IDIOM TEACHING STRATEGIES AND TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH IDIOMS

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ABSTRACT

   The literature review so far has emphasized the effectiveness of idiom instructions in second language acquisition, but this issue has almost been left untouched and/or forgotten at the English Department of Dong Nai Univerity (DNU). This present study, therefore, aims to investigate idiom teaching strategies used by DNU teachers of English as well as teachers' and students' perceptions of teaching and learning idioms. It was conducted with a participation of 10 teachers of English and 42 senior students of English majors. The study result indicated that most teacher participants better utilized 13 out of 16 most frequently used strategies provided by the researcher to improve idiom knowledge for them. Among these were guessing meaning of idioms from context, using idioms in sentence, looking up unfamiliar/unknown idioms from dictionary, communicating in English outside the classroom, translating the literal meaning into their L1 to understand idioms, learning idioms through memorization, learning idioms that are used in different media, reading from many sources, and so on. Regarding teachers'and students' perceptions of idioms, it was found out that both teachers and students were keenly interested in idiom instruction, and they also expressed their desires to have a well-written reference material on idiom, especially that of idiom in teaching IELTS speaking themes. On the basis of findings, some further recommendations for future study on idiom instructions were also included.

   Keywords: *Idioms, idiom teaching strategies, teacher's and students' perceptions, first language (L1) learners, second language (L2) learners*

1. Introduction

   Undeniably, English of today has become a crucial tool for both academic and professional success. Indeed, a good mastery of English skills is considered a prerequisite condition for any of those who enters for life. In response to urgently societal needs, educators in language area in general have made their uttermost attempt to upgrade language competence for the learners with a view to helping them walk confidently and bravely straight to life.

   Nationally, the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam (MOET) has so far carried out many innovative projects, especially the National Foreign Languages 2020 Projects in hope to strengthen the English usage skills for Vietnamese learners as well as arouse their interests of learning English before they enter the world of workforce and/or tertiary

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education. In order to do so, in addition to the issuance of new English textbook series (from grade sixth to grade twelfth from 2000 upwards) and shifting the teaching methodology from Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the MOET has also stipulated that every English major student before practising teaching career must achieve C1 Level according to the *Common European Framwork of Reference* (CEFR) or Band 7 following the *International Testing System* such as IELTS or the equivalent certificates.

Specifically, one of the criteria to achieve C1 and Band 7 IELTS is that the candidate must have the ability to use high-frequency level vocabulary such as a wide range of *idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs,* and *colloquialism* in the listening, speaking, reading, and writing areas [1]. So a good savvy of idiomatic figurative competence will give learners of English an advantage in studies now and career in the future.

Ambitious as it has been, the teaching and learning of idiomatic expressions in Asian context in general and in Vietnamese context in particular have long been problematic and undermined [2, 3]. Their studies uncovered that very few Asian teachers of English were well aware of the role of idioms in communicative competence. To make matter worse, few instructors of English holding MA

and PhD degree in language teaching area and/or those trained overseas deployed idioms in their language instruction [2]. The reasons may be that they are not fully confident of their real ability of using idioms. That is why they reluctantly resort to using the familiar words and phrases to be on the safe side. Students are without an exception. They certainly have a desire to use idioms in everyday communication to reach the native-like manner [4, 5]. This is especially true for students who once experienced F1 culture where the idiomatic expressions are used on a daily basis. However, to the EFL learners who have never experienced the target culture before, the the frequent absence of being exposed to idiomatic expressions have hampered them a lot in written and face-to-face communicative encounters, especially with the native speakers of English.

The second reason attributing to the weaknesses of using idiom-related phrases among students is a systematic lack of reference materials on idiom. Liu's study [6: 671] confirmed, "most teaching and reference materials on English idioms are primarily intuition-based". Meanwhile, Tran's study [2] on idiom at highschool level found out that only 24 idioms were introduced in the three English high school textbooks (six in English ten, six in English 11, and twelve in English 12) respectively. In line with this, Grant's and Liu's studies

[7, 6] revealed a sporadic frequency of English idiomatic expressions used by the L2 learners. These limitations were attributed to the absence of idiom-related practical exercises in the textbook for students to consolidate the knowledge of the idiomatic expressions.

