

"An Investigation of the Hierarchy of Realization of English Idiomatic Phraseology by Iraqi Learners of EFL"

Dr. Madeha Saif Al-Deen M. Zainab Jihad Abdulqader
University of Tikrit / College of Education for Women

Abstract:

There are many idiomatic expressions which constitute major problems for foreign learners of English. Phraseology as a general concept and particularly phrasal verbs are one of these idiomatic expressions. It is undeniable that EFL learners may find it difficult to understand and use idiomatic phraseology and this leads them to avoid using these expressions. The research aims at knowing to which extent Iraqi EFL students can recognize and produce idiomatic phraseology as a problem for EFL learners and to know how English idiomatic phraseology pass along a continuum of complexity through the college grades. It is argued that there will be some statistical differences among the students of the four grades of English department at College of Education for Women at Tikrit University. 100 students are chosen to be the sample of the research. The research is grounded into two main parts. The first, presents a theoretical background of idioms and phrasal verbs tackling some definitions, types, characterizations and features of idioms and phrasal verbs and the interference between the two concepts. Part two deals with the procedures of the research. The Conclusions indicate that language development is not necessarily a smooth continuous process that takes place all the time. Finally, some conclusions, findings, and suggestions are provided.

الاستقصاء الهرمي لإدراك التراكيب التعبيرية الاصطلاحية لمتعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية من العراقيين بوصفها لغة أجنبية

أ.م.د. مديحة سيف الدين م. زينب جهاد عبد القادر
جامعة تكريت / كلية التربية للبنات

المخلص:

هنالك العديد من التراكيب الاصطلاحية التي تُعدّ من المشكلات الرئيسة لمتعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية. وكذلك التراكيب التعبيرية كمصطلح عام والأفعال المركبة بشكل خاص والتي هي إحدى أشكال تلك التعبيرات الاصطلاحية ولا يمكننا إنكار حقيقة أن المتعلمين للغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية يجدون صعوبة في فهم واستخدام تلك التراكيب التعبيرية، وهذا الأمر يقودهم إلى تجنب استخدام تلك التراكيب. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التعرف إلى أي مدى يستطيع المتعلمون العراقيون للغة الإنكليزية تمييز وإنتاج التراكيب التعبيرية الاصطلاحية كمشكلة من المشكلات التي يواجهها هؤلاء المتعلمون، كما تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة فيما إذا كانت تلك التراكيب التعبيرية تتدرج في صعوبتها خلال المراحل الأربع في الكلية. ولقد أُفترض أنه هنالك بعض الفروق الإحصائية بين المتعلمين للمراحل الأربع في قسم اللغة الإنكليزية في جامعة تكريت/ كلية التربية للبنات. طُبّق الاختبار على ١٠٠ طالبة في كلية التربية للبنات/ جامعة تكريت. تقع الدراسة بجزئين رئيسين، يهتم الجزء الأول بالجانب النظري المتمثل باصطلاحات فضلاً عن التراكيب التعبيرية، تعاريفها، أنواعها، وبعض خصائصها، كما يشتمل على التداخل الحاصل بين المصطلحين. بينما يعني الجزء الثاني من هذه الدراسة بالإجراءات الإحصائية المتبعة من الباحثين. تشير الاستنتاجات بأنه ليس بالضرورة أن تتطور اللغة بشكل مستمر، وكما يبدو فإن بعض الاصطلاحات التعبيرية لا تتطور بينما البعض تتقدم نحوه. وفي نهاية البحث، ضمّنت الباحثتان هذه الدراسة عدداً من الاستنتاجات والتوصيات والمقترحات.

1.0 Introduction

English language as many other natural languages, is rich in idiomatic expressions, which can be defined as phrases or sentences that cannot be understood literally. In other words, the expressions whose meanings cannot be predicted even if one knows and understands all the phrase and the grammar of the phrase (Spears and Kirkpatrick, 2000: v).

John- Laird (1993: 3) states that "it is difficult to speak spontaneously without lapsing into idiomatic usage"; besides, McDevitt (1993: 4) says that "idioms are an important part of any language and may be said to be an indicator of one's fluency in that language". In this sense, idioms play an important role in a foreign language as well as in the first language. Foreign language learners learn idiomatic phrases in addition to vocabulary and grammatical structures of the target language to integrate themselves into the culture of the target language. Mastering English idioms is not easy for EFL students, who may see them as a stumbling block (Cooper, 1999: 233-262).

Cowie et al. (1983: x) believe that idioms cause semantic and structural problems for students of second and foreign language. The unitary meaning of idioms is the most familiar difficulty that makes idioms troublesome since the meaning of the idiom cannot be predicted from the meanings of the words that make it up; in other words, "the sense of the whole cannot be arrived at from a prior understanding of the parts":

1-1 The Problem:

There are many idiomatic expressions in English language which constitute major problems for foreign students of English. One of these idiomatic expressions is phrasal verbs. However, understanding and learning to use phrasal verbs is often problematic for many reasons:

- (1) The meaning of a phrasal verb, for example, often bears no relation to the meaning of either the verb or the particle which is used with it.
- (2) Phrasal verbs are combined with prepositions or adverbs, sometimes both give new meaning.
- (3) In other times, this meaning can be predicted through its parts but mostly, it is too separated from the separated words; i.e., they are idiomatic.

Collis (1994: v) argues that "English foreign students may feel frustrated and confused when they hear idiomatic expressions, since the true meaning of the idiom generally cannot be determined by the knowledge of its component parts".

