# Factors Affecting the Learning of English Proverbs and Idioms of English-Majored Students at University of Khanh Hoa, Vietnam

Vo Tu Phuong*

*University of Khanh Hoa*
*01 Nguyen Chanh Street, Loc Tho Ward, Nha Trang City, Khanh Hoa Province, Vietnam*
*Email: votuphuong@ukh.edu.vn*
*Phone: +84 366631871*

**Abstract**
Teaching English through idioms and proverbs is one of the ways to help students' better understanding the use of English. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the frequency, interest and learning style of idioms and proverbs among first-year students at University of Khanh Hoa, Khanh Hoa province, Vietnam. It is hypothesized that teaching of idioms and proverbs increase students' vocabulary, help them understand grammar and sentence structure, grasp the meaning and culture of English, and finally use English naturally and confidently. This study adopted a quantitative strategy to answer research questions by employing descriptive analysis based on survey data collected between August 2022 and April 2023, at University of Khanh Hoa, Khanh Hoa province, Vietnam. A sample of 83 first-year English language students majoring in English and 14 English lecturers at University of Khanh Hoa, Khanh Hoa Province participated in the survey organized through Google Form. The data was analyzed by collating the participants' responses in tabular forms showing the number, frequency and the percentage of responses for each option, and help understand their opinion and perception. A comparative approach was also taken to differentiate the learning of English idioms and proverbs with the methods used in the Vietnamese language. The findings revealed that students with better English proficiency of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills; a good learning environment and a good knowledge of culture and history learnt English proverbs and idioms more quickly. It is suggested that teachers need to teach idioms and proverbs combined with illustrations to promote students' critical thinking.

*Keywords:* Idioms; proverbs; language majored students; culture; University of Khanh Hoa.

## Introduction

Proverbs and idioms, which are expressions of everyday ideas or opinions, require a deeper familiarity of the English language to comprehend what someone means when they use them in conversation. These expressions are creative ways to express oneself. For example, if one says, 'I am on cloud nine' which means 'I am very happy' or rather than saying 'you are doing something that has never been done before,' one can

---

* Corresponding Author.
Email : votuphuong@ukh.edu.vn

say, 'you are breaking fresh ground.' The idiomatic expressions are more complex but interesting and often humorous. People often prefer idiomatic expressions to express themselves in a more genuine way, or sometime to show off their personality and sense of humor. Idioms and proverbs are part of a native speaker's daily conversation, but when a non-native uses these expressions, it is the evidence of his familiarity with the cultural context behind these idioms and proverbs (Mieder, 2014b).

In the ESL scenario, idioms and proverbs are cross-cultural and need a comparative analysis. An idiom or a proverb will first be encoded by the speaker and then decoded by the listener, by making use of this underlined (background) knowledge of the language. This happens because these expressions are not deducible from any individual words of a particular language; rather they reflect the culture even more vividly and deeply than other words in their language. Some may regard proverbs and idioms as metaphoric expressions (Gibbs, Bogdanovich, Sykes, & Barr, 1997) or cultural discourse (Dabaghi, Pishbin, & Niknasab, 2010) due to their specific semantic and syntactic structures (Matindas, Samola, & Kumajas, 2020). Hence, proverbs and idioms are also often seen with pragmatic significance carrying higher philosophical and cultural meanings. Proverbs and idioms also represent the cultural identities of a specific society, which are unique factors that describe the nuances of that society.

There is no dearth of research on the linguistic aspects of proverbs and idioms. For example, Makkai (2013) examined the typology; Wèinreich (1969) discussed the syntactical aspect, and Fraser (1970) attempted to understand the semantics of such expressions. Likewise, in order to establish idioms and proverbs as discourse tools, Strässler (1982), Fernando (1996), and Moon (1998) analyzed these expressions from pragmatic, functional and corpus-linguistic approaches respectively. However, learning of idioms and proverbs is highly neglected in the university syllabi. Unless there is a conscious inclusion of idioms and proverbs in teaching, it is difficult to enhance learners' language skills.

Proverbs and idioms are the result of socio-cultural experiences accumulated in the historical process across the globe in general and Vietnam in particular. Proverbs and idioms of a nation show lessons learned by the people, experiences gathered with the natural world, observations of things and phenomena in daily life. It is a valuable treasure of cultural life experience, about the character of people. Proverbs and idioms of a language are often used a lot in articles and readings as brief summary sentences, conveying a very brief, condensed idea about a phenomenon that occurs.With learning English becoming more and more popular, it is important to understand and master English proverbs and idioms. However, the study of English proverbs and idioms by English language majored students at University of Khanh Hoa is very limited.

This paper attempts to first study the meanings of English idioms and proverbs from a textual perspective, focusing on such potential subjective and objective factors that influence students' learning of English idioms and proverbs of English language major students at the University of Khanh Hoa. For this purpose, the following research questions of the study were framed:

1.   What are the subjective and objective factors affecting the learning of English proverbs and idiom of first-year language major students at University of Khanh Hoa?
2.   What are the solutions to improve the learning English idioms and proverbs of 1st year language-major students at University of Khanh Hoa?

## Literature Review

The word proverb originated from the Latin word, "*proverbium*" meaning a simple, concise statement known to many people and repeated over and over to express a fact based on observation and experience (Hallik, 2007). Though it is extremely difficult to come up with a perfect definition of a proverb because it is "the wit of one and the wisdom of many" (Mieder, 2010, 2014a), but there are a few definitions that attempt to describe proverbs. Sotvaldieva (2021) describes proverbs as "concise, metaphorical, easy-to-remember and everyday sayings." Duran and Öztürk (2021) consider proverbs as "children of experience;" while Awad_Elkareem (2018) called proverbs as "wisdom of streets." Yankah (1999) described a proverb having two meanings: literal and figurative; Gibbs and Beitel (1995) consider proverbs having the nature of concluding, generalizing specific remarks into mottos and truths. With such a high variety of content and diversity of transmission, proverbs have established a cultural value system of their own. They are part of the practical life, directly composed by people, so there exists a close connection between the people and the form and content of proverbs (Mayer, 1994).