To recap, though realizing the role of idiomatic expressions in academic and professional setting, idioms in general have not yet been received special attention to in both Asian and Vietnamese context.

Therefore, this paper aims at exploring Dong Nai University (DNU) English teachers' and English-majored students' attitudes as well as strategies adopted by DNU English teachers in the instruction of English idiomatic expressions in hope that both teachers and students find it comfortable and interesting to learn English idiomatic expressions, which in turn contributes to the improvement of the English competence for the learners to serve best for their written and spoken communication meaningfully and effectively now and in the very near future.

This present study sets out to find the anwer to the following research questions

01. What are DNU English teachers' opinions on the instruction of English idioms in their language curriculum?

02. What strategies do they use in teaching English idioms to their students?

03. What are students' opinions on the English idioms in general and on their

teachers and curriculum towards the term of "idiomatic expression" in particular?

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition of idiom

It is actually not a piece of cake to give a clear-cut definition to the word "idiom" because this is a broad area that needs several in-depth investigations from the perspectives of several linguists. There are many reasons to explain this. Firstly, "idioms range very widely, which includes slang, proverbs, figurative phrases, motto, saying, quotations, jargon, colloquial, two-part allegorical sayings, and so on" [8: 1691-1697]. One idiom can imply several meanings that can cause misunderstandings for readers. The second reason is that different cultures have different understandings towards one particular idiom in use. There is a case where one idiom in the source language may not exist and/or have corresponding meanings in the target language. Below are some conceptualization of the idiom defintion.

First, idioms are treated as dead metaphor which have been used so many times by several speakers and writers that they have lost its idiomatic property. In this case, idioms can be understood as universal sayings accepted by the plural readers, which does not need to trace its origins.

Second, most of the dictionaries, though different in the way of expressing, share something in common in the definition of idiom (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary,*

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Co-build Learner's Dictionary, New World Dictionary of the American Language, 2nd college edition, among others). Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary [9: 547] defines idioms as "*phrases or sentences whose meaning is not clear from the meaning of its individual words and which must be learnt as a whole uni*t." while Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English [10: 870] treats idioms as "*a group of words that has special meaning that is different from the ordinary meaning of each separate word*."

Finally, idioms can also be viewed as sayings meant figuratively and radically different from the literal or original meaning. According to this definition, the meaning of the idiom will depend on the context rather than the primary meaning. To trace the exactness of the meaning of these idioms, it is necessary for the users of language to consider them in context, and even considering "*sociolinguistic, culltural and pragmatics rules of use*" as well. [11: 20]

Putting all above defintions of idioms together, this study treats idiomatic expresions as a group of special words, phrases, and sentences whose primary/literal dictionary meaning is completely lost to make room for *a new shade of meaning*, normally understood figuratively and contextually. In order to understand the meaning of these idioms, the users of language must treat them as a whole unit, not an individual component.

2.2. The importance of idiom

It is hard to trace the real origin of the idioms and the idiomatic-related sayings. As a matter of fact, it is more correct to say that since the appearance of human beings on earth, idioms have come into being. Idiom appeared everywhere, first in speech, then passed down from mouth to mouth and finally in written forms to keep it longer. Idioms can be invented by the intellectuals and even by ordinary people when working on the field, in the factory or or they may be passed down from stories told by grandparents to children and so on. When writing system was invented, the idioms were recorded for the later generation to learn and enjoy. Nowadays, we can see the appearance of idioms in multi-forms like proses and verses in the literature, in film subtitle, media, different sources, and so on.

The importance of the understanding of idiom to the learners of English is undeniable. Without clear awareness of its, learners would find it hard hard to appreciate beauty and nuance of the language [12]. Secondly, because idioms are used across the four skills of English, ignoring them would put any users of language at disadvantageous position. Lundblom and Woods [13] also maintained that a failure to comprehend and use idioms can baffle anyone to perform their

learning tasks successfully and effectively in such areas as written composition, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. Other authors such as Liu [4], Shirazi & Talebinezhad [14], Wray [15] concured to the fact that a sound knowledge of idiom is required for the English language proficiency of any English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) learners. To them, the language proficiency of a person must be assessed on the basis of their understanding of idiomatic expressions. Finally, several authors in the literature body so far have also claimed that learning grammatical structures and vocabulary of the target language is not enough to help learners assimilate themselves into the host culture. Therefore, they need to familarise themselves with the knowledge of idioms.

