



Learning Of Idiomatic Expressions By Jordanian EFL Students Majoring In English Language And Literature At Mutah University: Attitudes, Difficulties And Strategies

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the attitudes of 214 Jordanian EFL students at Mutah University, of both genders, with respect to the importance that they placed on learning English idioms, the challenges that they faced and the strategies that they employed to facilitate their comprehension. Data for the study was collected using a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. It was determined that students had robust positive attitudes towards learning English idioms. However, they experienced challenges, such as the absence of counterpart idioms in their native language, the lack of literal meaning in idiomatic expressions, their inexperience of processing idioms, the absence of apposite cultural and historical information, and encountering rare or unknown idioms that occurred out of context. It was shown that learners utilized a range of strategies to assist their idiom comprehension. The most favored strategies encompassed memorization, dictionary consultation and guessing the meaning from the context; the least commonly exploited were usage within sentences and etymological explanation.

Introduction

English language contains numerous idioms, i.e. phrases specific to a language or dialect, which often fail to obey grammatical constraints or a rational approach. The divergence and amusement derived from the English language would be diminished in the absence of idioms; these idioms form an essential component of linguistics and cultures on a global scale. They can be classified as an imaginative use of words or as mechanisms to add characteristics to the language and to engender admiration of linguistic form (Seboni, 1980). Learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) are frequently challenged by idioms as their meaning may not always be construed from the words per se. They generally find idioms to be an impediment to their perfect grasp of the language, an issue compounded by the fact that the words comprising an idiom may have little relation to the intended meaning. Idioms are

potent figurative phrases that have the ability to express complicated concepts with only a few memorable words; this property engenders their use in both spoken and written discourse.

Acquaintance with a broad spectrum of idioms and the skill to use them in an appropriate fashion in the correct setting are hallmarks of a native-like command of English. Frequently, these characterful phrases are utilized in daily contexts and can represent an individual's ability to command the required language (McDevitt, 1993). When it is considered that idioms additionally include cultural facets and comprise an intriguing method of understanding the language's background, it is clear that such phrases facilitate efficacious communication and should receive particular attention during language teaching and learning. Since idioms are present in daily speech as well as in literature, no language learner can avoid them when their goal is to acquire the natural use of language (Fernando, 1996). Such idiom evasion in EFL learners would identify them as English speakers from overseas. Furthermore, they would be denied cultural doctrines, traditions, practices, rites and symbols that are embodied in indigenous languages. Thus, each learner of a foreign language (L2) should be ready to face the difficulties of L2 idiom acquisition as they not only comprise an inherent property of all native languages but are particularly common in spoken and written English (Vasiljevic, 2015).

The challenges that Jordanian EFL learners face when studying the English language include those pertaining to mastering idioms. Despite being fluent in English, they can have problems with utilizing or comprehending the sense of a number of these idioms that native speakers use in their routine written or verbal dialogue. The numerous idioms within the English language frequently puzzle students, especially those just commencing their studies. Such issues commonly lead to a lower linguistic competence of which the learner may lack cognizance and thus continue to circumvent the study of these linguistic tools. This may be a consequence of their ignorance relating to suitable strategies that could facilitate their learning of idiomatic expressions in their chosen language. Practicing and employing idiomatic expressions could increase their self-confidence and belief that they can acquire them to a sufficient standard for appropriate usage. (Al-Khawaldeh, Jaradat, Al-Momani & Banikhair, 2017). An EFL learner who wishes to excel in a foreign language should become educated with respect to idioms and methods that facilitate the management of their challenges. Authors of textbooks and language teachers should focus on this domain; it is a difficult task to assist students in achieving a relatively high level of proficiency in the English language. Nevertheless, there is little information regarding the attitudes of EFL learners towards the mastery of idioms and the types of idiom learning strategies that could help them use a newly learned idiom effectively. The current study will endeavor to contribute to the increasing volume of research relating to these two disciplines.

