



Please cite this paper as follows:

Madhi Al-Saedi, M. B., & Sarkhosh, M. (2025). Impact of Etymological Elaboration and Captioned Video on Iraqi EFL Learners' English Idiomatic Expressions Development. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 13 (55), 89-102.<https://doi.org/10.71962/jfl-2025-1127934>

Research Paper

Impact of Etymological Elaboration and Captioned Video on Iraqi EFL Learners' English Idiomatic Expressions Development

Majid Bani Madhi Al-Saedi¹, Mahdi Sarkosh^{2*}

¹Ph.D. Candidate, Department of English, Urmia State University, Urmia, Iran

^{2*}Assistant Professor, Department of English, Urmia State University, Urmia, Iran

Received: August 08, 2024

Revised: October 08, 2024

Accepted: November 20, 2024

Abstract

This study explored the impact of etymological elaboration and captioned video on the development of English idiomatic expressions among Iraqi EFL learners. Recognizing the significance of idioms in language mastery, the research aimed to identify effective teaching strategies that enhance learners' comprehension and usage of idiomatic expressions. A sample of 70 advanced female learners, aged 19 to 26, was randomly assigned to three groups: an etymological elaboration group, a captioned video group, and a control group. The study employed a pre-test and post-test design to measure idiom familiarity before and after a 10-session treatment program. Results indicated that both etymological elaboration and captioned videos significantly improved idiom learning, with etymological elaboration proving to be the most effective method. The findings highlight the importance of integrating cognitive and multimedia strategies in EFL instruction to facilitate idiomatic expression acquisition.

Keywords: *Captioned video, Etymological Elaboration, Idiomatic development, Idiomatic expressions*



Introduction

The ultimate goal of each teaching learning method devised by scholars is to provide the learners by different types of language competence. In this vein, Wray (2000) asserts that idioms and idiomatic expressions are one of the most important components of language mastery. In other words, mastery of idiomatic forms of expressions including idioms, collocations, and sentence phrases, collectively referred to as formulaic sequence is one of the important components of successful language learning. Similarly, Li (2000) claims that idioms play an important role in daily communications among people, therefore, an adequate knowledge of idiomatic expressions and their use is an essential part of language competence.

Regarding the importance of idioms and idiomatic expressions in language competence, it can be concluded that teaching, learning and using idioms are important parts of any language. As a matter of fact, one of the language teachers' and language specialists' duty is to find a proper and effective technique to teach and learn idioms. This issue gains extra importance and can be beneficiary to teachers and learners in (EFL) context because of the cultural bound of idioms and the fact that their meaning and the conveyed message are sometimes totally different from their literal meaning (Moreno, 2011).

Wang and Wang (2013) have noted that idiom is a language in the formation of the unique and fixed expressions in the using process possessing exclusive features and patterns which are frequently used in speech or printed form. According to Wang and Wang (2013) idioms possess a significant importance for language learners since they can convey not only the language that is desired by the speaker or writer but also the cultural norms which exist within the language and society.

Highlighting the importance of idioms, Spears (2005) mentions the challenges of learning idiom and their abundance. He asserts that all languages have phrases that cannot be understood literally and, therefore, cannot be used with confidence. Idioms are a big part of language and community around the world. The native speakers of every language use idioms all the time. Idiomatic usage is so widespread in all cultures, and of course in English, that without utilizing idioms it appears very difficult to talk or write. Additionally, he points out that idioms are unclear or erratic because their meaning is not fixed and easily understood by nature.

There is no doubt that idioms create difficulties for learners of English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL) because of the ineradicableness of their meanings in the case of their literal meaning. For example, when confronted with idioms, nonnative speakers can find themselves in a hard situation since idioms are omnipresent in any human language. So, a proper demand a language requires extensive knowledge of its basic idioms. The level of idiomatic knowledge is in fact an important sign of a learner's skill (Maisa & Karunakaran, 2013; Thyab, 2016; Macis & Schmitt, 2017).

Taking the fixed form and unpredictability of the meaning of the idioms into consideration, idioms constitute a notoriously difficult area of foreign language learning and teaching since idioms are conventionalized expressions whose overall meaning cannot be determined from the meaning of their constituent parts. For instance, students often complain about the difficulties involved in understanding idiomatic expressions such as *to fall in love*, *to be over the moon* or *to be under the weather*, since the image of a person falling, standing over the moon or being placed under meteorological conditions apparently holds no relation whatsoever with the states of love, happiness and sadness conveyed by these expressions respectively.