In a nutshell, equipping knowledge of idiom is requisite for anyone who is learning another language beside their first language.

2.3. Strategies on the learning of idiom

To learn any language successfully and effectively, learners need to devise some concrete learning strategies. The Literature review so far has listed several strategies in dealing with the learning of vocabulary of students; concretely here is *the mastery of lexical idiomatic expression*. Alhaysony [16] investigated 23 idiom learning strategies used by EFL Saudi English

major university students. He did so by delivering a twenty-three item questionnaire to these student participants. Below are some strategies asked by this researcher:

Guessing the meaning from the context, using idiom in communicating with others outside the class, learning idioms in group discussion, using them in sentences, translating the idiom into the target language, learning them through memorisation, comparing the English idiom with the mother tongue's idiom, using dictionary and other sources like media, film to acquire idiom, looking up the meaning in the dictionnary, learning them from different media, and from many different sources, and so on (p. 78)

His study result confirmed many strategies used by the student participants, which was in coincidence with the previous studies in the body of literature. The strategies in order of most frequent use were using context to guess meaning of idiom, predicting the meaning of idiom, translating the literal meaning of idiom into L1 to understand them, learning idioms from different media, and reading idioms from many different sources.

With positive outcomes found in the previous empirical studies, the researcher of this study wondered whether the teachers of English where the researcher is working have employed these strategies to help their students better learn English in general

and idiom in particular. Therefore, he borrowed some of the strategies used by Alhaysony to build a conceptual framework for this study. 16 out of 23 strategies by Alhaysony (2017) were chosen to ask teacher participants' opinions on strategies they have been using to teach idioms for their learner.

2.4. Learners' attitudes towards the learning of idiom

Attitudes are said to play a significant role in raising the motivation for any kinds of learners in the language learning field. A positive attitude will uphold learners' motivation and help them conquer obstacles whereas negative attitudes can potentially lead to "*decreased motivation, frustration, and even anxiety*" [17] and thus hinder the learning process.

Though there have been many studies to examine the influence of attitudes on the language acquisition in general [18], the studies of learners' attitudes on the acquisition of idiom, however, has been still in its infancy.

First of all, internationally, the study of Tadayyon and Ketabi [19] on the attitudes of forty Iranian EFL learners on the learning of idiomatic expressions in English revealed that most of the student informants expressed very high positive attitudes towards both learning and producing English idioms.

In line with Tadayyon's and Ketabi's, Ababneh's [20] confirmed the similar outcomes. Most learner participants expressed their satisfactions towards the learning and producing English idioms. They also asserted that idiom mastery was a must to help them reach native-like competence of English.

In Vietnam's context, one study by Tran [2] was found. Her study revealed that most learner participants found satisfaction when instructed with idiom. She argued that learning English idioms meant learning about the English culture. Therefore, students should be instructed more about idioms so that they can use English more confidently and more effectively for communicative purposes. However, they complained that they were not sufficiently instructed with idioms. The reasons were that teachers did not treat the topic of idioms seriously; they did them only to fill in the gap when they happened to see these idioms in the listening and speaking exercises. And that is it. Finally, learner participants expressed that idioms are difficult to learn as they must be undestood as a chain rather than individual parts, which all contribute to their discouragement from the learning of idioms.

Mixed by both positive and negative results regarding these aforementioned studies, this study is hoped to give a newly fresh breeze to fill the gap of the body of literature.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research setting

This study was conducted at the English Department of Dong Nai

University from October 1st, 2020 to November 15th, 2020.

3.2. Participants

There are two types of participants in this study. The first participant is English instructors, totalling 10; 8 out of 10 earned a Master of Arts Degree in the language teaching area by Victorian Institute of Language, Australia whilts the two others earned MBA Degree from the Asian institute of Technology of Management. These participants all have had more than a 20-year-experience of teaching English for TESOL-majored students and/or students of English Linguistics and Literature. Furthermore, they used to teach English at the levels of FCE and CAE, and IELTS, where idiomatic expressions have been included in the English coursebooks. Therefore, their opinions towards the strategies of teaching idioms can be said to be unbiased.