Therefore, learning idiomatic expressions and phrases of a particular language are important, not only for the acquisition of that language itself, but also its social communication and culture. Yet, studies aiming at teaching idiomatic phrasal verbs to EFL students have not been able to catch the attention of many EFL teachers. Idiomatic phrasal verbs are thus often ignored during the process of teaching and learning (ibid).

1.2 The Aims

The research is devoted to:

- (1) Identify the hierarchy of realization of Iraqi EFL students, in relation to idiomatic phraseology.
- (2) Investigate the extent to which Iraqi EFL students are able to recognize and produce idiomatic phraseology.
- (3) Investigate the Iraqi college students' realization of idiomatic phraseology at recognition and production levels between:
 - (a) students of fourth and third grades.
 - (b) students of fourth and second grades.
 - (c) students of fourth and first grades.
 - (d) students of third and second grades.
 - (e) students of third and first grades.
 - (f) students of second and first grades.
- (4) Point out whether there are any statistically significant differences in students' performance at recognition and production levels.
- (5) Investigate to what extent the EFL students perform and recognize idiomatic phraseology along the four grades of college.

1.3 The Hypotheses

In order to fulfill the aims of the research, it is hypothesized that:

- 1- EFL students in Iraq move towards the target language they learn along a continuum of increasing complexity.
- 2- Iraqi EFL students at the university grades fail to master English idiomatic phraseology in both recognition and production levels.
- 3- Iraqi EFL students face difficulty in the production level higher than that at recognition level.
- 4- There are statistically significant differences in the Iraqi college students' performance at recognition and production levels over the four grades of students' college.

It is hoped that the students and everyone who belongs to the teaching/ learning process in Iraq can get benefit overall findings of the research, and

lead to increase the awareness among students, teachers, methodologies, curriculum designers and reference providers of the general negligence of idiomatic phrasal verbs, which are an important language form for students to gain fluency in English 'the target language'.

1.4 The Limits

The research is limited to:

- 1-The sample is expanded to include the students of the four grades of English Department, at The College of Education for Women- University of Tikrit/ morning classes, during the academic year (2014-2015).
- 2- The idiomatic phraseology in college syllabuses for the four grades.
- 3- Phrasal verbs which are semantically idiomatic.

1.5 The Procedures

The procedures to be followed for carrying out the research include:-

- (1) Presenting a theoretical background of the definition of idiomaticity and idiom as well as the definition of the phrasal verbs.
- (2) Selecting a sample of Iraqi EFL students as subjects for conducting a test to investigate their recognition and production levels of idiomatic phraseology.
- (3) Constructing a test to investigate the students' performance at the level of recognition and production.
- (4) Applying the constructed test to the selected sample of students.
- (5) Data analysis is accomplished with the support of appropriate statistical tables and means to confirm the validity of the hypotheses.
- (6) Outlining conclusions, recommendations and suggestions at the end of this study.

2.0 Theoretical Background

2.1 The Concept of Idioms and Idiomaticity

Idiomaticity as Gasser (2006: 10) defines is "the tendency of phrases to take on meanings that go beyond the meanings of their parts". It stands in contrast to compositionality. However, idiomaticity is "a matter of degree and in all cases, the figurative meaning of the phrase, which is unpredictable from the meanings of its individual parts and, which speakers and listeners are expected to understand what must be stored in the mental lexicon i.e., they are 'linguistic convention' " (ibid). Such phrases are called idioms.

Idioms are considered the most important aspect in all languages in the world and one needs to know the meaning of idioms in each language in

order to understand them, (Skophommer, 2003:58). However, "owing to their rigid structure and quite unpredictable meaning, idioms are often considered problematic" (Colin, 2005: 1).

Idioms were defined from different perspectives as an attempt to decode their complexity. In each perspective, scholars show particular features and characteristics such as: inflexibility, fixedness and figurativeness.

According to Baker (1992: 63), idioms are "frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form ... often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components". This definition indicates that idioms are fixed expressions whose meanings cannot be derived from the meaning of their constituent words. Hence, idioms as a whole have different meaning from that of their individual words (ibid). From grammatical point of view, idioms do not behave as single grammatical words. For instance, there is no past tense such as:

[1] **kick the bucketed*, for:

[2] *kick the bucket*.

Besides, they often allow no variation in their structure; for example, we can say:

[3] *It is raining cats and dogs*,

But it would be odd to say:

[4] *It is raining dogs and cats* (Palmer, 1976: 98).

Semantically speaking, Ball (1974: 1) defines idioms as "the use of familiar words in an unfamiliar sense". In another words, Ball refers to the semantic peculiarity of idioms. Thus, the idiomatic expression *kick the bucket* has familiar words as *kick* and *bucket*, but the meaning of this idiom is not the total sum of meaning of neither *kick* nor *bucket* (*kick the bucket* means die).

2.1.1 Properties of Idioms

Idioms have special grammatical and semantic properties. They must be entered into the mental lexicon as single items having specific meanings (Fromkin, et al, 2003:20).

According to Zevgoli (1998:218) the properties of idioms are classified into:

2.1.2 Primary properties of idioms

Primary properties of idioms are those that apply to all idioms to a greater or lesser degree. These properties are:

2.1.2.1 Conventionality

It means that the meaning of idioms or their conventions of use are not completely predictable (Zevgoli, 1998: 219).

2.1.2.2 Invariability

It refers to lexical, syntactic and morphological invariability. Lexical invariability refers to the parts of an idiom cannot be replaced by other words.; syntactic invariability means that idioms are not flexible, that is, they do not permit syntactic transformations, idioms can appear only in a limited number of syntactic constructions, while morphological invariability suggests that the idiom components do not allow internal change (e.g., changes in verb tense or noun number). (Zevgoli , 1998: 219).