In this vein, Irujo (1986 as cited in Zarei, 2013) claims that "idioms do not say what they mean' because they are not literal" (p. 13). Besides the difficulty in comprehending the meaning expressed by the idiomatic expression, another problem faced by the EFL/ESL learners deals with the proper usage of such expressions since as Irujo (1986 as cited in Zarei, 2013), asserts,



using idioms correctly is a very difficult task for English learners even if they know the intended meanings because idioms are culture bound expressions. The problems faced by learners in comprehending and using the idioms in the target language appropriately are among the significant and demanding reasons for the necessity of mastering idioms which seems to be a hard goal for L2 learners (Chuang, 2013).

Contributing to the difficulty of comprehension and proper using of idioms is their strong relation or bound to the culture underlying every language. In other words, since idioms are deeply rooted in the culture of the target language, understanding them without any knowledge of the target culture seems very difficult. Idioms are the reflection of customs, cultural beliefs, specific features, social attitudes and norms of a society. There are morals, themes, and stories behind idioms and L2 learners do not have a chance to learn and read about them (Cakir, 2011).

From teachers' perspectives, they have always been interested in finding and applying appropriate methods to teach idioms because of their significance in achieving language competence. From a cognitive perspective, teachers should mainly focus on etymology and apply etymological elaboration as a mnemonic approach to help EFL learners' idiom learning, comprehension and use (Moreno, 2011). Boers, Demecheleer and Eyckmans (2004) assert that cognitive scholars believe etymological elaboration would assist learners in comprehending and remembering the meaning of idiomatic expressions by getting the origin or literal meaning of idioms. In fact, they consider the source domain of idioms to resort the meaning.

Etymological elaboration is of pedagogical importance because knowing the etymology of the idiom allows students to find the connections between figurative and literal meanings which encourage the processing of images. Baleghizadeh (2012) advocates the positive effect of etymological elaboration from a dual-coding theory-based perspective, claiming that data which is delivered in a visual and verbal way is stored and retrieved easier than knowledge provided in just one way. Therefore, in the case of idioms, the mental image for figurative idioms is expected to facilitate the recall and retention of them. The other advantage of etymological elaboration is to raise the knowledge of learners about the historical context of idiomatic expressions that fosters the appreciation of the target community (Baleghizadeh, 2012).

On the other hand, one of the other dual-coding based used strategies in EFL/ESL classes is video. This strategy has gained attention in light of technology development which enables the teachers to have used videos in their classes to teach second languages to their students. As Chang, Lei and Tseng (2019) explain, teachers use different types of media and videos to teach different English skills since videos are believed to be good sources of input because students are able to see the characters and situations. Simultaneously, videos are also interesting and increase the motivation of students.

From a sociological perspective, in today's world, the availability and popularity of EFL films and videos has increased, and the usage of captions as an add-on to them is generally accepted. Captions activate multi-sensory processing involving all components of audio, video, and print at the same time (Rodriguez & Diaz, 2017). Therefore, as Markham and Peter (2002) argue, captioning may be one of the reasons that will support students when they interpret all of the video material while listening and reading the captions. The researcher has therefore decided to do a study investigating and comparing the effects of etymological development and video captioning on learning English idiomatic expressions by posing the following questions:

RQ1: Does using etymological elaboration have any significant effect on Iraqi EFL learners' idiom development?

RQ2: Does using captioned videos have any significant effect on Iraqi EFL learners' idiom development?

RQ3: Is there any significant difference between using etymological elaboration and captioned videos on Iraqi EFL learners' idiom development?

Literature Review

There is no doubt that idioms are very important part of language and language learning since they are constantly appearing in the speech of native speakers and it is difficult for EFL students to learn and understand. Provided that there are various reasons as to why idioms should be learned in an EFL school, there are several forms in which to teach them. According to Rizq (2015), these methods can be divided broadly into the traditional method and the cognitive linguistic approach. As Chen and Lai (2013) assert, in traditional approach to teaching idioms, they were mainly taught using memorization and rote learning in which the learners were given a list of phrases and were asked to memorize through constant repetition. However, Chen and Lai (2013) criticize the traditional approach to teaching idioms for being time- and effort-consuming because learners must pick up idioms without associations or previous knowledge.

The next approach to teaching idiomatic expressions is the Cognitive Linguistic approach which is considered a modern school of linguistic thought. According to Evans and Green (2006), the cognitive linguistic advocating this approach, aim to discover systemic vocabulary and thought processes, implying that learning vocabulary according to cognitive linguistic methodology involves researching conceptualization trends and human mind characteristics. Moreover, Cognitive Linguistic agrees with the necessity to memorize some number of items, but offers an approach which allows lexical items and multiple meanings to be seen as motivated, which means “reflecting a pattern that can provide a set of principles acting as a schema for acquiring new vocabulary” (Tyler, 2012, p. 7). Tyler (2012) stresses the value of structured, inspired clarification in language instruction, because it will make it simpler for language learners to understand and recall the encountered lexical items.