The second respondents were 42 senior students of English TESOL major at DNU. They were invited to participate in the study for they have spent four years learning English major and with the coursebooks of FCE and CAE such as Ready for First & Ready for CAE by Roy Norris and and IELTS Complete, by Guy Brook-Hart and Vanessa Jakeman (3 book volume numbers, Band 4-5, Band 5-6.5, & Band 6.5-7.5 respectively) which includes idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, and colloquialism in them. Therefore, their responses to the

quesstionnaires were also valid and reliable too.

3.3. Research instruments

The research tools are two questionnaires, one for teachers and one for students. The questionnaire for teachers contain two sections; section one consists of 8 items aiming to investigate teachers' opinions towards idiom teaching and learning in general and materials in use. Section two including 16 items targeting at strategies used by the teachers in teaching idioms to their students. Meanwhile, the questionnaire for students also have two sections, each containing 8 item aiming to elicit students' opinions towards idiom learning and teachers' and curriculum's treating towards the terms of "idioms. In total, there were 32 question items delivered to both teachers and students participating in the study.

All the question items were designed on Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree (SA), agree (A), uncertain (U), strong disagree (SD), and disagree (D) respectively. After the questionnaires were collected, they were processed quantitatively.

To validate the answers selected by the informants, a follow-up open-ended interview questionnaire was designed to ask four out of ten instructors and four students representing for each group of respondents to make clear any points in the questionnaires. The answers from the respondents were recorded and

transcribed. After examining the recording, the researcher summarized the main points/contents provided by the respondents. The data was then processed qualitatively.

4. Results and discussions

4.1. Teachers' opinions towards the role of idioms in teaching and learning English

Table 1: *Teachers' opinions on the role of idiom in teaching and learning English*

The role of idiom in teaching and learning English / teacher choice	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	M 3.0
1. Idiom is very important for learning English.	1 10	9 90	0	0	0	4.0
2. I am highly aware of equipping English idiom knowledge for my learners.	4 40	4 40	2 40	0 0.0	0 0.0	3.6
3. The coursebooks I am teaching contain many practical useful idioms.	0 0.0	2 20	5 50	3 30	0 0.0	2.3
4. I agree that idioms can help my students upgrade their Band Scores in (CEFR) exams as well as international exams like IELTS, TOEFL, or equivalent certificates.	5 50	3 30	2 20	0 0.0	0 0.0	4.3
5. English learners' proficiency is measured on the proficiency of idiom usage.	3 30	4 40	3 30	0 0.0	0 0.0	4.0
6. Using idioms effectively can improve students' academic studies, career opportunities, and personal lives.	3 30	4 40	2 20	1 10	0 0.0	3.9
7. Idioms are just for fun, for exercises embedded in listening, speaking, reading, and writing sections only if they happen to be there.	0 0.0	2 20	2 20	5 50	1 10	2.7
8. I do not put a heavy emphasis on equipping idiom knowledge for my learners as I think idioms are only for classic literature, film subtitles, and mass media only.	1 10	0 0.0	2 20	6 60	1 10	1.9

As indicated in table 1, all teacher informants realized the importance of idiom instruction to their students (10 out of 10 teachers expressing their agreement to the item 1). In so doing, they ascertained that they were always highly conscious of providing the idiom knowledge to their students to help them use English successfully and efficiently both inside and outside the classroom (8 out of 10 informants agreeing to item 2). This in turn entailed that eight out of ten respondents (item 4) reckoned that mastering a good command of idiomatic expressions can improve candidates' Band Scores in IELTS exams and that using idioms proficiently can boost students' personal, academic, and professional lives (seven out of ten informants agreeing to that statement, item 5). More importantly, a considerable number of informants (6 out of 10 & 7 out of 10, items 7-8)) expressed their appreciation towards idioms. They maintained that idioms are not just for fun and fill in the gap in their

teaching periods. Instead, idioms actually earned an oustanding place in their profession. Sadly, as the data disclosed, 2 out of 10 informants said that the coursebooks they were teaching did contain enough practical and

meaningful idioms. This partly explained to the reason why teachers were still cautious about and went in-between how to instruct idioms effectively to their learners.