Like proverbs, idioms are also an important part of the culture and traditions of every individual (Dadyan, 2015; Libben & Titone, 2008); they are commonly used in daily life (Yeh et al., 2022) and are often passed down from generation to generation (Lane, 2016). An idiom is also defined as "a brief phrase or sentence, often used to convey a profound meaning or wise advice" (Gibbs et al., 1997). It is also seen "a brief and figurative expression, often used to convey a meaning or a life experience" (Makkai, 2013). There are also opinions that

idioms are often used to describe a situation or convey a particular message (Elkilic, 2008; Howwar, 2013). They can be used to indicate an idea or a correct approach in a particular situation. They are often used to describe people's experiences in life and to convey important lessons (Siyanova-Chanturia & Martinez, 2015). Table 1 summarizes the differences between idioms and proverbs.

**Table 1.** *Differences between idioms and proverbs*

| Research aspect | Idioms | Proverbs |
|---|---|---|
| **Grammatical structure** | Fixed phrase and equivalent to one word | Complete sentence with Literary function |
| **Literary function** | Aesthetic function | Aesthetic function Cognitive function Educational function |
| **Logical function** | Expressing concepts, generalizing separate phenomena | Expressing judgment, affirming an attribute of a phenomenon. |
| **Function of linguistic forms** | Identification function performed by words. Phenomena in the field of language. | The notification function belongs to the field of cognitive activities The phenomenon of people's social, cultural and spiritual consciousness |

(Source: Le (2019))

Although English and Vietnamese are languages that are spoken in two different countries, which are much distinct in terms of language, culture, geography, natural conditions, traditional customs and beliefs, as well as daily habits and social development. However, there are many similarities in perception and similarity of expressions of idioms and proverbs in the two languages. The first similarity is universal, in which idioms and proverbs are tacit, humorous, serious, subtle and special in both languages, with all vividness. Due to geography, history, religious beliefs, living customs, etc., there are differences between English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs. These expressions not only carry weight of people's cultural characteristics and national information, but they are also closely linked to cultural traditions of their respective countries (Le, 2019; Nguyễn, 2012).

The Vietnamese dictionary defines an idiom as, *"Thành ngữ là một tập hợp từ đã quen dùng mà nghĩa thường không giải thích được một cách đơn giản bằng nghĩa thường của các từ tạo nên nó"* [Idiom is a set of familiar words whose meaning cannot be explained simply by the ordinary meaning of the words that make it up"]. Nguyễn (2012) describes idioms as: *"thành ngữ là những cụm từ cố định dùng để diễn đạt một khái niệm* [fixed phrases used to express a concept.] For example, "one sun and two dew (*Một nắng hai sương);"* "Be careful and uncompromising (*Cẩn tắc vô áy náy*); "Peace and harmony are precious (*Dĩ hòa vi quý);"* and "To err is human (*Nhân vô thập toàn)."* Vu (2020) went beyond this definition and believed that the content of proverbs and idioms are both a summary of experience, a crystallization of the wisdom of the masses, both from the generalization of reality to derive the nature of the law.

Idioms and proverbs are thus understood to be different and having varying grammatical form and content. In the Vietnamese context, Nguyễn (2012) draws attention to the fact that, in terms of content, proverbs are regular while idioms are phenomenological. In terms of grammatical form, proverbs are at least one sentence, and idioms are just a phrase. Vu (2020), however, did not completely agree with this delimitation. He believed that the basic difference between proverbs and idioms is in terms of function. An idiom has a naming function, so an idiom is equivalent to a word, while a proverb is just a complete sentence that fully expresses an idea. In terms of structure, proverbs have a structure of two centers; other elements can be inserted, such as: false words, while idioms have a structure of one center, and no other elements can be inserted.

Idioms and proverbs have been studied from various perspectives and approaches. Dundes (1975) and Milner (1971) took a structural approach and described these expressions as "propositional statements;" Other experts like (Giddy, 2012; Norrick, 1985) looked at idioms and proverbs with ethnographic and cultural perspectives with a didactic function, which are widely used in both oral and written forms, but their sources are not known. Last, but not the least, Mieder (2014a) advocated the empirical approach, which paid much attention to the views of the native speakers.

There is no dearth of studies that have examined lecturers' or students' opinions about teaching and learning of idioms and proverbs. For example, Hanzén (2007) and Can Daşkin and Hatipoğlu (2019) discovered that teachers develop a positive attitude towards using idioms and proverbs in English language teaching; Liontas (2002) found that L2 and EFL learners are aware of the significant role of idioms and proverbs in communication and are willing to learn them, though it is also felt that owing to the less frequency in their use and lacking lexical values, these expressions are not useful and have limited pedagogical value. It is also reported that in the text books fewer expressions are culture-specific thus ignoring such idioms and

proverbs that represented cultural elements (Tekir & Arikan, 2007). In a similar study, Khan and Can Daskin (2014) find idioms and proverbs inadequate in quantity and quality and they are also lack any pedagogical value as they fail to enhance learners' communicative competence.

However, there is a lack of research studies in the Vietnamese perspective that would elaborate the meaning of English idioms and proverbs from a textual perspective, focusing on subjective and objective factors as well as their pedagogical value. The teaching of English proverbs and idioms to students specializing in language at University of Khanh Hoa also does not meet the demand for output standards. There are many reasons including: the students' English level is not suitable; the teaching methods of the lecturers have also not been promoted to learners; the learning environment is also not good; study time is not flexible; and learners are not really passionate about Proverbs and idioms.The current study therefore aimed at filling this research gap by studying the subjective and objective factors that influence the learning of English proverbs and idioms for first-year language major students at University of Khanh Hoa; and secondly, how the learning of these expressions can be improved.