Sources of difficulties of learning idiomatic expressions

Idiomatic expression acquisition is one of the most difficult issues in language teaching and learning, Belousova (2015), and it deserves special attention in class. Even native speakers, according to Mäntylä (2004), have issues with proper idiom usage and make mistakes. Pimenova (2011) identified five main challenges to understanding idioms: unfamiliar lexicon and unrecognized idioms; lack of comparable idioms in L1, cultural disparities, insufficient experience in dealing with idiomatic expressions and the absence of the broad context for a given idiom.

EFL students experience numerous issues with respect to idioms, which include identifying whether or not an expression is in fact an idiom, and then comprehending its true

sense. This is predominantly related to the metaphorical meaning implied by idioms, which makes understanding their meaning challenging, if not unattainable. In other words, the meaning of an idiom cannot be deduced from its constituent words. Understanding English idioms requires more than just knowing the denotative meaning of words; it also requires connotative word comprehension and an understanding of figurative language. Irujo (1986) claimed

that "idioms do not say what they mean" because they are not literal. This refers to the arbitrary nature of idioms. The arbitrariness and nonliterality of idioms make them challenging to acquire and grasp for EFL students (Hussein, Khanji, & Makhzoomy, 2000). Furthermore, Mäntylä (2004) asserted that students frequently struggle to decide whether to regard the figurative or literal sense of idioms in various settings. It has been demonstrated that learning and comprehending English idioms is problematic for both EFL and ESL learners, owing to the disparity between the actual word meanings and the sense of the idiom (Almashikhi, 2018).

Idioms are difficult to understand because they are rooted in a specific language and culture, and their meanings are associated with that language based on the relationship between language and culture. Jiang (2000) pointed out that "language is the mirror of culture, in the sense that people can see a culture through its language" (p. 328). Numerous idioms are derived from morals, motifs and tales that L2 students do not have the opportunity to engage with or learn from. Because idioms are culturally specific, finding equivalents in every language is not always possible, according to Cakir (2011). It is essential to learn about the target culture as well as

intercultural disparities in order to understand the meanings of idioms (Taki & Soghady, 2013). Without this cultural background, attempting to master idioms becomes more difficult.

The absence of comparable idiomatic equivalents in the student's native language is a further difficulty when studying English idioms (Alhaysoni, 2017), e.g., the disparities between Arabic and English idioms create significant challenges for Arab EFL learners. Pimenova (2011) argued that the easiest expressions to learn include those with precise analogies in the student's first language; the hardest are those without an equivalent in L1 and whose sense cannot be attained from a word-by-word analysis of the idiom. Moreover, students frequently attempt to turn to their own language when employing idiomatic expressions, which generally leads to inaccuracies as idioms typically lack any grammatical rules.

Another issue is a lack of contact with idioms, which can range from the intentional deletion of idiomatic expressions in speech directed at nonnative speakers to utter disregard of them in target language materials and syllabi, as well as the absence of activities designed to teach them. This means that students learn idioms in non-interactive and out-of-setting circumstances (Mäntylä, 2004). Irujo (1986) observed that idioms were either totally deleted from curricula or simply included in the glossary section of individual chapters without being employed in any exercises to help students learn them. When it comes to a lack of idiomatic contact, the source of the problem is frequently found in the EFL classroom. This also means that students are unable to ask about their true sense or receive feedback on their own proper use. In fact, Asl (2013) and Wray (2000) have suggested that EFL contexts disregard idiomatic expressions as teachers attempt to make the study of English more straightforward and most of their focus is directed toward teaching grammatical rules.

Strategies of learning idiomatic expressions

Oxford (1990) defines language learning strategies as "specific actions employed by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p. 8). Two principal categories of LLS can be identified, i.e., direct, which encompasses memory, cognitive and compensation LLS; and indirect LLS, which includes metacognitive, affective and social approaches (Oxford, 1990).

L2 learners may adapt some strategies in order to understand or to deduce the sense of idioms which appear unfathomable. According to Cooper (1999), these strategies are split into two stages, i.e., preparatory and guessing. The former encompasses three steps: (i) to reiterate or to reword the phrase in the absence of interpretation; (ii) to debate and to interpret the expression without attempting to guess its sense; and (iii) to look for additional insight into the idiom from the setting of its usage. The latter comprises a four-tiered approach: (i) the literal sense of the words is utilised in an attempt to deduce the figurative meaning; (ii) an imaginative concept is employed to understand the idiom's meaning; (iii) it is compared with an assumed analogous idiom in the student's native language; and (iv) the learner applies their empirical knowledge to understand the meaning of an idiom.