4.2. Teachers' idiom teaching strategy

Table 2: *Idiom teaching strategy*

teacher choice I teach my students to master the English idioms through	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	M 3.0
1. guessing the meaning of idioms from the context.	2 20	6 60	1 10	1 10	0 0.0	 3.9
2. looking up unknown/ unfamiliar idioms in the dictionary.	1 10	6 60	1 10	2 20	0 0.0	 3.6
3. writing them in their diary.	3 30	3 30	1 10	3 30	0 0.0	 3.6
4. using them in sentences.	3 30	5 50	2 20	0 0.0	0 0.0	 4.1
5. communicating in English outside the classroom.	2 20	5 50	3 30	0 0.0	0 0.0	 3.9
6. reading from different sources.	0 0.0	7 70	3 30	0 0.0	0 0.0	 3.7
7. learning them through memorisation.	1 10	7 70	2 20	0 0.0	0 0.0	 3.5
8. figuring out an idiom from an equivalent one in their language.	1 10	3 30	6 60	0 0.0	0 0.0	 3.5
9. using animated pictures to guess the meaning of the idiom.	0 0.0	2 20	4 40	3 30	1 10	2.7
10. finding out the origins of the idioms.	0 0.0	2 20	6 60	1 10	1 10	2.9
11. translating the literal meaning into their L1 to understand idioms.	2 20	5 50	0 0.0	1 10	1 10	3.3
12. having group discussion to find out about the meanings of the idioms.	0 0.0	6 60	1 10	3 30	0 0.0	3.3
13. learning only the easy idioms or the idioms present in the book.	0 0.0	5 50	1 10	2 20	2 20	2.9
14. ignoring the difficult, complex, and "hard to see" idioms.	1 10	3 30	1 10	5 50	0 0.0	3.0
15. learning idioms that are used in different media.	1 10	7 70	1 10	1 10	0 0.0	3.8
16. reading from many different sources.	1 10	6 60	2 20	1 10	0 0.0	3.7

As can be seen from table 2, most participants were in favor of strategies like *guessing the meaning of idioms from the context (*8 out of 10, item 1*), translating*

*the literal meaning into their L1 to understand idioms (*7 out of 10, item 11*), using them in sentences (*6 out of 8, item 4*), learning them through memorisation (*8

out of 10, item 7*), learning idioms that are used in different media (*8 out of 10, item 15*), looking up unknown/ unfamiliar idioms in the dictionary (*7 out of 10, item 2*), reading from many different sources* (7 out of 10, item 16). Other strategies that also received attention from the teacher participants included *writing them in diary, communicating outside the classoom, and having class discussion*. All of these items (3, 5, & 12) received more than 50 percent of respondents agreeing to these statements. Finally, the less frequently used strategy by participants were using pictures to guess the meaning of idioms, and finding out the origins of the idioms (item 9-10). Only 2 out of 10 said choosing those options. This implied that using pictures and finding out the origins of idioms were not prefered by most teachers in the study. This needs further investigation in the near future why these strategies were uncommon by DNU teachers. Most interestingly, half of participants were wary of the role of idioms in students' lives. So they did not agree that they would ignore the difficult, complex, and "hard to see" idioms (6 out of 10, item 14).

4.3. Teachers' interview

Data from interview also uncovered that most of the teacher interviewees realized the importance of idioms in students' personal, academic, and professional lives. So failing to this can create big obstacles to their lives, hampering them from progressing further to the world of academics and career as idioms are a part of sayings, embedding cultural values in native people's lives. So mastering them

thoroughly helps learners understand more deeply about native people whose authentic languages are used. These responses were in coincidence to those found in the questionnaires. However, The data also revealed that most lecturers have not yet been highly aware of the importance of idioms in their teaching and learning. As teacher 1 expressed:

In my speaking class, I only focused hard on structure and grammar instruction as well as idea enrichment for the speaking practice session. This is my first priority to help my learners pass the required exams. Meanwhile, other teachers can give learners plus points as incentives if they can use idioms in their speaking section but most of the time, it is optional. What is more, due to the fact the English coursebooks in use now at DNU contain a sporadic and unsystematic number of idiomatic expressions, introducing them to students for the right moment is only regarded as a secondary concern.