This study also focused on  issues such as understanding the perception of language major students about the importance of learning English proverbs and idioms; exploring the current situation of teaching and learning English proverbs and idioms in English reading comprehension classes at University of Khanh Hoa; pointing out the advantages and disadvantages of first-year English language majored students when learning English proverbs and idioms in reading comprehension skills; and providing solutions to help students become more interested in learning English idioms and proverbs.

## Theoretical Framework

A theoretical basis and orientation for this research was built upon the theory postulated by Halliday and Matthiessen (2013), who examined the textual meta-function of a language and identified a few "meaningful semiotic contexts" performing an enabling function, which makes them fit smoothly into the unfolding language event. Such semiotic expressions, which includes idioms and proverbs as well, are concerned with organizing "ideational and interpersonal meaning" in a discourse and aim at constructing the information (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Sacks and Schegloff (1973) also had noted that idioms and proverbs convey "conventional wisdom" in a discourse as they convey a "moral" lesson in the text. Hence, the current study utilized this theoretical principle and considered idioms and proverbs as textual component with an enabling force, making use of that force to create information and to engender a discourse.

These theoretical implications are applied to compare the similarities and differences of English-Vietnamese idioms and proverbs in a given text that formulates a discourse. The comparative comparison method helps particularly in comparing and contrasting English-Vietnamese idioms and proverbs, along with their lexical-semantic, grammar comparison. This comparative analysis helped understand students' comprehension level of idioms and proverbs through reading comprehension texts and examine the factors affecting the learning of these expressions.

## Methodology

- *Research Design*

This study adopted a quantitative strategy to answer research questions by employing descriptive analysis based on survey data (Nagy & Hiebert, 2011). It utilized the quantitative and percentage method specifically to present and analyze the responses to the questionnaire (Collis & Hussey, 2014). A quantitative analysis relies heavily on collecting and analyzing numerical data to explain, forecast, test hypotheses, and regulate the observed aspects (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). This involved collecting numerical data through surveys and using descriptive analysis techniques to analyze the data. The data was collected from the entire research sample, allowing for generalization to a large population (Mertler, 2018). By collecting data from the entire research sample, the researchers were able to make generalizations to a larger population.

- *Time and place of research*

The study was conducted from August 2022 to April 2023, at University of Khanh Hoa, Khanh Hoa province, Vietnam. The selection of English majors to conduct the survey was based on the belief that first-year students had little or no understanding of English idioms and proverbs in communication as well as in writing. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the frequency, interest and learning style of idioms and proverbs among first-year students.

● *Research sample*

The sample of this research comprised 83 first-year English language students majoring in English and 14 English lecturers at University of Khanh Hoa, Khanh Hoa Province, Vietnam. These students had been studying English for more than seven years, since the pre-intermediate level. All participants were around 18 to 19 years old. They were randomly selected from among nearly 200 first-year students from all classes, majoring in English at this University. Besides, there were also 14 lecturers who were sampled for the same university at Khanh Hoa, Vietnam. Each lecturer had a minimum of 10 years' experience in teaching English.

● *Data collection*

All participants were asked to complete a questionnaire through Google Form which aimed at collecting information correctly and directly (Collis & Hussey, 2014). There were a total of 19 questions, with a variety of scaling such as "agree to disagree" or "dislike" to "very much like." A few questions collected students' opinions or perception about the purpose, need and various other aspects of learning English idioms and proverbs. A questionnaire of almost similar questions was prepared for the lecturers also to collect their opinions about the students' learning of idioms and proverbs, and how they differed from their counterparts in the Vietnamese language.

● *Data analysis*

The data analysis involved collating the responses of the questions in tabular forms showing the number, frequency and the percentage of responses for each option (Winters, Winters, & Amedee, 2010). This enabled to analyze and correctly understand the opinion and perception of the students and the lecturers regarding learning of idioms and proverbs in the English language. A comparative approach was also taken to differentiate the learning of English idioms and proverbs with the methods used in the Vietnamese language.

## Results

A major evidence of this study was in the form of survey questions that asked students about their level of interest in learning English proverbs and idioms. This section lists the results of all the survey questions in terms of number and percentage. Table 2 shows the number of students' and percentage who selected each option.

**Table 2.** *Students who like learning English proverbs and idioms*

| Number | Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|--------|--------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1. | Like very much | 4 | 4.8 |
| 2. | Like | 33 | 39.8 |
| 3. | Like a little | 43 | 51.8 |
| 4. | Don't like | 3 | 3.6 |
| **Total** | | **83** | **100** |

Out of the total of 83 students, a majority of students, 51.8%, (or 43 students) reported that they "like a little" learning of proverbs and idioms; while 39.8% (or 33 students) reported that they "like" their learning; 4.8% (or 4 students) reported that they "like very much" learning English proverbs and idioms and finally 3.6% (or 3 students) reported that they "don't like" learning these expressions. This information can be useful for interpreting the findings of the study and understanding the level of interest in learning English proverbs and idioms among the surveyed population. The number of dislikes is not much which proves that learning idioms and proverbs in English has not really attracted students and has not been noticed by students, who have put their effort into researching and learning.

Table 3 presents the results of a survey question that asked students how frequently they used English proverbs and idioms. The table shows the number and percentage of students who selected each option.

**Table 3.** *The frequency of English proverbs and idioms learning*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Always | 3 | 3.6 |
| Sometimes | 60 | 72.3 |
| Rarely | 18 | 21.7 |
| Never | 2 | 2.4 |
| | **83** | **100** |

Out of a total of 83 students who responded to this survey question, a majority of students, 72.3% (or 60 students) reported that they "sometimes" use proverbs and idioms; it was followed by a significant number, 21.7%, (or 18 students) who reported that they "rarely" used them; a small percentage 3.6%, (or 3 students) reported that they "always" used English proverbs and idioms; and finally 2.4%, (or 2 students) reported that they "never" used English proverbs and idioms.