EFL learners employ a range of strategies while processing idioms, even though they don't have sufficient knowledge and language exposure. Numerous studies have therefore postulated a wide range of theories which explain the way in which idiomatic expressions are processed. Bobrow & Bell (1973) proposed the idiom-list model which states that initially, second language learners translate an idiom literally; if this literal sense seems inappropriate for the setting in which the expression is used, they then examine their mental lexicon for the idiom and select its figurative meaning. The lexical representation model by Swinney & Culter is the second idiom processing model (1979). Idioms are treated as long words in this model; they are retrieved from the mental lexicon alongside all other words. The setting determines the winner in the simultaneous processing of literal and metaphorical meanings. The direct access model is comparable to the lexical representation model, but learners typically ignore the literal sense of the idiom, resorting immediately to the idiomatic meaning from their mental lexicon (Gibbs, 1980; Schweigert, 1986).

Kennedy (2008) concluded that there is no perfect strategy, either for students or teachers, with respect to the study of idiomatic expressions, despite the numerous published methods available to EFL learners. One of the strategies which is often employed by EFL learners to comprehend idioms is to resort to their native language. Cieřlicka (2015) observed that when students fail to recognize idioms, they fall back on their knowledge of idioms within their first language, and focus on deducing the sense of the expression according to these parameters. Thus, similarities between languages are an important element that influences the acquisition of idioms within the target language, enabling the figurative sense of analogous expressions to be readily available and understood. Nevertheless, additional time is required where idiomatic expressions differ from those in the student's native language. Irujo (1986) claimed that using L1 can help L2 learners understand L2 idioms that are similar to their L1 counterparts. Idioms with no similar or equal L1 equivalents, on the other hand, present problems for L2 learners.

Lexical inferencing, often known as guessing, is a learning strategy or approach that has been widely adopted by second language learners when dealing with new terms for a long time (Paribakht & Wesche, 1999); it has been significantly linked to auxiliary vocabulary learning. This strategy is regarded as effective for understanding idioms (Liu, 2017; Webb, 2007). Furthermore, Schmitt (2008) asserted that it is one of the most common ways of interpreting unfamiliar words in reading passages, particularly phrasal terms and idioms. According to

Haastrup (1991), lexical inferencing is a process in which individuals make educated assumptions about the meaning of new words based on linguistic and nonlinguistic cues in the text. Lexical inference can also be used to classify the times and reasons why the passage's meaning is unclear to them (Duffy et al. 1987). Guessing the meaning of idioms from context, on the other hand, can be problematic since students may overestimate their comprehension (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2008).

Memorization is a further strategy that EFL learners apply to learn and understand idioms. Idioms are essentially lexical items whose sense is frequently not implied by the individual meanings of their component words, necessitating rote learning. Many of these create a hindrance to their acquisition for many learners (Pucelj, 2018), but could be efficacious if students were already familiar with the L2 (Ding, 2007). The success and speed with which idioms are memorized are determined by the idiom type as well as the learner's attributes. It works best when it is used to consolidate and/or promote knowledge (Cooper, 1998). Memorization has recently been believed to be undesirable. That does not have to be the case because, when used correctly, memorization may be quite advantageous to those who already know a language (Ding, 2007). The memorization of metaphorical expressions which appear to have an apparent mismatch between form and meaning, places a considerable learning burden on students, leading to a lack of motivation and failure in idiom understanding, recall, and production (Kovecses & Szabo, 1996; Boers, 2000). The teacher's role in decreasing the pupils' learning burden is critical in this regard. They can be an informative resource in resolving this issue.