In responses to questions relating to whether in the future they think there should be an application of idiom instruction and whether there must be a systematic coursebook on idioms written by a cohort of English colleagues in the Department of English, the opinions among the teachers were divided. For example, a teacher in charge of teaching theory of language maintained that he was unsure of its usefulness simply because, according to him, idioms were just dead metaphors, used very limittedly in the informal context; therefore, it should be avoided by any means.

Sharing a rather similar idea, a teacher teaching speaking said that it is hard to say because based on his judgement, idioms can be of great values to speaking, but it is of little value to academic writing because idioms contain even colloquial words as well, which can be said to be unaccepted in the formal context. Finally, the other teacher voiced that there should not be an application in university curriculum but they should be treated in paralell with other subjects such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing whilst the role of teachers of English is to show their students how to use idioms effectively in their learning.

Though disappointing as it was, the reseacher also received positive responses. As teacher 2 expressed:

In my opinion, teachers of English should introduce idioms to English majors as soon as possible, preferably from the first year of English instruction. By doing so, we can make big distinction between highschool and university education. As a saying goes "no pain no gain" And by this way, we can use idioms to measure learners' progress and proficiency.

In line with the idea of teacher 2, teachers 3 and 4 also voiced that:

There should be a material on idioms at the drop of a hat as this is beneficial for both teachers and students in terms of knowing the rope of both idioms in terms of academical and daily lives. In addition, this coursebook is of necessity to students in the near future when they have the chance to get cultural exchange or use them for their English career development.

4.4. Students' opinions towards learning English idioms

Table 3: Students' *opinions towards learning English idioms*

student choice / My opinions on learning English idioms	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	M 3.0
1. Idioms are very important for my learning English.	21	12	7	2	0	
	50	28.6	16.7	4.8	0.0	3.4
2. Idioms help me to improve my four English skills.	18	12	12	0	0	
	42.9	28.6	28.6	0.0	0.0	3.0
3. Idioms just play a marginalized role in my English learning. I just learn them for fun.	0	4	12	19	7	
	0.0	1.0	28.6	45.2	16.7	1.9
4. Using idioms proficiently helps me improve my Band Scores in the International Exams and/or CEFR.	23	14	2	0	3	
	54.8	33.3	4.8	0.0	7.1	4.3
5. Idiomatic competence helps me easily integrate into the native speakers' communities.	8	15	13	1	5	
	19	35.7	31	2.4	11.9	3.5
6. Using Idioms effectively enables me to improve my communicative skills and career opportunities.	13	16	10	0	3	
	31	38.1	23.8	0.0	7.1	3.9
7. I only learn idioms if they are included in my coursebooks.	0	0	11	24	7	
	0.0	0.0	26.2	57.1	16.7	2.1
8. Idioms are just for classic literature.	0	0	6	20	18	
	0.0	0.0	14.3	47.6	42.9	1.8

As indicated in the table 3, it is easily seen that the majority of learner respondents realized the importance of idioms in learning English. This was confirmed by 78.6 percent of informants expressing their agreement towards it. In so doing, they ascertained that a good mastery of English idioms can improve students' four English skills as well as raise their scores in the international exams like CEFR and IELTS, for example. The number of both agreement and strong agreement in items 2 and 4 were 71 percent and 88.6 percent respectively. Secondly, hardly any informants claimed learning English to be fun (only 4 out of 42 participants expressing their agreement to this fact, item 3). This strongly confirmed that English majors of DNU were very keen on idioms and expressed their seriousness in knowing more about English idioms.

Surprisingly, though a comparatively high percentage of learner respondents were uncertain about the benefits of English idioms in enabling them to integrate into the native speakers' community (31%), betterment of English skills (28.6%), and increasing career opportunities (23.8%), it is undeniable that English still has a good standing in their lives. These items (5-6) constitute 54.7 percent and 69.1 percent respectively.

Finally, contrary to the researcher's long-held belief, most of the learner participants did not agree that they only learnt English idioms if they are present in the coursebooks and that English idioms are just useful for classic literature. The proportion of student informants voicing their disagreements were very high, ranging from 73.8 percent and 90.5 percent respectively (Items 7-8).

All in all, all students in the survey agreed fully to the importance of idioms in learning English.