From a different categorization, Cooper (2012) introduces contextual clues as useful method to learners in comprehending unknown idioms. Confirming the efficacy of context clue method for teaching and learning idioms, Cain and Towse (2008) assert that idiomatic expressions are understood in relation to the context in which they are used. the techniques used to process and interpret language in context are deemed essential for improving comprehension of idioms (Liu, 2017). If an idiom is new, it will (partly) be interpreted by examining the definitions of the verbs in the phrase (Maisa & Karunakaran, 2013). In this way, the meaning may be a valuable guide for learners to grasp idiom meanings. Learners mostly prefer context-based strategies.

The next method is devoted to Willis (1990) who prefers procedures that render trends look (personal communication), claiming that it will help students identify patterns and think about idioms. Unsurprisingly, his approach uses formulaic sequence as part of the data collection used to display terms in their normal usage. The rationale behind the efficacy of the mentioned approach as Willis (1990) assert is that “the commonest pattern in English occurs again and again with the commonest words in English. If we are to provide learners with language experience which offers exposure to the most useful patterns of the language, we might as well begin by researching the most useful words in the language” (p.38).

The other approach that belongs to Lewis (1993), downgrades the sense of the single terms as a unit and favors the wider term as a lexical feature. The lexical phrasing is significant in this method. Therefore, he selects lexical phrases on the basis of their “archetypicality” and his aim is to provide “a large vocabulary, if low level students are initially unable to grammaticalize it” and also “balance between relatively rare words carrying considerable meaning and relatively wide and frequent pattern with low meaning content”(Lewis 1993 p.58).

The next approach for teaching idioms to be mentioned here is teaching idioms based on their underlying themes or literal origins is a potentially useful approach. Boers et al. (2004) outlines a teaching method based on problem-solving tasks in which students are made aware of



the origin of figurative idioms. The approach called as etymological elaboration coined by Boers, et al. (2004) provides learners with the literal, original use of an idiom. In other words, using etymological elaboration is trying to direct learners' attention to the etymology of idiom in order to make students understand the symbolic purpose behind idiomatic words.

The reasons provided by Stengers, et al. (2014) for using etymological elaboration for teaching idioms is that incorporating information about the origin or literal uses of idioms lends concreteness and imaginability to the idiom whereby facilitating learning, a phenomenon at the heart of Dual Coding theory. The second reason is that getting familiar with the origin of the idiom, the learner can make an educated guess at its abstract (idiomatic) meaning.

Cognitive linguistics focuses on the application of etymological elaboration as a mnemonic approach to help EFL / ESL learners' comprehension of the language. Through acquiring the root or literal meaning of idioms, this approach allows learners to recognize and recall the meaning of idiomatic expressions. In fact, they consider the source domain of idioms to resort the meaning. This is an effective approach used in many paper-and-pencil experiments (Boers, Demecheleer, & Eyckmans, 2004).

On the other hand, one of the techniques used in classes EFL / ESL is video. Teachers have used videos in their classrooms since the period that technologies permitted, to teach second languages to their students. Teachers use different kinds of media and videos to teach different English skills (Chang, Lei & Tseny, 2019). Videos are good input sources since students can see the characters and situations; videos are often fascinating, so they increase the enthusiasm of the students.

According to Palmer (2007), instructional videos can be described as powerful media that can provide narrative visualization and engage multiple senses of the students simultaneously. Similarly, Whatley and Ahmad (2007) attribute the power of video in providing narrative visualization and engaging multiple senses to the watch again feature of instructional videos since using it learners can enrich their notes on the subject. Furthermore, as Chan (2010) asserts, in addition to providing the learners with an environment to learn at the speed, time and setting they can choose, tutorial videos also allow them to learn autonomously of others. Educational videos, which have become very easy to produce and disseminate due to developments in new knowledge and communication technology, play a significant role in the auditory and visual delivery of the instructional message to the learner.

Considering the theory underlying the use of educational videos Jamet and Le Bohec (2007) claim that according to the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, Visual and verbal information processing mechanisms are distinct and learning happens by forming relations between visual and verbal channels, each of which has a small processing capacity. The main claim of the redundancy principle, which is based on the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, is that students learn better when animation/ illustration and narration are presented without written texts rather than when animation/illustration and narration are presented together with written words (Mayer, 2009; Mayer & Moreno, 2003). In other words, the redundancy effect suggests that animated / illustrated and narrated presentation of teaching video material has a more beneficial impact on the learning experience as compared to an animated / illustrated and narrated introduction supplemented with captions or other written texts.