With this valuable information about the frequency of English proverb and idiom usage among the surveyed students, it can help to understand the impact of learning these linguistic expressions and their level of incorporation in the language used by students. However, the interpretation of the results of the table may be influenced by the specific sample of students who participated in the study and the context of the research.

Table 4 presents the results of another survey question that asked students about their perception of the importance of learning English proverbs and idioms.

**Table 4.** *Students' perception of the importance of learning idioms and proverbs*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Very important | 13 | 15.7 |
| Important | 55 | 66.3 |
| A little important | 13 | 15.7 |
| Not important | 2 | 2.3 |
| | **83** | **100** |

Out of the total of 83 students responded to the survey question, a majority of students (66.3% or 55 students) reported that they believed it was "important" to learn proverbs and idioms; followed by (15.7%, or 13 students) each who reported that they believed learning proverbs and idioms was "very important" and "a little important." Finally, a very small percentage of students (2.3%, or 2 students) reported that they believed it was "not important" to learn English proverbs and idioms. The table provides important information about the perceived importance of learning proverbs and idioms among the surveyed students. This information can be useful for understanding the attitudes of students towards these linguistic features and their motivation for learning them. However, it is important to keep in mind that the interpretation of the results may be influenced by the specific sample of students who participated in the study and the context of the research

Table 5 presents the results of the survey question that asked students about their opinions on the frequency of occurrence of English idioms and proverbs in different language skills.

**Table 5.** *Students' opinions on the frequent occurrence of English idioms and proverbs in language skills*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Listening | 11 | 13.3 |
| Speaking | 25 | 30.1 |
| Reading | 37 | 44.6 |
| Writing | 10 | 12 |
| | **83** | **100** |

Out of the total of 83 students responded to the survey question, a significant proportion of students (44.6% or 37 students) reported that they believed idioms and proverbs occurred frequently in reading skills; followed by (30.1% or 25 students) who reported that they believed these linguistic expressions frequently occurred in speaking skills; while a small proportion of students (13.3% or 11 students) and (12% or 10 students) reported that they believed English idioms and proverbs occurred frequently in listening skills and writing skills respectively. The table provides important information about students' perceptions of the frequency of occurrence of English idioms and proverbs in different language skills. This information can be useful for understanding the students' awareness of the importance of these linguistic features and their motivation to learn them. However, it is important to keep in mind that the interpretation of the results may be influenced by the specific sample of students who participated in the study and the context of the research

The consensus between the opinions of students and lecturers is also reflected in the assessment of the effectiveness and benefits of learning English idioms and proverbs in developing foreign language skills. Table 6 and Table 7 present the results of two separate surveys that asked students and lecturers about their opinions on the development of language skills when learning English idioms and proverbs. The tables show the number of respondents who selected each response option, as well as the percentage of respondents who selected each option. It is clearly evident that both students and lecturers agreed that English idioms and proverbs would help develop speaking skills (47% students and 43% teachers), followed by the ability to read and understand English (27.7% students and 29% of teachers). It seems that developing listening and writing skills has little to do with understanding English idioms and proverbs in the opinion of both students and lecturers. This unified feedback will help both teachers and learners develop a specific investment plan for language skills to achieve the most positive and optimal results.

Specifically, Table 6 presents the results of the student survey, in which 83 students participated. Of these, the majority of students (47%, or 39 students) reported that they believed learning English idioms and proverbs was most beneficial for speaking skills. A significant proportion of students (27.7%, or 23 students) reported that they believed these linguistic features were most beneficial for reading skills, while 15.7% (13 students) believed they were most beneficial for writing skills. Finally, a small proportion of students (9.6%, or 8 students) reported that they believed these linguistic features were most beneficial for listening skills.

**Table 6.** *Students' opinions about their development of skills when learning English idioms and proverbs*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Listening | 8 | 9.6 |
| Speaking | 39 | 47 |
| Reading | 23 | 27.7 |
| Writing | 13 | 15.7 |
| | **83** | **100** |

In the lecturer survey participated by 14 lecturers, as seen in Table 7, a majority of lecturers (43%, or 6 lecturers) reported that they believed learning English idioms and proverbs was most beneficial for speaking skills. A significant proportion of lecturers (29%, or 4 lecturers) reported that they believed these linguistic features were most beneficial for reading skills, while 14% (2 lecturers) each believed these expressions were most beneficial for writing and listening skills.

**Table 7.** *Lecturers' opinions about students' development of skills when learning English idioms and proverbs*

| Alternative Answers | Number of lecturers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Listening | 2 | 14 |
| Speaking | 6 | 43 |
| Reading | 4 | 29 |
| Writing | 2 | 14 |
| | **14** | **100** |

The tables provide important information about the opinions of both students and lecturers on the development of language skills when learning English idioms and proverbs. The results suggest that both groups believe that learning idioms and proverbs is most beneficial for speaking skills, although lecturers are more likely to believe that these linguistic features are also beneficial for reading skills. The results also suggest that students may have a greater awareness of the importance of these linguistic features for writing skills compared to lecturers. However, it is important to keep in mind that the interpretation of the results may be influenced by the specific sample of students and lecturers who participated in the study and the context of the research.

Table 8 and Table 9 present the students' and the lecturers' opinions about the objectives for which students learn English idioms and proverbs. It is evident that both students and lecturers agree on the purpose of studying English idioms and proverbs as to understand the English culture (66.3% students and 85.7% lecturers agreed) at first place; along with to improve speaking (65.1% of students and 78.6% of lecturers) and to improve reading comprehension (60.2% of students and 57.1% of lecturers).