4.5. Students' opinions on teachers and curriculum towards the subject of idioms

Table 4. *Students' opinions on teachers and curriculum towards the subject of idioms*

What are students' opinions on teachers and curriculum towards idioms? ⟍ student choice	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	M 3.0
1. Teachers rarely mentions idioms.	4 9.5	12 28.6	20 47.6	6 14.3	0 0.0	3.0
2. Teachers often use idioms to explain the lesson, new language inputs like vocabulary and grammar for us.	0 0.0	6 14.3	21 50	8 19	7 16.7	4.3
3. Teachers often encourage us to use idioms in the classrooms.	2 4.8	20 47.6	9 21.4	4 9.5	7 16.7	4.3
4. The coursebooks we are learning contain many practical idioms.	2 4.8	6 14.3	17 40.5	14 33.3	3 7.1	4.3

5. English coursebooks contains a sporadic numbers of idioms.	3 7.1	24 57.1	8 19	5 11.9	2 4.8	3.9
6. There should be a coursebook on idioms that explain in details how to use idioms in practical lives.	18 42.9	18 42.9	2 4.8	1 2.4	3 7.1	3.8
7. We should not incorporate idioms into the curriculum as it does not have any much value in life.	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	22 50	22 50	1.6
8. Teachers should pay attention to equipping idiom knowledge for their students.	6 14.3	24 57.1	5 11.9	1 2.4	6 14.3	3.8

As indicated from table 4, most student informants were unclear about whether their English lecturers and their coursebooks had paid due attention to English idioms or not (Items 1, 2, and 4). As you can see that the proportion of student informants expressing their hesitation was very high, ranging from 47.6, 50, and 40.5 percent respectively. Despite these, it is clear that teachers endeavored to help their learners to use English idioms communicatively. 22 out of 42 students agreed that their lecturers often encouraged them to use idioms for communicative purposes (Item 3). Next, in response to item 5, a rather high percentage of informants (64.1%) reckoned that their coursebooks actually contained many idioms though they were not sure whether they were of practical values or not.

In the remaining items (6, 7, 8), the researcher wanted to elicit the learners' respones in such issues as a material on idioms and more idiom instruction in the future. Strikingly, the majority of learner participants expressed their wish that a well-written book on idioms explaining in details the origins of idioms and the way to use them for both spoken, written communication and exam-oriented purposes should be a must-have for both teachers and students. Their responding rates were 85.8 and 71.4 percent respectively (items 6-8). Meanwhile, 100 percent of student participants voiced their disagreement to item 7. This meant that English idioms were very important to their lives.

Taking table 3 and 4 altogether, clearly teachers and coursebooks have not yet put a heavy emphasis on English idioms though students were keenly enthusisatic to know and discover more about it.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This present study attempted to seek answers to teachers' and students' opinions on idiom instructions as well as on strategies used by teachers in teaching idioms. Based on the aforementioned study results, some conclusions were withrawn.

The first conclusion related to teachers' and students' opinions on idioms.

Firstly, both teachers and students expressed their agreement to the crucial role of idioms in language teaching.

This was evidently shown in the positive responses of both informants.

Secondly, almost all teachers and students agreed that the English coursebooks in use at the English Department of DNU have contained very few number of practical and meaningful idiomatic expressions, which in turns greatly hampers the acquisition of idiom of learners.

Thirdly, both teachers and students agreed that there should be a well-written book on idioms to bring into use because it is not only of real values to students but to teachers as well.

Finally, there was a dividing opinions among teachers on how to apply idioms into teaching in future. Almost all teacher participants agreed to continue equipping idiom knowledge for learners but they differed in how to apply them into their teaching context. Some were in favor of embedding idioms into other skills whilst others wanted to teach them exclusively for speaking skills only instead of teaching them for all academic settings.

As regards for idiom teaching strategy, it was found that teachers utilized lots of strategies to better idiom knowledge for their learners, of which the most frequently used ones were guessing meanings from context, looking up meanings of idiom from dictionary, translating the literal meaning into my L1 to understand idiom, using them in sentence, memorizing them, learning from media and many sources and so on. However, there were also some strategies rarely used by teacher participants, notably was finding out origins of idioms.