These days, popularity and availability of films and videos in the field of EFL has increased and using captions as an addition to them become widely welcomed. Captions activate multi-sensory processing that involve audio, video, and print components all at the same time (Hwang & Huang, 2009). Thus, as Markham and Peter (2002) asserts, captioning can be one of the factors that can help students since they view the whole content of video while they listen and read the captions.



Methodology

Design of the Study

The study utilized a quasi-experimental design involving three groups of participants: an etymological elaboration group (N=22), a captioned video group (N=20), and a control group (N=23). Participants were advanced female EFL learners from a language center in Maysan Governorate, Iraq. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from pre-tests and post-tests with qualitative observations during the treatment sessions. The treatment consisted of 10 sessions, each focusing on three idiomatic expressions, taught through either etymological elaboration or captioned videos. The pre-test assessed participants' prior knowledge of idioms, while the post-test evaluated their learning outcomes. Data analysis involved ANOVA and paired samples t-tests to determine the effectiveness of the teaching methods and to compare the performance of the groups.

Participants

The participants of this study included 70 female advance learners within the age range of 19 to 26, studying English as a foreign language in Maysan Governorate language center in Amarah, Iraq. The first language (L1) for 70% of participants was Arabic; 30% of them spoke other languages as their L1. However, because the medium of instruction in this very institute is English, thus, teachers are not allowed to use languages other than English to clarify the concepts. After determining the participants' age, sex, and language proficiency homogeneity, they were then randomly assigned to an etymological elaboration group (N= 22), a video caption group (N= 20) and a control group (N= 23).

Instruments and Materials

The researcher used a variety of data collection instruments to answer the research questions and to collect the required data for the study. The employed instruments and materials consisted of the following;

a. Homogeneity test

The Michigan English Test (MET) is a standardized, extremely valid and reliable ($r=0.90$) advanced EFL test. The MET is being used to assess general English language proficiency in the social, educational and professional contexts and is recognized as formal documented proof of English proficiency in a variety of countries around the world. The MET measure indicates the English language proficiency of the participants at the time of the exam and is accurate as long as the level of proficiency of the examinee does not change.

b. Idiom familiarity test prior to the treatment (pre-test)

The pre-test was an idiom test that demonstrated the participants' previous knowledge of the idioms to be used in the research. It contained 55 idioms that were selected from the Longman American Idiom Dictionary (1999), Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms (2009) and the Collins Co-build Dictionary of Idioms (2012). A total thirty minutes were given as the exam time to answer the questions. Based on the pre-test results of the subjects, forty entirely unfamiliar idioms were chosen to ensure learning and were taught during treatment.

c. Video Captions (Treatment Materials)

One of the instruments used in this stud to teach the idioms in English to EFL learners was captioned videos. The video that students watched were chosen among the ones having clear speaking and conversations and that the accents of the speakers were close to Standard English.



Thus, the international students can understand them better. While choosing the videos, it was considered that the videos did not cause any kind of cross-cultural problems or they did not have any kinds of inappropriate sentences or behaviors that could harm students or was in conflict with cultural, social and religious beliefs of the participants. Due to the time limitations some parts of the video were cut and the needed parts were sent to the participants. The researcher kept the parts that included useful and intended idioms/phrases (the idioms/phrases that were used in the pre-test). After reducing the time of the videos and cutting the unnecessary parts, transcripts were written and added to the video as subtitles (captions).

d. The post treatment test (post-test)

The post-test was design based on the information obtained from the pre-test administered before the treatment phase of the study, that is it included all forty unfamiliar idioms along with fifteen known idioms in pre-test. Actually, the post-test was a restructured version of the pre-test. The format, item number, allotted time, and target idioms were exactly the same as those of pre-test. The post-test was used to screen out the effectiveness of video cations and etymological elaboration on learning idiomatic expressions.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to conduct this study, three intact English classes including 70 female advanced EFL students were selected randomly from among the classes held at Fahim language center. This study was conducted in regular class time at Maysan Governorate language center in Amarah, Iraq. Prior to the administration of the treatment, permission was obtained from the institute's supervisor. The students were assured that the results would be handled in a confidential manner. Subsequently, a researcher made consent form was distributed among the initial sample to get informed of their consent of taking part in this study followed by the researcher's explanations regarding the process of the study and the terminology of idiom, video captions and etymology. After the preliminary preparations, the researcher administered Michigan English Test (MET) which is a standardized, extremely valid and reliable ($r=.90$) advanced EFL test to reach a homogeneous participant sample. Based on the results of the administered test, 5 outliers were omitted and others were assigned into two groups. One of the classes was assigned as etymological elaboration group ($N= 22$), control group ($N= 23$) and a video caption group ($N= 20$) at random. It is worth noticing that, because the pre-test and post-test used in this research were designed by the researcher himself, prior being utilized, a pilot study was administered to check the reliability of the target idioms, appropriateness of idiom difficulty, time limitation, and the precision and lucidity of the research questions. As Farhadi, Jaafarpour, and Birjandi(1994) state, "On a 'reliable' test, one's score on its various administrations would not differ greatly. That is, one's score would be quite consistent" (p.125).