2.1.3 Secondary properties of idioms

According to Zevgoli (1998: 218), are those properties that do not apply to all idioms. They include the following:

2.1.3.1 Compositionality

It refers to the extent to which the meaning of an idiom can be analyzed into different components, each of which is assigned to a different idiom part. Some idioms are compositional while others are not. E.g.,

[5] *to break the ice* (ibid).

It is compositional because its parts, *to break* and *the ice* can be assigned the meanings 'to ease' and 'the formality of a social situation' respectively. This type is called "idiomatic combinations", while idioms like *kick the bucket* are non- compositional because the meaning of such idioms cannot be distributed to their different parts. This type is called "idiomatic phrases" (Zevgoli, 1998: 219).

2.1.3.2 Grammaticality

Grammaticality refers to the grammatical structure of idioms. Based on this, idioms are classified into two categories (Zevgoli, 1998: 220):

(1) grammatical idioms, that is, idioms whose grammatical structure adheres to the familiar rules of grammar, e.g.,

[6] *I paint them black*, meaning (to be deeply sad or disappointed);

(2) extra grammatical idioms, that is, those whose grammatical structures do not adhere to the familiar rules of grammar e.g.,

[7] *I have someone whom I can make stand up and sit down*, meaning (to make someone do everything one wishes) (ibid).

2.1.3 Figurative Properties

Figurative properties of idioms, according to Nunberg, et al. (1994: 492) refer to the fact that the meanings of idioms are often based on some other forms of figurative language such as, metonymy and metaphor as the most common type of figure in idioms since idioms themselves are often based on metaphors, e.g., the interpretation of the Greek idiom:

[8] *I boil from my anger* (to be extremely angry)

It is motivated by two independently existing metaphors: 'mind is a container' and 'anger is heated fluid in that container' (ibid).

2.1.3.1 Informality

Nunberg, et al. (1994: 493) state that "idioms are typically associated with relatively informal or colloquial registers and with popular speech and oral culture". However, Zevgoli (1998: 221) mentions that there are also formal idioms indicating the formality of the situation between the speaker or the writer and the addressee.

2.1.3.2 Affective Property

Affective property of idioms means that "idioms are typically used to imply a certain evaluation or affective stance towards thing they denote", Nunberg, et al. (1994: 493).

2.1.4 Types of Idioms

Different criteria are taken in considerations in classifying idioms: some researchers classify idioms according to their transparency of meaning, degrees of formality, semantic meaning, grammatical structure, keywords, etc. Fernando (1996:35) distinguishes three sub- classes of idioms:

(1) **Pure idioms:** Fernando defines pure idioms as 'a type of conventionalized, non literal multiword expression' (Fernando, 1996:36). Pure idioms are always non literal, however, they may be either invariable or may have little variation. In addition, idioms are said to be opaque (ibid: 32). For example, pure idiom to *spill the beans* (has nothing to do with beans).

(2) **Semi- idioms:** Semi- idioms are said to have one or more literal constituents and one with non literal sub sense. Therefore, this type of

idioms is considered partially opaque (ibid: 60). For example, *foot the bill* which means 'pay' is semi- idiom.

(3) Literal idioms: This sub- class of idioms are either invariable or allow little variation. In addition, literal idioms are considered to be transparent as they can be interpreted on the basis of their parts, or their meaning can be inferred from the combination of their constituents. For example, *of course, in any case, for certain*.

2.1.5 The Use of Idioms

Fernando (1996: 45) identifies the following functional use of idioms:

1- Ideational Function: Idioms convey a specific experienced representation; for example:

[35] *it was a simple bread butter issue*.

2- Interpersonal Function: Idioms here represent exchanges between a speaker and an addressee in a discourse. An expression of this kind is:

[36] *bless you* (ibid).

3- Relational Function: Lexical units such as:

[37] *in addition, as on the contrary and in sum*

These units are relational idioms because they maintain cohesion and coherence of discourse between the participants (ibid).

2.1.6 Definitions of Phraseology and Phrasal Verbs

Phraseology as Garica, et al. (2009: 128) state that it is a linguistic branch that deals with the study of "speech repeated units"; they claim that those units are best known as 'fixed expressions'. Phraseology, according to them, admits two key requirements that fixed expressions must have: fixation and idiomaticity.

Likely, Baldwin and Kim (2010: 271) assert that phraseology, as a branch of linguistics, has essentially appeared to study everything related to fixed expressions, such as their description and functional classification. However, they also say that beside fixed expressions, phraseology also deals with they call 'sentence- like units', such as phrases and quotations.

Linguists have looked at phrasal verbs from different perspectives. For instance, Biber, et al. (1999: 403) define phrasal verbs as "multi- word units consisting of a verb followed by an adverbial particle (*carry out, find out,*

pick up) and this adverbial particles all have core spatial or locative meanings (e.g., *out, in, up, down, on, off*).

The term 'phrasal verbs' is defined by (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973: 347) as "units which complement the verb and which are, in general, obligatory in clause structure". Crystal (2003: 352) defines phrasal verb as "a term consisting of a sequence of lexical element plus one or more particles (an adverb, a preposition or an adverb plus a preposition)". McCarthy and O'Dell (2007: 6) mention that "phrasal verbs are identified by their grammar, but it is probably best to think of them as individual vocabulary items, to be learned in phrases or chunks".

2.2 Previous Studies

This review of literature will include some important aspects as the aims, the samples (if found), some of the procedures, then showing some of the important results.