**Table 8.** *Students' opinions on reasons to help them learn English idioms and proverbs (student can choose more than one choice)*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| To speak English better | 54 | 65.1 |
| To write English better | 31 | 37.3 |
| To listen English better | 37 | 44.6 |
| To read English better | 50 | 60.2 |
| To know more about English culture | 55 | 66.3 |
| To be more friendly, to make friends | 1 | 1.2 |

**Table 9.** *Lecturers' opinions on reasons to help them learn English idioms and proverbs (lecturer can choose more than one choice)*

| Alternative Answers | Number of lecturers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| To speak English better | 11 | 78.6 |
| To write English better | 5 | 35.7 |
| To listen English better | 5 | 35.7 |
| To read English better | 8 | 57.1 |
| To know more about English culture | 12 | 85.7 |
| To be more friendly, to make friends | 8 | 57.1 |

Regarding the aspect of designing separate lessons on English idioms and proverbs, the needs of students were found slightly different from the pedagogical judgment of the lecturer. Table 10 and Table 11 show that while most students (97.6%) think that there should be a separate lecture on idioms and proverbs, more than half of the lecturers (57.1%) find it unnecessary. This is also understandable because students give opinions based on their own characteristics and needs. They express quite diversely why it is necessary to have a separate lecture for English idioms and proverbs. As for the teachers, they have the experience of a teaching process with many different types of learners and find it convenient to teach and help learners practice different language skills. However, teachers always need to consult with learners to make improvements to meet the needs of learners, helping learners to achieve the desired level and skills. The rationality of needs and responses will help to quickly improve the efficiency of the communication and absorption process.

**Table 10.** *Students' opinions about the possibility of English idioms and proverbs lesson in class.*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Agree | 81 | 97.6 |
| Disagree | 2 | 2.4 |
| **83** | **83** | **100** |

**Table 11.** *Lecturers ' opinions about the possibility of English idioms and proverbs lesson in class.*

| Alternative Answers | Number of lecturers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Agree | 8 | 57.1 |
| Disagree | 6 | 42.9 |
| | **14** | **100** |

Table 12 infers that a majority of the students have a positive opinion on their understanding of English idioms and proverbs. Out of the 83 students surveyed, 49 students either completely agree or agree that they understand English idioms and proverbs. This represents 59% of the total number of students surveyed. Meanwhile, 34 students partly agree that they understand English idioms and proverbs, representing 41% of the total number of students surveyed. No students indicated that they did not agree with the statement. In short, the majority of the students had a positive opinion on their understanding of English idioms and proverbs, while a significant number had a neutral or uncertain stance

**Table 12.** *Students' opinions on understanding English idioms and proverbs*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Completely agree | 2 | 2.4 |
| Agree | 47 | 56.6 |
| Partly agree | 34 | 41 |
| Not agree | 0 | 0 |
| | **83** | **100** |

Table 13 shows that a majority of the students believe that understanding idioms and proverbs can help them learn English reading comprehension skills. Out of the 83 students surveyed, 63 students either completely agree or agree that understanding idioms and proverbs can help them learn English reading comprehension skills. This represents 76% of the total number of students surveyed. Meanwhile, 19 students partly agree that understanding idioms and proverbs can help them learn English reading comprehension skills, representing 23% of the total number of students surveyed. Only one student indicated that they do not agree with the statement. Overall, a majority of the students believe that understanding idioms and proverbs can help them learn English reading comprehension skills, while a significant number have a neutral or uncertain stance

**Table 13.** *Students' opinions about understanding idioms and proverbs will help students learn English reading comprehension skills well*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Completely agree | 14 | 16.9 |
| Agree | 49 | 59 |
| Partly agree | 19 | 22.9 |
| Not agree | 1 | 1.2 |
| | **83** | **100** |

Table 14 shows that a majority of the students believe that learning and understanding the origin of English idioms and proverbs can be effective. Out of the 83 students surveyed, 74 students either completely agree or agree that learning and understanding the origin of English idioms and proverbs can be effective.

This represents 89% of the total number of students surveyed. Meanwhile, 6 students partly agree that learning and understanding the origin of English idioms and proverbs can be effective, representing 7% of the total number of students surveyed. Only 3 students indicated that they do not agree with the statement. Overall, the majority of the students believe that learning and understanding the origin of English idioms and proverbs can be effective, while a smaller number have a neutral or negative stance

**Table 14.** *Students' opinions on the effectiveness of learning and understanding the origin of English idioms and proverbs*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Completely agree | 23 | 27.7 |
| Agree | 51 | 61.5 |
| Partly agree | 6 | 7.2 |
| Not agree | 3 | 3.6 |
| | **83** | **100** |

Table 15 infers that a majority of students have a positive opinion about the lecturer who helps them to be interested in learning English idioms and proverbs. Out of the 83 students surveyed, 57 students either completely agree or agree that the lecturer helps them to be interested in learning English idioms and proverbs. This represents 68.7% of the total number of students surveyed. Meanwhile, 25 students partly agree that the lecturer helps them to be interested in learning English idioms and proverbs, representing 30.1% of the total number of students surveyed. Only one student indicated that they do not agree with the statement. Overall, a majority of the students have a positive opinion about the lecturer who helps them to be interested in learning English idioms and proverbs.

**Table 15.** *Students' opinions about the lecturer who helps students to be interested in learning English idioms and proverbs.*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Completely agree | 13 | 15.7 |
| Agree | 44 | 53 |
| Partly agree | 25 | 30.1 |
| Not agree | 1 | 1.2 |
| | **83** | **100** |

Table 16 shows the results of another question that aimed to ask whether it is important to learn idioms and proverbs to learn English well. Out of the 83 students surveyed, 4.8% completely agree; 42.2% agree; while 45.8% partly agree and only 7.2% of the students do not agree with the statement that students need to learn idioms and proverbs well to learn English well. These results suggest that a majority of students (87.8%) recognize the importance of learning idioms and proverbs to some extent in order to learn English well.

