. drive fast

34. down to earth

- A. very practical
- B. very early
- C. very responsible
- D. very associated
- E. very deep

35. over the moon

- A. very happy indeed
- B. greatly realistic
- C. very enthusiastic
- D. really not acceptable
- E. really high and tall

**III. Use the following idioms in their correct situations**

A. lay it on the line	I. bend over backwards
B. down to the wire	J. a trade-off
C. be between a rock and a hard place	K. water under the bridge
D. a win-win situation	L. on one's plate
E. plug and play	M. shoot from the hip
F. put all one's eggs in one basket	N. a pain in a neck
G. take the bull by the horns	O. have the bandwidth
H. be in someone's face	P. miss the boat

Example: He could have bought that stock last week at half the current price. He really .....**P- missed the boat**.....

36. This job has had problems from the beginning. It's .....

37. That man .....I didn't like him. He stood very close and was very impolite.

38. He .....If he does what his mother wants, his wife will be angry. If he does what his wife wants, his mother will be angry.

39. Don't .....It's less risky to have more than one plan.

40. If you cut back your hours to have more free time for your family, you'll earn less. It's .....

41. I decided to .....and talk to the president about his mistreatment towards workers.

42. I usually ....., but honestly make other people angry sometimes.

43. I .....to make him happy, but he was never satisfied with what I did for him.

44. We're tired of all the polite words. Just .....for us.

45. Don't worry about that mistake anymore. It's .....

46. That was a good business. We both got what we wanted most. It was .....

47. We have enough ..... right now. We shouldn't care about that. That is their responsibility.

48. Unexpectedly, the company is growing too fast. I'm wondering if they .....to manage the changes.

49. I'll be able to install this new program and run it in five minutes. It's .....

50. We're ..... on this project so we have to work overtime for sure.

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