2.2.1 Sahab's Study (2008):

Sahab's study aims at identifying the errors done by the fourth year students at the College of Education, and College of Education for Women at the University of Tikrit in using phrasal verbs in their writing of EFL. Moreover, it aims at finding whether there are significant differences in students' performance among the various areas of the diagnostic test.

In order to fulfill these aims, the researcher hypothesized that there are no statistical differences between the students' performance of the College of Education and the College of Education for Women in the area of phrasal verbs and there are no differences between the students' performance of the College of Education and the College of Education for Women among the various areas of the diagnostic test in the area of phrasal verbs.

The sample of this study is limited to the fourth year College students at the Departments of English – at the College of Education and College of Education for Women of the University of Tikrit in using English phrasal verbs.

The researcher adopted the following procedures: Constructing a diagnostic written test, administering the constructed test on the selected sample, and classifying and analyzing the collected data.

The main findings of this study include:

- 1- The high number of students' errors concerning phrasal verbs reflects that this area forms serious problems to fourth year students of the Department of English at both Colleges.
- 2- Phrasal verbs are the reasons behind students' error.
- 3- EFL students at the two involved Colleges of Education manifest difficulties in using phrasal verbs.

2.2.2 Abdul- Majeed and Sallumi's Study (2014):

This study aims at:

1. Finding out whether third year college students at the Department of English, and those at the Translation Department, College of Arts, Al-Mustansiriyah University are able to recognize English idioms or not.
2. Comparing their responses about English idioms.

To achieve the aims of this study, the researchers hypothesized that:

1. Students of both English and translation departments have the ability to recognize English idioms properly.

2. There is no statistically difference in recognizing English idioms between students at the department of English and those at the Department of translation.

The sample of this study is limited to the third year students/ morning classes at the Department of English and Department of Translation/ College of Arts, Al- Mustansiriyah University.

The procedures followed in this study consist of the following steps:

Constructing a test, applying the test to the sample which is selected, analyzing the results and outlining conclusions and recommendations.

The main findings of this study reveal that students of Translation Department perform better in recognizing English idioms than those at the English Department.

Finally, it is recommended that learners have to think of idioms as units, just like single words; they have to record them in their notebooks as a whole. Besides, EFL instructors are advised to use new trends in teaching rather than the lecture method.

3.0 Introductory Note

This section sheds light on selecting of the sample, description of the test, validating the test, ascertaining its reliability and analyzing its items, administrating the constructed test, and the statistical procedures for the treatment of the research data.

3.1 Population and Sample

3.1.1 The Population

The population of the research consists of all college students who studying at the College of Education for Women, University of Tikrit. The total number of the population is three hundred and fifty two college students.

3.1.2 The Sample

In the current research, the sample has been randomly selected in order to be truly representative of population characteristics without any bias and in order to obtain valid and reliable results. The total number of the sample is one hundred, chosen intentionally and randomly. Intentional choice is represented through choosing college and random choice is achieved through selecting a representative number of students from College of Education for Women / University of Tikrit.

Since the research topic is somehow complicated and requires advanced learners to deal with, the students of the four grades of English Department from College of Education for Women at Tikrit University, that is, (25) students from each grade.

3.2 Test Description

The test aims at investigating what extent of learning the students of English have developed throughout their overall learning process. Two elicitation techniques have been employed. Since the elicitation techniques should be capable of eliciting both types of data, intuitional and textual, techniques should be able to provide evidence of both implicit and explicit knowledge of the subject. Hence, both recognition and production tasks have been employed. The technique used to measure the intuitional or implicit knowledge is the Multiple- choice Discourse Completion Test (hence forth MDCT). The textual or explicit knowledge is tested through using Written Discourse Completion Test (hence forth WDCT). The specific objectives include statement of what material should be covered in the test to meet the aims. The test covers the common idiomatic phraseology included in the text-books of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades of college which serve as the basic source of the material for the test.

With regard to its design, the test contains two questions and each question includes ten items. The first question is designed to measure the recognition performance of students for the idiomatic phraseology; meanwhile the second question is adopted to measure the production performance of English language students.

3.2.1 Test Validity

Two types of validity are considered important: content and face validity. Therefore, both types have been adopted for the purpose of the research.

3.2.2 Content Validity

To ensure content validity, much attention has been given to the content of college textbooks.

2.2.3 Face Validity

In order to make sure of the face validity of the study tool, the test has been given to some highly qualified and experienced university lecturers to review it and check its appropriateness.

Table(1)

Name, Qualification, Academic Status and University of the Jury Members

No.	Name	Qualification	Academic Status	University
1	Ali Talib Jaboori	PhD	Asst. Prof.	Tikrit
2	Abdullah Hameed Mosa	PhD	Asst. Prof.	Tikrit
3	Shaima Mahdi Saalh	PhD	Asst. Prof.	Baghdad
4	Fatima Rahim Abdul Hussein	PhD	Asst. Prof.	Misan
5	Wiaam Abdulwahab T. Albayati	PhD	Asst. Prof.	Kufa
6	Mayssa Rasheed Abdul- Majeed	PhD	Asst. Prof.	Baghdad
7	Israa Burhanudeen Abdulrahman	PhD	Lecturer	Tikrit

3.3 The Pilot Administration

Conducting a pilot test was strongly preferred for the current study. For this purpose, 20 students of the study sample were haphazardly selected from English Department, College of Education for Women to be tested (5 students from each grade). On the 14th July, 2015, the pilot test was carried out in a normal day situation and classroom condition.

After giving necessary instructions and providing useful information about the test content, in no longer than 60 minutes. Concerning the appropriateness and usefulness of the test items, some statistical calculations were needed to decide on.