As a result, 15 female students with the same level of English proficiency as the main subjects of the study took these exams. The data collected was entered into the SPSS and the Cronbach alpha was used to verify the reliability of the results. The pre-and post-test reliability index ($r = 0.72$) suggested that the researcher-made experiments were reliable enough for the purpose of this analysis. On the other hand, to deal with the validity of the designed tests and get assured of them, the content and face validity of these tests, relevance of the questions to the treatment, and their suitability to the research objectives and purposes, were evaluated by the researcher consulting three experienced applied linguistic university lecturers who have been teaching idioms for a number of years. The comments of the validity team and their suggestions were taken into account, and before applying the tests, the needed modifications were made by the researcher.

At administering the pre-test, the familiarity of the idioms and the participants initial idiom knowledge was targeted and based on the results of pre-test administration, forty entirely unfamiliar idioms were chosen and used in the treatment process. Each session was designed in two versions i.e. one in the form of etymological elaboration and one in the captioned video form that were used for groups, respectively. The participants were exposed to three idioms every session which were taught at the end of the class (at least 20 minutes). In the etymological elaboration group the pre-prepared elaborations and examples were sent every session to the participants of the group and then in the case of any ambiguity it was discussed over by the teacher. For the video caption group, the researcher, used videos to teach the idioms in English to EFL learners. That is, he used video part that included useful and intended idioms/phrases adding transcripts to the video as subtitles (captions). For the last group, the dictionary definitions of the idioms to be learned by the learners were extracted and given to them with any explanation if needed. After 10-session training program within which 4 idioms were taught using two different strategies, a post test was administered to evaluate the participants' learning and the effectiveness of the applied teaching strategies.

Data Analysis Procedures

After homogenizing the sample of the study, the participants of the study were asked to take a Idiom knowledge test to examine the existence of any significant difference between the groups regarding their idiom knowledge. The gathered results were analyzed using an ANOVA test after getting assured of the distribution normality of the scores.

Table 1

ANOVA Test Comparing the Observed Difference in Pre-test

Pre-test					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	16.709	2	6.236	1.073	.366
Within Groups	406.926	62	5.813		
Total	425.635	64			

According to Table 1 which shows the results of ANOVA test on pre-test scores, the significance level $p = .36$ which is higher than 0.05 set for this study which indicates that all the participants in all groups are similar in terms of idiom proficiency.

After the pre-test, the groups received their treatments. At the end of the treatment period in order to evaluate the effect of aforementioned teaching strategies on participants' learning, they were given a post-test. Similar to the analysis done on pre-test scores, the scores of post-tests were to examine the normality of distribution. Subsequent to the confirmation of the normality, in order to check the participants' learning three paired samples t-test were run on the pre-test and post-test scores.

Table 2

Paired Samples t-test Run on the Scores after the Post-test Comparing the Performances in Pre and Post-test

Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
n							

					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Control-pre-test- Control-post-test	-6.95	3.86	.80	-7.32	-3.97	-7.00	22	.02
	Captioned-pre-test- Captioned-post-test	-8.59	4.01	.78	-7.02	-4.11	-8.21	19	.00
	Etymological-pre-test- Etymological-post-test	-11.6	4.72	.84	-6.74	-4.51	-8.14	21	.00

According to the statistics depicted in the Table 2, since all the significance level indices i.e. (.02, .00, .00), were lower than the set alpha level it was concluded that there were statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level comparing the pre and post-test scores of all three groups. Hence, it was concluded that using etymological elaboration, captioned videos and English definition in control group have significant effects on Iraqi EFL learners' idiom development. However, considering the point that the groups were initially similar and had no differences, therefore only their performances in the post-test were compared to spot the outperformance of any of them over the others, the mean scores and standard deviation of the groups were compared using another ANOVA test to spot any difference in the case of existence.

Table 3

ANOVA Test Comparing the Differences between groups in Post-test

Post-test	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	310.285	2	103.428	18.595	.000
Within Groups	389.350	62	5.562		
Total	699.635	64			

Based on the result abridged in Table 3, the significance value corresponding to teaching strategy grouping variable turned out to be less than .05 ($F = 18.595$, $p = .00 < .05$). Therefore, the difference among the groups was significant. The conclusion, hence, is that there is statistically significant difference among the groups using etymological elaboration, captioned videos and English definitions in control group to enhance EFL learners' idiom learning. To perform a more detailed investigation of the data and find the most effective teaching strategy in improving idiom learning of the participants, the researcher conducted a post hoc test to compare the groups in pairs more detailed.