**Table 16.** *Students' opinions about students need to learn idioms and proverbs well to learn English well*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Completely agree | 4 | 4.8 |
| Agree | 35 | 42.2 |
| Partly agree | 38 | 45.8 |
| Not agree | 6 | 7.2 |
| | **83** | **100** |

Table 17 presents the responses of the question which sought students' opinions whether a lecture on learning idioms and proverbs created excitement. Out of the 83 responses, 10.8% completely agree; 65.1% agree; 22.9% partly agree; and only 1.2% does not agree with the statement that a lecture on learning idioms and proverbs can create excitement. These results suggest that a majority of students believe that a lecture can create excitement for learning idioms and proverbs.

**Table 17.** *Students' opinions on the lecture create excitement for students to learn idioms and proverbs*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Completely agree | 9 | 10.8 |
| Agree | 54 | 65.1 |
| Partly agree | 19 | 22.9 |
| Not agree | 1 | 1.2 |
| | **83** | **100** |

Table 18 presents the responses of the question which asked students whether it is effective and easy way to learn idioms and proverbs through visual and specific illustrations. Out if the 83 students, 34.9% completely agree; 51.9% agree; 10.8% partly agree; and only 2.4% do not agree with the statement that illustrations can help students learn idioms and proverbs. These results suggest that a majority of students would like to learn idioms and proverbs with the help of illustrations.

**Table 18.** *Students' opinions on the effectiveness of illustrations to help students learn idioms and proverbs*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Completely agree | 29 | 34.9 |
| agree | 43 | 51.9 |
| Partly agree | 9 | 10.8 |
| Not agree | 2 | 2.4 |
| | **83** | **100** |

In Table 19, it is evident that out of 83 students, only 7.2% of the students completely agree that reading texts create interest for students to learn idioms and proverbs, while 60.3% of the students agree; 28.9% partly agree and only 3.6% of the students do not agree with this statement.

**Table 19.** *Students' opinions about reading texts create interest for students to learn idioms and proverbs*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Completely agree | 6 | 7.2 |
| Agree | 50 | 60.3 |
| Partly agree | 24 | 28.9 |
| Not agree | 3 | 3.6 |
| | **83** | **100** |

The effectiveness of learning English idioms and proverbs through writings is also accepted by students. Table 20 shows that out of 83 students, 3.6% completely agree; 60.3% agree; 28.9% partly agree; and only 3.6% do not agree with the statement that reading texts create interest for students to learn idioms and proverbs.

**Table 20.** *Students' opinion about writing texts create interest to learn idioms and proverbs*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Completely agree | 3 | 3.6 |
| Agree | 43 | 51.8 |
| Partly agree | 32 | 38.6 |
| Not agree | 5 | 6 |
| | **83** | **100** |

Table 21 presents the responses of the students who do not trust that systematic listing could be effective method to learn idioms and proverbs. Out of 83 students, 4.8% students completely agree; 41% agree and partly agree each; and only 13.2% do not agree with the statement that systematic listing could be effective method to learn idioms and proverbs.

**Table 21.** *Students' opinions on the effectiveness of learning idioms and proverbs by systematic listing*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Completely agree | 4 | 4.8 |
| Agree | 34 | 41 |
| Partly agree | 34 | 41 |
| Not agree | 11 | 13.2 |
| | **83** | **100** |

Table 22 exhibits the responses to the question whether idioms and proverbs can be learnt effectively by equivalent expressions in the Vietnamese language. Out of the 83 students, 22.9% completely agree; 62.7% agree; 12% partly agree; and only 2.4% do not agree with the statement that learning idioms and proverbs by finding their equivalence in the Vietnamese language is an effective method.

**Table 22.** *Students' opinions on the effectiveness of learning idioms and proverbs by equivalence Vietnamese sentences*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Completely agree | 19 | 22.9 |
| Agree | 52 | 62.7 |
| Partly agree | 10 | 12 |
| Not agree | 2 | 2.4 |
| | **83** | **100** |

Table 23 shows the responses to the question which attempted to find out whether learning idioms and proverbs in groups was an effective method. Out of 83 students, 27.7% completely agree; 48.2% agree; 18.1% partly agree; and 6% do not agree with the statement that learning idioms and proverbs in groups is effective.

**Table 23.** *Students' opinions on the effectiveness of learning idioms and proverbs by in groups*

| Alternative Answers | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Completely agree | 23 | 27.7 |
| Agree | 40 | 48.2 |
| Partly agree | 15 | 18.1 |
| Not agree | 5 | 6 |
| | **83** | **100** |

## Discussion

Teaching idioms and proverbs to students is an important job to help students understand and use these expressions in daily communication. However, the problem of teaching idioms and proverbs to students also means facing a few challenges which emerged out of this study. These challenges are: firstly, the diversity of idioms and proverbs: proverbs have a high diversity in meaning and usage, so it is essential that teachers fully communicate these expressions to students by offering them a diverse range of expressions so that learners can understand the diversity and variety of these expressions. Secondly, cultural differences: idioms and proverbs often carry many values and cultural features of a nation, country or region. Therefore, the teaching of idioms and proverbs needs to consider cultural differences between countries and regions to avoid misunderstanding or controversy. For example, some animals in one culture represent bad traits while in another culture they represent good traits.

Thirdly, the overlap and contrast between idioms: some idioms and proverbs have nearly the same or opposite meanings, so it is necessary to explain and convey to students clearly the difference in their meaning, to avoid misunderstanding or misuse in communication. Fourthly, confidentiality and diversity of idioms and proverbs: idioms and proverbs have a high diversity in meaning and usage, so teaching and fully communicating proverbs to students will require focus and effort from the faculty. Fifthly: application in practice: The teaching of proverbs needs to be combined with practice, for example, explaining the context of the idiom's use, how to use it to communicate effectively in the classroom in different situations. Finally, interest and encouragement from students: in order for students to be motivated and interested in learning idioms and proverbs, lecturers need to have interesting and attractive teaching methods to attract interest. of students.