3.3.1 Item Difficulty Level

The level of difficulty refers to the percentage of students who get the items correct (Ebel, 1972: 85). The total scores of the twenty students have been ranked from the highest to the lowest one, and then they are divided into two groups. The total scores of the students who answer the test items correctly at both the upper and the lower groups are divided by the total number of the students of both groups. For the purpose of estimating the difficulty level (DL) of each item the following formula is used:

$$DL = \frac{Hc + Lc}{N}$$

Where:

Hc = High correct

Lc = Low correct

N = Total number of examinees (Bloom, 1971:181).

3.3.2 Item Discrimination Power

Another procedure that has been used to evaluate the feasibility of the test items is Discriminates Index (DI). The DI of an item indicates the extent to which the item discriminates between the examinees, separating the more able examinees from the less able ones (Heaton, 1988: 179).

According to Brown (1981: 104), the test item is good if it has a discrimination index of (0.20) or more. In calculating the discrimination index of the test items, it is ranged between (0.20) and (0.80) which is regarded as an adequate index of discrimination.

To compute the discrimination index of the test items, the following formula is applied:

$$DI = \frac{RU - RL}{1/2 T}$$

Where:

DI = Discrimination Index

RU= the number of examinees in the upper group who get the items right.

RL= the number of examinees in the lower group who get the items right.

T = the total number of the two groups.

(Mehren and Lehman, 1984: 192)

Table (2)
DL&DI of MDCT Question of the Pilot Test

Item Number	Difficulty Level (DL)	Discrimination Index (DI)
1	0.45	0.50
2	0.30	0.40
3	0.60	0.40
4	0.40	0.40
5	0.55	0.50
6	0.50	0.40
7	0.20	0.40
8	0.55	0.30
9	0.55	0.50
10	0.60	0.60

Table (3)
DL&DI of WDCT Question of the Pilot Test

Item Number	Difficulty Level (DL)	Discrimination Index (DI)
1	0.70	0.40
2	0.70	0.40
3	0.55	0.90
4	0.50	0.60
5	0.75	0.50
6	0.50	0.60
7	0.70	0.40
8	0.65	0.70
9	0.60	0.50
10	0.80	0.40

Thus, as it appears, the whole items of the test are discriminate between good and poor students since the DI is within the normal range.

3.4 Test Reliability

For the purpose of computing the reliability coefficient of the test of the current study, the *split half method* is used. Sub-score of each of the two halves (odd and even items) is obtained. The two obtained sub-scores are correlated to calculate the reliability of the test.

After collecting the data, coefficient correlation factor between the two halves of the test by using Pearson Correlation Coefficient Formula. The correlation coefficient is found out to be (0.82). It is a good percentage. By using the Spearman-Brown equation, the reliability coefficient amounted to be (0.90) which is an acceptable one.

3.5 Test Administration

The final test was administered on the 22nd of July, 2015 on English Department, the College of Education for Women at Tikrit University. The students were given one hour to answer the whole test.

3.6 Scoring Scheme of the Test

The test consists of two questions and each question contains ten items. The test has been scored out of twenty, i.e., each item has been given one mark. An item correctly rendered is given one point, an incorrect item is given zero. Concerning the items that are left unanswered by the examinees, they are considered wrong and given zero.

3.7 Statistical Methods

To analyze the obtained data, four different statistical methods have been used, namely One- way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), T- test for two independent samples to measure the recognition and production performance, T- test for one sample to compare the recognition and production levels within the single sample.

4.1 Data Collection

In an attempt to fulfill the aim, i.e. to investigate to what extend EFL students perform idiomatic phraseology along the four grades of college at each of the two levels.

It is worth mentioning that the two questions in the conducting test (MDCT and WDCT) are devoted to assess students' performance in **the meaning** of English idiomatic phraseology. The result of the students' performance in answering each of the questions is as follows:

4.1.1 Students' Performance in MDCT

The first question investigates the recognition level which contains ten multiple choice items. It aims at discovering the students' ability in understanding the situations expressed by the sentences and choosing the correct IPs for them that explain the correct meaning. The total scores of both correct and wrong answers indicate that good number of students have dominance over the subject of this question.



Figure (1)

The Correct & Wrong Answers of the MDCT Items

4.2.2 Students' Performance in WDCT

The second question investigates the production level. The test items require the students to provide interpretations of the IPs depending on short single answers. The rationale behind this question is to find out to what extent the students (through the four grades of academic years of study) have picked up a good enough number of IPs to use in real situations.