According to the results the p value for comparing Control group with Captioned video and etymological elaboration groups were .01 and .00 which all are lower than the set alpha level i.e. 0.05 indicating that all the groups were different in comparison to the dictionary definition one, implying that both techniques outperformed the dictionary definition technique used in control group in improving the participants' idiom proficiency. Also, the comparison between captioned video group and etymological elaboration showed that $p = .00$ which mean that the difference between the performance of these two groups was statistically different. Checking the mean difference revealed that the etymological elaboration group outperformed the captioned video group implying that the etymological elaboration teaching strategy was more effective than others in improving participants' learning of the target idiomatic expressions.

Table 4*Post Hoc Test Comparing the Observed Difference in Pairs*

(I) grouping	(J) grouping	Mean Differenc e (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control	Captioned	-2.471*	.809	.016	-4.60	-.34
	Etymological	-5.694*	.778	.000	-7.74	-3.65
Captioned	Control	2.471*	.809	.016	.34	4.60
	Etymological	-3.224*	.778	.001	-5.27	-1.18
Etymological	Control	5.694*	.778	.000	3.65	7.74
	Captioned	3.224*	.778	.001	1.18	5.27

Discussion

According to Cieřlicka (2015), the salient reason for not being fluent and figuratively competent in English for SL/FL learners could be the lack of proper and correct exposure to English conceptual concepts and idiomatic expressions even to the highest levels of language learning. The next reason provided for the difficulty of understanding and learning idioms which was related to the mismatch between the message conveyed by the idiom and the literal meaning of the component words is believed by Gibbs, Wilson, and Bryant (2012) to be that idiomatic phrases are expressions that usually bring an image to mind and they are frequently used in different types of communication almost everywhere since the image can differ considerably for every individual unless it occurs in a particular context. Therefore, there is a need for a proper teaching or learning techniques to solve the problem of lack of context. EFL learners are not exposed to authentic English in the social life and they do not have ample opportunities to use English or to be involved in it. The problem of non-native learners of English could be best solved by the novel approach that the researchers apply. This approach exposes the EFL learners to the real story behind the idioms or the origin of the expressions. It is worth noticing that knowing the etymology of idioms is crucial in improving language proficiency since the idioms were coined in definite time and because of specific cultural reasons.

The results of present study revealed that implementing etymological elaboration on idiom-learning of EFL learners was the most effective strategy of all three ones. Hence, the findings can be justified from a cognitive perspective. Since as Moreno (2011) asserts, it is believed by most of the scholars that teachers should mainly focus on etymology and apply etymological elaboration as a mnemonic approach to help EFL/ESL learners' idiom learning, comprehension and use. The efficacy of captioned videos can also be related to the fact that teachers use different types of media and videos to teach different English skills since videos are believed to be good sources of input because students are able to see the characters and situations (Chang, Lei & Tseny, 2019). Simultaneously, videos are also interesting and increase the motivation of students. In addition, from a sociological perspective, in today's world, the availability and popularity of EFL films and videos has increased, and the usage of captions as an add-on to them is generally accepted. Captions activate multi-sensory processing involving all components of audio, video, and print at the same time (Hwang & Huang 1999).

This study findings can be supported by Conceptual Metaphor Theory. According to this idea, idioms are not just a collection of random words with a meaning. A physical setting that depicts the source from whence the idioms were developed may also be used to determine the meaning of idiomatic terms. Furthermore, the findings are also consistent with the Dual Coding



Theory. This idea states that etymological elaboration and captioned videos are useful in evoking a mental picture of a tangible situation that can be remembered alongside the verbal form (Boers, 2007). The conditions for understanding, learning, and remembering new words—and, in particular, for comprehending idiomatic expressions—are often improved by this mental picture.

The findings of the present study are consistent with a number of studies such as Fazel and Bagheri (2010); Bagheri and Fazel (2010); Tabatabaei and Reisi (2011); Baleghizadeh and Mohammad Bagheri (2012), Ozdemir, Izmirli & Sahin-Izmirli (2016), Aydin (2017) and Teng (2022). All these studies verified the significant role of etymology, providing definition and captioned videos in idiom comprehension and indicated that etymological elaboration, providing definition and subtitled videos elevated learners' performance.

The findings of this study revealed that associating idioms with their origin could reinforce the idiom learning. These results are in line with the study done by Zhang (2009) who examined the effect of etymology on receptive and productive knowledge of target idioms. The results of Zhang research support the present findings in that Zhang (2009) found that etymology was effective in the production of target idioms. It should be noticed that there is a difference between the present research and Zhang in that it explored the effect of etymological elaboration on the learning of idioms in web-based and on-line learning environment.