## Conclusion

The factors affecting students' learning of English proverbs and idioms can be summarized as follows: Firstly, English proficiency: Students with better English proficiency often learn English proverbs and idioms more quickly. Secondly, the school of study: The learning environment can affect students' learning of English proverbs and idioms. Learning in a comfortable and supportive environment from faculty and friends helps students learn more effectively. Thirdly, Language skills: Language skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. If students do not have good language skills, it becomes more difficult to learn proverbs and idioms. Fourthly, cultural and historical knowledge: proverbs and idioms are often related to a country's culture and history. If students do not have knowledge of culture and history, it becomes more difficult to learn proverbs and idioms. Fifthly, attention and effort: learning proverbs and idioms requires attention and effort on the part of students. If students are not interested or make no effort, learning will not be effective.

In short, in order to learn English proverbs and idioms well, students need to have a good level of English, study in a favorable environment, have good language skills, have knowledge of culture and history, and have interest and effort in learning.

The following are some suggestions to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning English idioms and proverbs. Firstly, we should start learning idioms and proverbs that are common and often applied in life. Since common idioms are easier to understand and apply, learners will remember those words easily. When I know and apply all the frequently asked questions, I will learn more new questions. Secondly, the practice should take place on a regular basis. If every day, we learn 2-3 proverbs every day and apply it in communication with friends, then in a month we will learn hundreds of sentences and a year will learn a lot of sentences. Like it's easy to feel like rain

Thirdly, teachers need to make exercises on idioms combined with illustrations to help learners deduce the meaning of idioms from pictures or vice versa, which helps them promote critical thinking and logic in language and remembering in lessons in a easier manner. Fourthly, idioms and proverbs should be learned

according to each topic. example We have topics about idioms and proverbs such as weather, idiom topics about love, topics about behavior, customs and habits, family feelings, life experiences. Thus, learning will form sentences that are easy to understand with daily life. Having an association from learning with life helps learners to memorize and grasp many idioms and proverbs at the same time.

Fifthly, because learning at home, also known as self-study, needs to be promoted for learners because learning is lifelong. One can learn anywhere, anytime, study at any age so that they can have knowledge and understanding to help open the minds of learners more. Sixthly, teachers can design games such as chasing pictures to catch words, flip pictures, guessing idioms, proverbs, etc. to help learners apply the knowledge they have learned through judgment and critical thinking to reach conclusions. From the fun and joy of learning idioms and proverbs, learners will learn better.

# References

Awad_Elkareem, E. A. E. A. (2018). *Contrastive Study of English and Arabic Proverbs with Focus on Cultural Value.* (Doctoral Dissertation). University Of Gezira. Retrieved from http://repo.uofg.edu.sd/handle/123456789/4968

Can Daşkin, N. l., & Hatipoğlu, Ç. (2019). A proverb learned is a proverb earned: Proverb instruction in EFL classrooms. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 5*(1), 57-88. doi: http://doi.org/10.32601/ejal.543781

Collis, J., & Hussey, R. (2014). *Business research: A practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students.* Cornwall: Palgrave Macmillan. Retrieved from https://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/id/eprint/5216

Dabaghi, A., Pishbin, E., & Niknasab, L. (2010). Proverbs from the Viewpoint of Translation. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 1*(6), 807-814. doi: https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.1.6.807-814

Dadyan, I. (2015). *On the Study of Idioms and the Problem of Their Equivalence.* Yerevan State University. Retrieved from http://publications.ysu.am/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Ishkhan_Dadyan.pdf

Dundes, A. (1975). On the Structure of the Proverb. *Proverbium, 25*(1975), 961-973.

Duran, E., & Öztürk, E. (2021). Contribution of Visual Cards Supported by Short Story and Drama Technique to Proverb Acquisition. *Anatolian Journal of Cultural Studies, 5*(1), 1-18. doi: https://doi.org/10.15659/ankad.v5i1.125

Elkilic, G. (2008). Turkish students' understanding of transparent and opaque idioms in English in reading as well as in speaking. *Journal of Language and Linguistic studies, 4*(2), 27-41. Retrieved from https://www.acarindex.com/pdfler/acarindex-9019-4037.pdf

Fernando, C. (1996). *Idioms and idiomaticity*. Oxford University Press, USA. Retrieved from https://lib.ugent.be/en/catalog/rug01:000406730

Fraser, B. (1970). Idioms within a transformational grammar. *Foundations of language, 6*(1), 22-42. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/25000426

Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. W. (2012). *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications* (10th ed.). Pearson. Retrieved from https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/subject-catalog/p/educational-research-competencies-for-analysis-and-applications-global-edition/P200000005040/9781292106205

Gibbs, R. W., & Beitel, D. (1995). What proverb understanding reveals about how people think. *Psychological Bulletin, 118*(1), 133–154. doi: https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.118.1.133

Gibbs, R. W., Bogdanovich, J. M., Sykes, J. R., & Barr, D. J. (1997). Metaphor in idiom comprehension. *Journal of memory and language, 37*(2), 141-154. doi: https://doi.org/10.1006/jmla.1996.2506

Giddy, P. (2012). "Philosophy for Children" in Africa: developing a framework. *South African Journal of Education, 32*(1), 15-25. doi: https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v32n1a554

Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. (2013). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar*. Routledge. doi: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203431269

Hallik, S. (2007). *Sententia und proverbium* (Vol. 9). Böhlau Verlag Köln Weimar. Retrieved from https://toc.library.ethz.ch/objects/pdf_uzh50/3/z01_978-3-412-02306-5_01_000672121.pdf