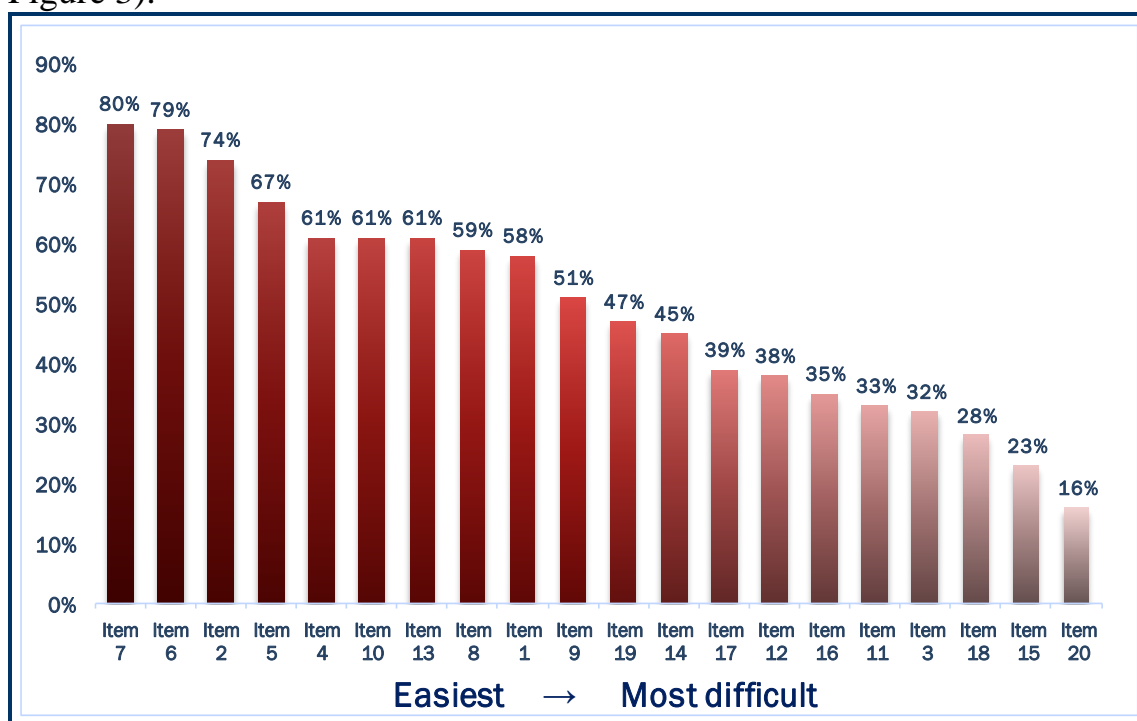
Depending on the results of the students answer responses reveals students' lack of knowing a good enough number of IPs.



Figure (2)*The Correct Answers & Wrong Answers of the WDCT Items***4.2.3 Students' Overall Performance**

In an attempt to fulfill the first hypothesis of this study i.e., *Iraqi EFL learners move towards the target language along a continuum of increasing complexity* and to discover the graduation of difficulty of IPs used in the test of the current study, the subjects' performance on both recognition and production tasks are analyzed.

Based on the results, it is clear that college students' realization in the area of IP moves along a continuum of increasing complexity. Hence, it is safe to state that H1 of the research as stated above is validated. (See Figure 3).

**Figure (3)***The Hierarchal Order of English Idiomatic Phraseology According to Students' Realization (from the Easiest to the most Difficult)*

In order to find out whether there is any statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the paired- grades: (1) fourth vs. third, (2) fourth vs. second, (3) fourth vs. first, (4) third vs. second, (5) third vs. first, and finally (6) second vs. first) in the total score of the test, the t- test formula for two independent samples is used.

As shown in table (4), by using t- test formula for two independent samples the value of computed t- test is less than the tabulated one. This indicates that there is no statistical difference between the paired- grades.

By comparing the mean score of the fourth grade which is 11.16 and that of first grade is 8.68. By using the t- test, it is found that the computed t- test is 2.22 which is more than the tabulated value 2.01 at level of significance 0.05. This means a statistically significance in favour of the fourth grade (See table 4).

Table (4)
T- test Statistics for the Total Scores

Groups	No. of Sample	Mean	St Dev	DF	T- test		p	Significance (0.05)
					Computed	Tabulated		
Fourth	25	11.16	3.99	48	1.04	2.01	0.30	ns
Third	25	10.00	3.89					
Fourth	25	11.16	3.99	48	1.41	2.01	0.17	ns
Second	25	9.56	4.06					
Fourth	25	11.16	3.99	48	2.22	2.01	0.031	*
First	25	8.68	3.92					
Third	25	10.00	3.89	48	0.39	2.01	0.70	ns
Second	25	9.56	4.06					
Third	25	10.00	3.89	48	1.19	2.01	0.24	ns
First	25	8.68	3.92					
Second	25	9.56	4.06	48	0.78	2.01	0.44	ns
First	25	8.68	3.92					

This indicates that there is difference between the two grades in the total scores of the test as a result to the accumulated knowledge they have gained along the three years the spent in the college stage. Moreover, the development of the syllabuses and to be authentic materials and being written by native speakers, all these reasons affect positively on the performance of EFL learners especially in their using to English IPs. So, the first part of the null hypothesis that present earlier is rejected.

4.3.1 Comparison of the Students' Performance at Recognition Level

In order to find out whether there is a statistically significant difference between students' responses of the English Department in recognizing English IPs among the four grades, the t- test formula for the six comparing paired- grades, the t- test formula for two independent samples is used.

As displayed in the table (5), the result of the independent t- test indicates that the differences between the mean scores of each paired grade is statistically not significant. Thus, the hypothesis which indicates that Iraqi EFL learners in the university grades fail to master English idiomatic phraseology at recognition is accepted.

Table (5)
Results of T- test between Two Independent Groups at Recognition Level

Groups	No. of Sample	Mean	St Dev	DF	T- test		p	Significance (0.05)
					Computed	Tabulated		
Fourth	25	6.24	2.22	48	0.13	2.01	0.90	Ns
Third	25	6.32	2.17					
Fourth	25	6.24	2.22	48	0.47	2.01	0.64	ns
Second	25	5.96	2.01					
Fourth	25	6.24	2.22	48	0.13	2.01	0.90	ns
First	25	6.32	2.14					
Third	25	6.32	2.17	48	0.61	2.01	0.55	ns
Second	25	5.96	2.01					
Third	25	6.32	2.17	48	0.00	2.01	1.0	ns
First	25	6.32	2.14					
Second	25	5.96	2.01	48	0.61	2.01	0.54	ns
First	25	6.32	2.14					

4.3.2 Comparison of the Students' Performance at Production Level

For the purpose of identifying whether there are any significant differences among the paired- grades of English department students at production level and in order to test the hypothesis naming "Iraqi EFL learners in the university grades fail to master English idiomatic phraseology in both recognition and production levels", six comparisons among the four grades are made.