The influence of etymological elaboration on idiom acquisition has been studied. It has been found to be a good mnemonic strategy for language learners to remember target idioms. It also rejects the previous view that idiomatic statements are random, emphasizing their "motivated" nature. Boers et al. (2004). Furthermore, some researchers believe that etymological elaboration is an effective method for EFL students to acquire and grasp idioms. They need to comprehend the literal origins of the idioms in order to employ them properly. Context is crucial for idiom comprehension. Idiomatic expressions, according to Cain & Towse (2008), are understood in connection to the context in which they are used. When an idiom is unfamiliar, it can be partially understood by analyzing the meanings of the words in the phrase (Nippold & Taylor, 1995). In this sense, students can benefit from using context to better understand idiom meaning. Mäntylä (2004) believes that context affects the interpretation of unknown idioms by limiting the interpretation options and assisting in the elimination of those that are clearly incorrect.

Several studies have demonstrated the usefulness of mnemonics, or memory strategies (Schmitt, 2008). These memory strategies can assist students in recalling a large amount of information (Congos, 2006), and teaching them has been found to be appropriate for students of all ages (Levin 1993). The keyword, storytelling, and semantic organization are all well-known mnemonics that are commonly used (Thompson, 1987). In semantic organization, the words are organized in a way that facilitates learning and encourages vocabulary development. When learners organize words in a connected and meaningful fashion, they are more likely to recall them (Mirhassani & Eghtesadi, 2007). Semantic organization has two benefits (Seal, 1991): it gives students a sense of organization and a framework for their learning while also making it easier to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words. Storytelling is also helpful for increasing a student's vocabulary and as a teaching tool. This involves the learner associating the new

words with a topic, then using the words to create a narrative story (Palmer, Harshbarger, & Koch, 2001). Furthermore, the use of narrative is deemed to be of utility in a range of EFL contexts because it facilitates contextualizing learning items and offers a context of meaningful, evocative and interesting learning. It additionally gives cohesion to the learning and adds a more dynamic and less formal atmosphere relating to communicative factors within the curriculum. Promotion of "dual coding" is the term that has been applied to a mnemonic approach of determined efficacy (Clark & Paivio, 1991), i.e., assisting students in gaining and dealing with linguistic comprehension that contains both imagistic and emblematic or propositional components.

Previous studies

Ababneh (2016) employed a questionnaire to assess the attitudes of 94 Jordanian EFL students at Yarmouk University majoring in Translation and English Language and Literature about the importance of learning English idiomatic expressions. Regardless of their gender or academic major, the majority of the participants expressed a positive attitude in this regard, emphasizing their importance in terms of effective communication using the English language.

Alhaysony (2017) evaluated the challenges encountered by Saudi EFL students relating to the acquisition and comprehension of English idiomatic expressions as well as the strategies used to assist them. The findings revealed difficulties in determining the sense of idioms; the most common strategy was to use context to support guessing about an idiom's interpretation, predict the sense of idioms, or compare them to an expression in their native language. Low proficiency learners face more challenges than their high proficiency counterparts. It was also observed that the higher the student's vocabulary awareness, the more they employed idiom-learning strategies, especially for idioms that required broader vocabulary knowledge.

Al-Houti & Aldaihani, (2018) investigated Kuwaiti EFL students' attitudes towards the importance, challenges, and strategies for learning idiomatic idioms. Positive attitudes were found in all areas, with data showing that participants were aware of the significance of idioms and their link to a variety of factors such as frequency, culture, and competence. Learners' notion that idioms were simple was an unexpected finding; they were also unaware of the difficulties of idioms. Contextualization was the preferred method of learning idioms in this cohort; students' first language and etymological elaboration were used to a lesser extent.

The strategies used by EFL learners to comprehend idiom meanings in oral and written assignments were appraised by Almashikhi (2018). Approaches to idiom interpretation and the promotion of glossaries pertaining to idioms within the language learning processes for both English language teachers and pupils were also evaluated. A higher performance in the inference task was noted following direct idiom instruction. It was concluded that visual aids, direct instructions and proactive debate could enhance the role of EFL instructors and routinely enhance the understanding of particularly frequently used expressions, thereby improving learners' understanding and, thus, their linguistic capabilities.