Hanzén, M. (2007). *When in Rome, do as the Romans do: Proverbs as a part of EFL teaching*. University of Jönköping. Retrieved from http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:3499/fulltext01.pdf

Howwar, M. (2013). Seeking the nature of idioms: A socio-cultural study in idiomatic English and Arabic meanings. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, 3*(2), 1-3. Retrieved from https://www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-0213/ijsrp-p1473.pdf

Khan, Ö., & Can Daskin, N. (2014). " You Reap What You Sow" Idioms in Materials Designed by EFL Teacher-Trainees. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language), 8*(2), 97-118. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1167288.pdf

Lane, S. D. (2016). *Interpersonal communication: Competence and contexts*. Routledge. doi: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315506173

Le, T. A. (2019). *An investigation into English and Vietnamese idioms*. South Bohemian University. Retrieved from https://dspace.jcu.cz/handle/123456789/40550

Libben, M. R., & Titone, D. A. (2008). The multidetermined nature of idiom processing. *Memory & cognition, 36*, 1103-1121. doi: https://doi.org/10.3758/MC.36.6.1103

Liontas, J. (2002). Context and idiom understanding in second languages. *EUROSLA yearbook, 2*(1), 155-185. doi: https://doi.org/10.1075/eurosla.2.11lio

Makkai, A. (2013). *Idiom structure in English*. De Gruyter Mouton. doi: https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110812671

Matindas, F. F., Samola, N., & Kumajas, T. (2020). Denotative and connotative meanings in english proverbs (a semantic study). *Journal of English Culture, Language, Literature and Education, 8*(1), 30-50. doi: https://doi.org/10.53682/eclue.v8i1.1590

Mayer, D. R. (1994). Proverbs are never out of season: Popular wisdom in the modern age. *Asian Folklore Studies, 53*(2), 355-357. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/1178654

Mertler, C. A. (2018). *Introduction to Educational Research*. Arizona State University, USA. Retrieved from https://lib.asu.edu/shelf-life/introduction-educational-research-third-edition

Mieder, W. (2010). 'Many Roads Lead to Globalization': The Translation and Distribution of Anglo-American Proverbs in Europe. In *Phraseologie: Global—areal—regional. Akten der Konferenz Europhras 2008 vom 13.-16.8. 2008 in Helsinki* (pp. 43-59).

Mieder, W. (2014a). *Behold the proverbs of a people: Proverbial wisdom in culture, literature, and politics*. Univ. Press of Mississippi. Retrieved from https://muse.jhu.edu/book/35498

Mieder, W. (2014b). Origin of proverbs. In *Introduction to paremiology: A comprehensive guide to proverb studies* (pp. 28-48). De Gruyter Open Poland. doi: https://doi.org/10.2478/9783110410167.2

Milner, G. (1971). The quartered shield: Outline of a semantic taxonomy. In *Social anthropology and language* (pp. 243-269). Routledge. doi: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315017617-21

Moon, R. (1998). *Fixed Expressions and Idioms in English: A Corpus-Based Approach*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from https://global.oup.com/academic/product/fixed-expressions-and-idioms-in-english-9780198236146

Nagy, W. E., & Hiebert, E. H. (2011). Toward a Theory of Word Selection. In *Handbook of Reading Research: Volume IV*. Routledge. doi: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203840412.ch17

Nguyễn, T. H. T. (2012). *A study on English idioms and proverbs relating to colors in comparision with Vietnamese*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Hai Phong Private University. Retrieved from https://luanvan123.info/threads/a-study-on-english-idioms-and-proverbs-relating-to-colors-in-comparison-with-vietnamese.170105

Norrick, N. R. (1985). *How Proverbs Mean: Semantic Studies in English Proverbs*. De Gruyter Mouton. doi: https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110881974.bm

Sacks, H., & Schegloff, E. (1973). Opening up closings. *Semiotica, 8*(4), 289-327. Retrieved from https://web.stanford.edu/~eckert/PDF/schegloffOpeningUpClosings.pdf

Siyanova-Chanturia, A., & Martinez, R. (2015). The idiom principle revisited. *Applied Linguistics, 36*(5), 549-569. doi: https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amt054

Sotvaldieva, H. M. (2021). Using proverbs as A lead-In activity in teaching english as A Foreign Language. *Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research, 10*(11), 159-163. doi: https://doi.org/10.5958/2278-4853.2021.01013.2

Strässler, J. (1982). *Idioms in English: A pragmatic analysis* (Vol. 183). Gunter Narr Verlag. Retrieved from https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/316576

Tekir, S., & Arikan, A. (2007). An Analysis of English Language Teaching Coursebooks by Turkish Writers:" Let's Speak English 7" Example. *Journal of Human Sciences, 4*(2), 1-18. Retrieved from https://www.j-humansciences.com/ojs/index.php/ijhs/article/view/321

Vu, H. (2020). *Vietnamese Proverbs: a Reasoning Method from Pragmatic Perspective* (2516-2314). Retrieved from https://easychair.org/publications/preprint_open/h9gP

Wèinreich, U. (1969). Problems in the Analysis of Idioms. In *Substance and Structure of Language* (pp. 23-82). University of California Press. doi: https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520316218-003

Winters, R., Winters, A., & Amedee, R. G. (2010). Statistics: a brief overview. *Ochsner Journal, 10*(3), 213-216. Retrieved from https://www.ochsnerjournal.org/content/ochjnl/10/3/213.full.pdf

Yankah, K. (1999). Proverb. *Journal of linguistic Anthropology, 9*(1/2), 205-207. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/43102467

Yeh, S.-L., Li, S.-H., Jingling, L., Goh, J. O., Chao, Y.-P., & Tsai, A. C. (2022). Age-Related Differences in the Neural Processing of Idioms: A Positive Perspective. *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience, 14*, 492. doi: https://doi.org/10.3389/fnagi.2022.865417