To find out whether there is any statistically difference between each paired grade at production level scores, the t- test formula is used. As table (6) .By using the t- test, it is found that the computed t – test is less than the tabulated t- test at level of significance 0.05 and degree of freedom 48. This means that no statistically significance is appeared between each pair-grade at production level test.

Table (6)
Results of T- test between Two Independent Groups at Production Level

Group s	No. of Sampl e	Mea n	St Dev	DF	T- test		p	Significanc e (0.05)
					Co mputed	Tabulate d		
Fourth	25	4.92	2.52	48	1.79	2.01	0.081	Ns
Third	25	3.68	2.39					
Fourth	25	4.92	2.52	48	1.87	2.01	0.067	ns
Secon d	25	3.60	2.47					
Fourth	25	4.92	2.52	48	3.71	2.01	0.0005	**
First	25	2.36	2.36					
Third	25	3.68	2.39	48	0.12	2.01	0.91	ns
Secon d	25	3.60	2.47					
Third	25	3.68	2.39	48	1.96	2.01	0.056	*
First	25	2.36	2.36					
Secon d	25	3.60	2.47	48	1.82	2.01	0.076	ns
First	25	2.36	2.36					

The comparison is made between the fourth and the first grades. The mean score of the fourth grade is 4.92 whereas the mean score of the second grade is 2.36. As shown in table (6) the computed t- test is found 3.71 which is more than the tabulated t- test 2.01 at the level of significance 0.05. This indicates that there is a statistically difference between the paired- grades in their producing IPs as a result to the accumulative knowledge the students gained along the four grades the spent in their studying in English departments and the variety of the authentic materials they studied through their college stage. All these reasons lead the students to be able to produce IPs and using it in their writing.

4.4 Analysis of Variance among the Four Grades

The last hypothesis naming: "There are significance differences in the Iraqi college learners' performance at recognition and production levels over the four grades of learners' college".

Based on Table (7), it can be observed that the fourth grade has the highest mean 11.16, followed closely by the third grade 10.00. The second grade obtains a mean score 9.56 which is very close to the third grade mean score. The first grade has the lowest mean 8.68. In order to see if group differences are statistically significant, the one way ANOVA procedure was used, the results of which are presented in Table (7).

Table (7)

ANOVA on English Idiomatic Phraseology

Groups	Number	Mean	St Dev	F		P	Significance (0.05)
				Computed	Tabulated		
First	25	8.68	3.923	1.69	2.8	0.074 *	c
Second	25	9.56	4.063				bc
Third	25	10.00	3.894				ab
Fourth	25	11.16	3.986				a

The results show that there are no statistically significant differences among the four grades. And the mean differences among the four grades in recognition and production test were not statistically significant to reject the fourth null hypothesis.

Therefore, it can be claimed that the time EFL learners spent in the college stage have no significant effect on learners' English Idiomatic Phraseology recognition and production. The following figure (Figure 4) makes the results more easily noticeable.

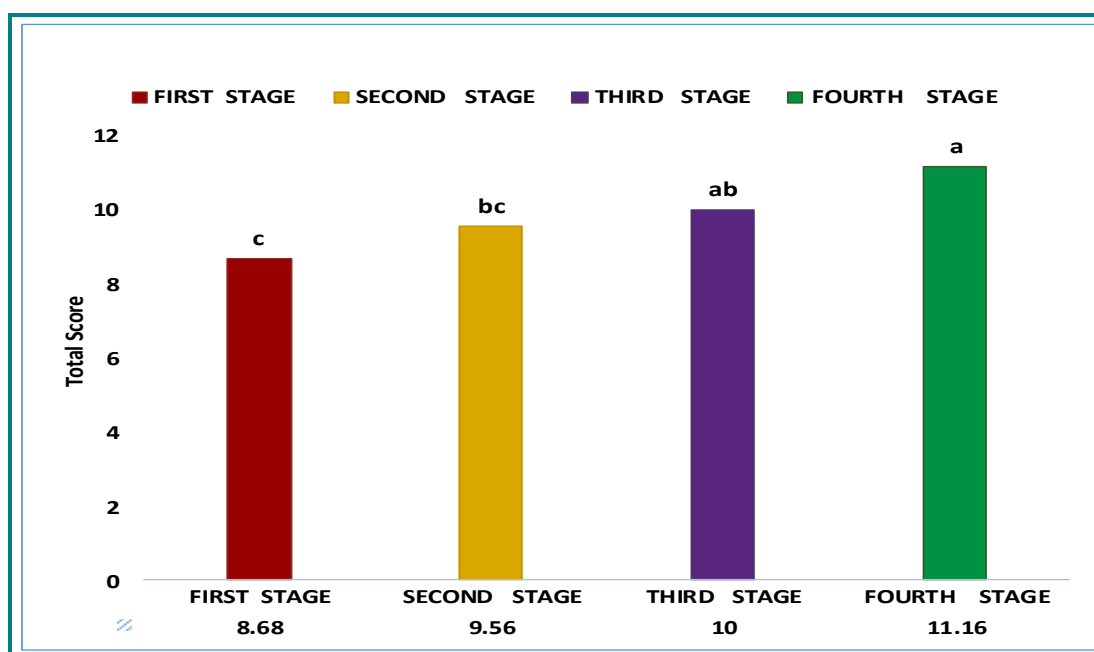


Figure (4)**Results of the ANOVA among the Four Stages**

In making a comparison of the students' performance in the whole test at the four grades of English department at College of Education for Women in Tikrit University, and finding ANOVA among them, no significant statistical difference was found among them. The P- Value is 0.074 which is considered as not significant, since it is > 0.05 (Bluman, 2012: 418). The students in the four grades are similar in their performance at recognition as well as production levels; they are generally poor (See table 7).