The findings regarding the effectiveness of etymological elaboration on learning idioms are also in line with the findings of the study done by Baleghizadeh and Mohammad Bagheri (2012) who applied etymological elaboration to facilitate idiom learning. Similarly, the results had demonstrated the significant effect of etymological elaboration on EFL students' comprehension and retention of idioms.

Regarding the efficacy of captioned videos on learning and particularly vocabulary learning, the results are in contrast with Ozdemir, Izmirli & Sahin-Izmirli (2016) who investigated the effect of captioned vs. non-captioned instructional videos on the motivation and achievement. In contrast to the findings of current study, their results had revealed achievement scores of students do not vary according to the instructional video type under investigation (captioned vs. non-captioned).

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of effective teaching strategies in enhancing EFL learners' understanding and use of idiomatic expressions. Both etymological elaboration and captioned videos significantly improved idiom acquisition, with etymological elaboration emerging as the superior method. This suggests that incorporating etymological insights into language instruction can facilitate deeper comprehension and retention of idiomatic expressions, ultimately contributing to greater language proficiency. The study advocates for the integration of cognitive approaches and multimedia resources in EFL curricula to address the challenges learners face with idioms, thereby enriching their overall language learning experience. Future research could explore the long-term effects of these teaching methods and their applicability across different language contexts.

The findings of this study carry significant implications for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, particularly in the teaching of idiomatic expressions. By demonstrating the effectiveness of etymological elaboration, the research suggests that educators should incorporate this method into their curricula to enhance learners' comprehension and retention of idioms. This approach not only deepens students' understanding of the language but also fosters a greater appreciation for its nuances. Additionally, the positive results associated with captioned videos highlight the value of integrating multimedia resources into language learning, catering to diverse learning styles and increasing student engagement. As idiomatic expressions are crucial for achieving fluency, language programs should prioritize their

instruction, equipping learners with the tools necessary to navigate real-life conversations more effectively. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of cognitive strategies in language acquisition, encouraging educators to focus on methods that promote deeper understanding rather than mere memorization. Overall, these implications advocate for a more dynamic and resourceful approach to EFL teaching, paving the way for future research to explore the long-term effects of these strategies and their applicability across various linguistic contexts.

References

- Bagheri, M. S., & Fazel, I. (2010). Effects of Etymological Elaboration on the EFL Learners' Comprehension and Retention of Idioms. *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 14(1), 45-55.
- Baleghizadeh, S. (2012). The effect of etymology elaboration on EFL learners' comprehension and retention of idioms. *3L, Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 18(1), 1-17.
- Baleghizadeh, S. & Mohammad Bagheri, M. (2012). The effect of etymology elaboration on EFL learners' comprehension and retention of idioms. *The Southeast Asia Journal of English Language Studies*, 18(1), 23-32.
- Boers, F., Demacheleer, M. & Eyckmans, J. (2004). Cross-cultural variation as a variable in comprehending and remembering figurative idioms. *European Journal of English Studies*, 8, 375-366.
- Cain, K., & Towse, A. S. (2008). Working memory, short-term memory and reading development: Introduction to the special issue. *Memory*, 16(3), 203-206.
- Çakir, I. (2011). The effects of note-taking on listening comprehension and recall of EFL learners. *International Journal of Instruction*, 4(2), 61-80.
- Chan, L. K. S. (2010). The relationship between cognitive style and learning preference in EFL writing: A study of Hong Kong learners. *RELJ Journal*, 41(1), 5-24.
- Chang, C., Lei, H., & Tseny, J. (2019). Media presentation mode, English listening comprehension and cognitive load in ubiquitous learning environments: Modality effect or redundancy effect? *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 27(4), 631-654.
- Chen, I. J., & Lai, C. F. (2013). Enhancing EFL learners' use of vocabulary learning strategies through computer-mediated glosses. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 26(1), 1-21.
- Chuang, Y. C. (2013). The effect of pre-task planning on L2 writing performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 22(4), 305-327.
- Collins Co-build Dictionary of Idioms. (2012). London: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Cooper, T. C. (2012). Processing of idioms by L2 learners of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(2), 284-310.
- Dervić, M., & Bećirović, S. (2020). Prerogative of the lexical approach in communicative language teaching. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 3(2), 1-21.
- Evans, V., & Green, M. (2006). *Cognitive linguistics: An introduction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Farhadi, H., Jaafarpour, A., & Birjandi, P. (1994). *Testing language skills: From theory to practice*. Tehran: SAMT Publications.
- Fazel, I. & Bagheri, M.S. (2010). Effects of etymological elaboration on EFL learners' comprehension and retention of idioms. *Applied Linguistics*, 14(1), 45-55.
- Gibbs, R. W., Jr., Wilson, N. L., & Bryant, G. A. (2012). Figurative language: Normal adult cognitive research. In M. J. Spivey, K. McRae, & M. F. Joannis (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of psycholinguistics* (pp. 465-484). Cambridge University Press.
- Cieślicka, A. B. (2015). Idiom acquisition and processing by second/foreign language learners. *Bilingual figurative language processing*, 208-244.