Orfan (2020) assessed undergraduate EFL learners' attitudes toward the importance of learning English idioms, perceived challenges, and facilitating strategies in Afghanistan. The impact of the participants' gender and native tongue on their perspectives was also considered. The students were determined to express a robustly positive outlook in relation to the significance of learning English idioms and were cognizant of the associated challenges. The

latter were attributed to a lack of cultural information underlying the idioms, the absence of comparable expressions within their own language, and the study of idioms outside of their context. Multiple approaches were utilized by the students to facilitate their grasp of idioms. The perspectives of the participants were noted to be irrespective of their gender or native language.

Saleh & Zakaria (2013) assessed the challenges relating to the comprehension of idioms encountered by 40 learners in Libya, along with any facilitating strategies employed. It was recognized that the learners used different strategies to assist their learning and understanding as opposed to a single strategy. They obtained the maximum success from guessing using the context; their second choice of approach was to compare the idiom to one in their native tongue. The idiom's context was viewed as a key factor for appreciating an idiom's meaning. The challenges reported were associated in their entirety with idioms that could not be broken down into their component words in order to yield their ultimate figurative sense. In several cases, the individual words proved a challenge as they were either rarely employed or the student was unfamiliar with them.

Study questions

The purpose of the study is to identify the attitudes of Jordanian EFL students with respect to the importance of acquiring proficiency in the use of English idioms. It also explores the challenges associated with their learning. In addition, it examines frequently employed strategies with respect to the learning and comprehension of such expressions. The relevant research questions are stated below.

- 1-What are the attitudes of Jordanian EFL students with respect to the significance of learning English idioms?
- 2-What are the perspectives of Jordanian EFL students in relation to the challenges of becoming proficient in the usage of English idioms?
- 3-What are the perspectives of Jordanian EFL students with respect to employed strategies for the learning and comprehension of English idioms?

Methodology

Participants

A sample of two hundred and fourteen students majoring in English language and literature at Mutah University were recruited to take part in this study, comprised of 136 females and 78 males. All the students were in their first, second, third and fourth year, and were competent in the Arabic language.

Instrument

The questionnaire used in this study was a key instrument, and was generated and adapted following an assiduous assessment and critique of earlier research that appraised the attitude of EFL students towards the acquisition of idioms, the challenges they encountered, and the enabling approaches that they employed (Orfan, 2020; Ababneh, 2016; Al-Houti & Aldaihani, 2018; Alhaysony, 2016). The questionnaire included four sections: (i) background information; (ii) 11 items concerning attitudes toward the importance of learning English idioms; (iii) 6 items concerning the difficulties associated with learning English idioms; and (iv) 12 items concerning learning strategies. A 5-point Likert scale was applied, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = agree, 3 = strongly disagree, 4 = disagree, and 5 = neutral.

The subjects were therefore requested to state their level of consensus with the questionnaire items. The research tool was validated by six professors from Mutah University, who reviewed it together with a study synopsis in order to make certain that the statements were easy to understand and apposite to the study objectives and the participants' degree of linguistic competence. The questionnaire was revised in keeping with the reviewers' advice; some of the items were rewritten. Reliability was achieved by disseminating the questionnaire to a pilot cohort of 20 students. Based on the resultant responses, Cronbach's alpha was computed for the tool in its entirety (0.90).

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science software was used for statistical analysis. Descriptive analysis was used, together with calculations of mean and standard deviation (SD) where appropriate, in order to meet the study's objectives. Mean values within the ranges (3.68-5.0), (2.34-3.67), and 2.33 were considered to indicate high, moderate, and low degrees of perception, respectively.

Results

The data demonstrated the attitudes of the students towards learning English idioms and the principal challenges faced in their learning, and also the facilitating strategies that they employed.

Findings relating to the first study question

The first question the current study attempted to answer was: what are the attitudes of Jordanian EFL students with respect to the significance of learning English idioms? The data was analyzed using the participants' responses to the six items of the questionnaire described above.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of the students' attitudes towards the importance of learning English idioms, presented in descending order of significance.