5.1 Conclusions

1. EFL students of Tikrit University are incompetent in the area of IPs. In particular, the students of College of Education for Women who are from the fourth grade are more and better acquainted with IPs than the students of the other three grades.
2. Language learners are selective in their learning of the structures of English. They don't take in whatever is presented on the menu.
3. Last but not least, Language development is not necessarily a smooth continuous process that takes place all the time.

5.2 suggestions for Further Studies

1. An Investigation of the Frequency Use of English Idiomatic Phraseology by Iraqi EFL Learners in Speaking and Writing (This is to see how frequent Iraqi learners employ IPs in their language, in which context IPs are more likely to be used by students).
2. The route of learning other structural areas of English need to be investigated.
3. Since this study was only conducted on the female participants, a similar research can be done on the opposite sex or both together.
4. There is a need to carry out similar experiments to investigate the long-term effects of teaching IPs through different techniques, strategies, activities, and areas of language similar to the subject of the current study.
5. Since this study covers only 20 English IPs, a more comprehensive study can be done by employing more IPs.

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Appendix (I)

Tikrit University

College of Education for Women

The four Stages – Test

Time: 1 Hour**Instructions:-** Please fill the following information:**Your Name:****Class:*****I. The Recognition Level***

Read the following situations carefully and choose the underlined verb means:-

1- Reem wants to buy a new dress for her birthday. While she is trying to find a new suitable model for her, the vendor is pointing to one of the dresses saying to Reem. "Can you **try on** it?", which means:

- (a) buy the dress.
- (b) see how it fits you.
- (c) show your admiration.

2- Jinan works as a secretary. Jinan's boss asks her to tell the staff that the meeting of today will be **put off** to next Monday.

- (a) The meeting will be before the next Monday.
- (b) The meeting is canceled.
- (c) The meeting will be postponed till next Monday.

3- Mustafa stays late at night preparing a new program for the project. He seems exhausted. His father says, "**Carry on** my dear."

- (a) His father asks him to continue his working.
- (b) His father tells him to stop working hard.
- (c) His father asks him to take a rest.

4- Ali's car **broke down** in the street, you stopped to see what the matter was, he said "My car broke down, can you give me a lift?"

- (a) The car stopped working.
- (b) The car was damaged.
- (c) The car was crowded.

5- Your manager told you he wants to assign you a task and he asked you to show your opinion. You **turned** the idea **over** in your mind all day but couldn't make a decision.

- (a) You refused the task.
- (b) You agreed the task.
- (c) You didn't take a decision.

6- Your neighbour wants to travel to London for a week. She asks you to **look after** her cat while she is away, that is to:

- (a) get rid of it.
- (b) give it to anybody.
- (c) take care of it.

7-You enter a course to learn German language but it seems too difficult! The lecturer told you "It isn't easy to learn German but you must **keep on** trying".

- (a) continue.
- (b) stop.
- (c) speak.

8-You are walking in the street, you meet an old woman who seems annoyed; you ask her "What is happened?" she says: "The man said he was a policeman and I believed him. I was completely **taken in**!"

- (a) The woman was in love with the man.

- (b) The woman was deceived by the man.
 (c) The man was a policeman.

9- You are in a lecture; you and your colleagues ask the lecturer to write the information on the board. He tells you that at the end of the lecture, he **gives out** information sheets to the students. So,

- (a) He will repeat the lecture.
 (b) He will give information sheets to each student.
 (c) He will write the information on the board later.

10- Your friend Sarah seems tired and sleepy today. She says: "The car alarm **went off** in the middle of the night, waking all the neighbours."

- (a) The car alarm made aloud noise.
 (b) The car's alarm stopped working.
 (c) The car alarm was very slow.

II- The Production Level

Read the following situations carefully and try to show with other words the meanings of the given situations:

1- You are talking on the phone with your mom, and you're cooking at the same time. Suddenly, you notice that the rice is burning, you say "**hold on**, mom, I've just take the rice off. I'll be right back with you". You ask your mother to

.....

2- You're with your friend walking down the street and you're about to cross the street, your friend stops in the street, and you grab him, because the car is coming. You say to him, "**Watch out!**" You ask your friend to

.....

3- My brother asked me "What do you think of Tom?" I answered "Yeah, I like him; I **get along** well with him."

You and Tom are,

4- Arthur: "Do you know any good Chinese restaurants here?"

You: "No, but I'll **look one up** on the Google."

You mean,

5- You are at a friend's house watching TV. The friend offers you a snack. You **turn it down**, saying that you have gained some weight and don't feel comfortable in your new clothes.

That means you,

6- You are recently living in this town; do you **get on** well with people who live near you?

.....

7- You are in the office to get a passport; the officer asks you "Where did you **grow up**?"

The officer means,

8- You and your friends are watching TV. You tell your friends that this programme is really stupid. You ask them to **turn the TV off**.

You mean,

9- Your health is in a bad status these days. When you visited the doctor last week, he told you that you should **give up** smoking.

That means,

10- Elizabeth, an old friend of you, lives in Paris. You tried continuously to phone her but couldn't **get through**.

That means,