- Hwang, Y., & Huang, P. (2009). The Effects of Video Captioning on L2 Learners' Listening Comprehension. *Journal of National Formosa University*, 29, 95-108.
- Jamet, E., & Le Bohec, O. (2007). Effects of prior knowledge and text structure on comprehension processes during reading of scientific texts. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(4), 791-806.
- Li, P. (2000). *Hong Kong from 6 students' ability in English idiom comprehension in relation to their general English proficiency*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China.
- Liu, D. (2018). *Idioms: Description, comprehension, acquisition, and pedagogy*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Longman American Idiom Dictionary. (1999). Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Macis, M., & Schmitt, N. (2017). Not just 'small potatoes': Knowledge of the idiomatic meanings of collocations. *Language teaching research*, 21(3), 321-340.
- Maisa, S., & Karunakaran, T. (2013). Idioms and importance of teaching idioms to ESL students: A study on teacher beliefs. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (AJHSS)*, 1(1), 110-122.
- Markham, P., & Peter, L. (2002). The influence of English language and Spanish language caption on foreign language listening/reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Technology System*, 31(3), 331-341.
- Mayer, R. E., & Moreno, R. (2003). Nine ways to reduce cognitive load in multimedia learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 38(1), 43-52.
- Mayer, R.E. (2009). *Multimedia Learning (2nd edn)*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Moreno, E. M. G. (2011). The role of etymology in the teaching of idioms related to colors in an L2. *PortaLinguarum*, 16, 19-32.
- Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms (3rd ed.). (2009). Oxford University Press.
- Palmer, H. (2007). The role of idiomatic language in English language teaching. *The Teacher Trainer Journal*, 21(1), 6-8.
- Özdemir, M., İzmirli, S., & Şahin İzmirli, Ö. (2016). The Effects of Captioning Videos on Academic Achievement and Motivation: Reconsideration of Redundancy Principle in Instructional Videos. *Educational Technology & Society*, 19, 1-10.
- Rodriguez, J., & Diaz, M. V. (2017). Media with Captions and Description to Support Learning among Children with Sensory Disabilities. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 5(11), 2016-2025.
- Spears, R. A. (2005). *McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Slang and Colloquial Expressions: The Most Up-to-Date Reference for the Nonstandard Usage, Popular Jargon, and Vulgarisms of Contempos*. McGraw Hill Professional.
- Stengers, H., Deconinck, J., Boers, F., & Eyckmans, J. (2014). Does copying idioms promote their retention? *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 29(2), 1-13.
- Tabatabaei, O. & Reisi, F. (2011). The Contribution of Movie Clips to Idiom Learning Improvement of Iranian EFL Learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(8), 990-1000.
- Teng, F., & Zhang, L. J. (2022). The Effects of Second Language Subtitled Films, Advance Organizers, and a Mixture of Both on Vocabulary Development: A Comparative Study. *TESOL Quarterly*, 56(1), 162-190.
- Thyab, R. A. (2016). The Necessity of idiomatic expressions to English Language learners. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 7(7), 106-111.
- Tyler, A. (2017). *Cognitive Linguistics and Second Language Learning: Theoretical Basics and Experimental Evidence*. New York: Routledge.

- Wang, L. & Wang, SH. (2013). A Study of Idiom Translation Strategies between English and Chinese. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(9), 1691-1697.
- Whatley, J., & Ahmad, A. (2007). Using Video to Record Summary Lectures to Aid Students' Revision. *Interdisciplinary Journal of e-Learning and Learning Objects*, 3, 185-196.
- Willis, D. (1990). *The lexical syllabus: A new approach to language learning*. London: Collins ELT.
- Wray, A. (2000). Formulaic language in learners and native speakers. *Language Teaching*, 32(1), 213-231.
- Zarei, A. A. (2013). On the Learnability of three categories of Idioms by Iranian EFL learners. *Modares Educational Journal in TEFL*, 27, 10-26.
- Zhang, L. (2009). The effect of etymological elaboration on L2 idiom acquisition and retention in an online environment (WebCT). Graduate Theses and Dissertations. 11126. <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/11126>



© 2025 by the authors. Licensee International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research, Najafabad Iran, Iran. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY NC 4.0 license). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