Item no.	Item	Mean	SD	%	Rank	Level
9	Idioms are an important aspect of the English language to learn.	4.00	0.90	80%	1	high
7	I need to be familiar with idioms in order to better comprehend the listening text.	3.92	0.91	78.4%	2	high
5	I think encouraging English language learners to learn English idioms is important for effective communication.	3.89	0.93	77.8%	3	high
1	Learning idioms is essential for recognizing cultural differences and similarities.	3.87	0.93	77.4%	4	high
4	Idioms are significant because they demonstrate competence and native-like knowledge of the language.	3.85	0.94	77%	5	high
10	Learning idioms is important for me to express myself better by using English metaphorical language.	3.84	0.93	76.8%	6	high
8	I think English textbooks need to include	3.82	0.96	76.4%	7	high

Item no.	Item	Mean	SD	%	Rank	Level
	English idioms .					
11	When I become an English teacher, I will absolutely teach English idioms.	3.81	0.90	76.2%	8	high
2	I would like to deepen my knowledge of English idioms.	3.80	0.98	76%	9	high
6	Familiarity with idioms is important for me to comprehend the reading text better.	3.78	0.99	75.6%	10	high
3	Knowing English idioms is necessary for me to understand the everyday language better.	3.75	1.00	75%	11	high
1-11	Overall mean	3.85	0.52	%77%	-	high

The mean scores and standard deviations of students' responses to each of the questionnaire statements used to determine their attitudes toward learning English idioms are shown in Table 1. According to the data in Table 1, the students' mean scores range from 3.75 to 4.0. The highest mean score, 4.0 (80%), related to item 9, i.e., "Idioms are an important aspect of the English language to learn." The lowest mean score, 3.75 (75%), was obtained with respect to item 3, i.e., "Knowing English idioms is necessary for me to understand the everyday language better." The overall mean score for the subjects' responses was 3.85. Thus, it was observed that, generally, the students expressed a markedly positive attitude towards the importance of learning idioms in the English language.

Findings relating to the second study question

The second question was: what are the perspectives of Jordanian EFL students in relation to the challenges of becoming proficient in the usage of English idioms? The second section of the questionnaire was aimed at collecting data about students' attitudes towards the challenges of learning English idioms. Students were given a list of six items and asked to indicate their attitudes on a five-point scale. The results for all students' responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations relating to students' perceived challenges of becoming proficient in the use of English idioms, listed in descending order .

Item no.	Item	Mean	SD	%	Rank	Level
3	Idioms are difficult because some do not have a counterpart in my native language .	4.15	0.88	83%	1	high
5	Idioms are difficult because they are non-literal and so the meaning of the idiom cannot be deduced from its component parts.	3.89	0.91	79%	2	high
2	Idioms are difficult because they are not included in English textbooks and they are not taught well in the classroom.	3.77	0.93	75.4%	3	high
1	Idioms are difficult because I am not familiar with cultural and historical background behind them.	3.72	0.95	74.4%	4	high

Item no.	Item	Mean	SD	%	Rank	Level
6	Idioms are difficult because they are not familiar and frequent.	3.31	1.00	66.2%	5	moderate
4	Idioms are difficult when they are out of context.	3.15	1.02	63%	6	moderate
1-6	Overall mean	3.68	0.57	73.6%	-	high

It can be determined from Table 2 that the students' mean scores lie between 4.15 and 3.15. The highest mean value, 4.15 (83%), related to item 3, i.e., 'Idioms are difficult because some do not have a counterpart in my native language.' The lowest mean value, 3.15 (63%), was obtained with respect to item 4, i.e., 'Idioms are difficult when they are out of context'. The overall mean value for the subjects' responses was 3.68. It was concluded from this data that the students have insight into the challenges faced in learning English idiomatic expressions. These were perceived to arise from the absence of comparable idioms in their native tongue, the lack of literal sense of the idioms, their low exposure to their use, the absence of cultural and historical information, unknown idioms, and those presented out of context.

Findings relating to the third study question

The final research question was: what are the perspectives of Jordanian EFL students with respect to employing strategies for learning and comprehension of English idioms? The third section of the questionnaire was aimed at collecting data about strategies employed by participants to learn English idioms. Participants were given a list of twelve items and asked to indicate their attitudes on a five-point scale. The results for all participants' responses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation relating to the strategies employed by students to help them become proficient in the use of English idioms, listed in descending order.