On the basis of conclusions, some of the following suggestions and recommendations have been provided.

First, as can be seen that all of the teachers and learners realized the role of idiom in L2 acquisition. However, what they are missing for the time being is an exclusively well-written material on idiom showing them meaning and correct use of idiom suitably to the context as well as the most commonly used spoken idioms. So the researcher's recommendation is that there should be a cohort of DNU English colleagues jointly writing a reference book on idiom entitled "Finding out origins of some commonly used idiomatic expressions and applying them into IELTS speaking section to improve students' Speaking Band Score." It is hoped that through this book, students will benefit a lot from high frequency level idiomatic words used in IELTS speaking section based on popular speaking topics like relationship, education, fashion, technology and environment, and so on. Similarly, to teachers who are interested in idiomatic area, they can use this book as a reference source to save their time in going and finding idiom materials for themselves.

The second suggestion is that teachers of English at DNU should continue to apply idiom teaching

strategies they have been using to benefit their learners. The researcher also dares to recommend the strategy of finding out the origins of idioms to teachers in hope that, by knowing where the idioms come from, students will have a deeper love for that idiom and retent it longer in their mind. Once they have thoroughly understood its origins, they will be more confident in using them in their academic and daily life.

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APPENDIX: Interview Questions

01. Do you think that teaching idioms is important for the second language acquisition? Why or Why not?

02. Do you think that failure to use idiom is an obstacle to your students? To what extent?

03. What do you do to help your students to enrich the idiomatic expressions?

04. Can you share with me some ways you have applied in the teaching of idioms for your students? What is your opinion on these methods?

05. Do the books you are using/teaching pay due attention to the idioms?

06. Do you think that we should embed many meaningful and practical idioms into our teaching program? Why?

07. Do you think there should be a coursebook written on idiom by your colleagues? Why is it necessary and benefcicial?

CHIẾN LƯỢC DẠY THÀNH NGỮ VÀ THÁI ĐỘ CỦA GIẢNG VIÊN VÀ SINH VIÊN ĐỐI VỚI VIỆC DẠY VÀ HỌC THÀNH NGỮ
TÓM TẮT

Tổng quan lý thuyết cho đến nay đã nhấn mạnh đến tính hiệu quả của hướng dẫn thành ngữ trong lĩnh vực thụ đắc ngôn ngữ thứ hai. Tuy nhiên, vấn đề này vẫn chưa được quan tâm nhiều tại khoa Ngoại ngữ trường Đại học Đồng Nai. Nghiên cứu này nhắm vào điều tra các chiến lược dạy thành ngữ mà giảng viên tiếng Anh Đại học Đồng Nai đã sử dụng để hướng dẫn sinh viên học thành ngữ tiếng Anh cũng như ý kiến của họ và sinh viên đối với việc dạy và học thành ngữ. Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện với sự tham gia của 10 giảng viên tiếng Anh và 42 sinh viên Sư phạm tiếng Anh năm cuối của trường. Kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng hầu hết các giảng viên đã tận dụng tốt 13 trong số 16 chiến lược dạy thành ngữ mà nhà ngiên cứu đưa ra. Trong số các chiến lược sử dụng phổ biến nhất đó gồm có: Đoán nghĩa thành ngữ từ

ngữ cảnh, dùng thành ngữ trong câu, tra cứu các thành ngữ không quen thuộc trong tự điển, giao tiếp bằng tiếng Anh bên ngoài lớp học, dịch nghĩa đen của thành ngữ vào ngôn ngữ của mình để hiểu thành ngữ, học thành ngữ thông qua ghi nhớ, học thành ngữ được sử dụng trong phương tiện truyền thông, học thành ngữ từ nhiều nguồn khác nhau… Liên quan đến ý kiến của giảng viên và sinh viên đối với việc học thành ngữ, cả giảng viên và sinh viên đều bày tỏ thái độ tích cực với việc dạy và học thành ngữ, và họ cũng bày tỏ mong muốn có một tài liệu tham khảo được viết tốt về chuyên đề thành ngữ, đặc biệt tài liệu về thành ngữ trong việc dạy các chủ đề nói IELTS. Trên cơ sở đó, các đề xuất và hướng nghiên cứu tương lai cũng được đưa ra.