Item no.	Item	Mean	SD	%	Rank	Level
3	I learn idioms through memorization.	4.18	0.87	83.6%	1	high
2	When I'm not sure what an idiom means, I look it up in a dictionary.	3.99	0.90	79.8%	2	high
5	I guess the meaning of an idiom from the context.	3.96	0.92	79.2%	3	high
12	I can learn idioms with clear literal meaning.	3.92	0.94	78.4%	4	high
10	I learn idiom by using key words.	3.88	0.95	77.6%	5	high
1	I try to guess the meaning of an idiom by translating it into Arabic.	3.72	0.98	74.4%	6	high
11	I learn an idiom by referring to a similar L1 idiom.	3.70	0.99	74%	7	high
9	I predict the meaning of idioms.	3.30	1.01	66%	8	moderate
7	I learn idioms by communicating in English outside the classroom.	3.24	1.02	64.8%	9	moderate
6	I learn idioms through group discussion.	3.17	1.03	63.4%	10	moderate
4	I learn idioms by using them in a sentence.	2.98	1.05	59.6%	11	moderate
8	I use etymological explanation to learn	2.49	1.06	49.8%	12	moderate

Item no.	Item	Mean	SD	%	Rank	Level
	idioms.					
1-12	Overall mean	3.54	0.61	70.8	-	moderate

Table 3 illustrates that scholars' mean scores lie within the spectrum of 4.18–2.49. The highest mean value, 4.18 (83.6%), was related to item 3, i.e., 'I learn idioms through memorization'. The lowest mean value, 2.49 (49.8%), was obtained with respect to item 8, i.e., 'I use etymological explanation to learn idioms'. The overall mean value for the subjects' responses was 3.54. This data demonstrated that the students resorted to a range of strategies in order to learn and to comprehend idiomatic expressions. The most frequently used strategies were memorization (M = 4.18) and using a dictionary (M = 3.99). Alternative, less employed strategies encompassed using them in a sentence (M = 2.98) and etymological explanation (M = 2.49).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the attitudes of EFL students in Jordan who were majoring in English Language and Literature at Mutah University with respect to the importance that they placed on learning English idioms, the challenges that they experienced, and the strategies that they employed to facilitate their learning. Overall, the results suggested that participants held notably positive views towards the need for knowledge of idioms, indicating that idioms are crucial for good comprehension of the listening text and efficient communication. They also reported that acquiring idiomatic expressions enabled them to gain insight into the cultural variations between English and Arabic communities. Furthermore, mastering English idioms enables them to have a native-like command of the language. They also believe that metaphorical interpretation of idioms helped them express themselves better and that idioms should be included in textbooks. These results are similar to those reported in previous studies (Ababneh, 2016; Orfan, 2020; Al-khwaldeh et al., 2016; Al-Houti & Aldaihani, 2018).

According to an analysis of their responses to the difficulty of learning idiomatic expressions, Jordanian EFL students faced a number of issues in learning English. One example is the absence of comparable idioms in their native language (Arabic). Alhaysony (2017) and Pimenova (2011) reported similar findings. These results additionally substantiate those of McPartland (2000), who observed that the idioms which were the most straightforward to grasp were those which have precise equivalents in the student's native language; conversely, the hardest idioms to appreciate were those with no L1 counterpart.

Another difficulty was identified when idioms only have a figurative rather than literal meaning. The absence of relationship between the component words and their meaning is one of the reasons why English idiomatic expressions are so difficult to grasp. Furthermore, the absence of a specific method for teaching English idioms poses a significant challenge to their acquisition, owing to their figurative nature, which prevents any lexical or syntactic modification. These findings resonate with those from Almashikhi (2018) who noted that EFL and ESL students struggle to study and understand English idioms as their meanings differ from the literal meanings of the words. This conclusion supports the findings of (Mäntylä, 2004) and Irujo (1986), who observed that students typically struggle to decide whether to consider the idiomatic or literal meaning of idioms in particular settings. It also supports the findings of Hussein et al. (2011), who found that the arbitrariness and nonliterality of

idioms make them challenging to acquire and grasp for EFL students. Idioms are difficult for EFL learners to comprehend based on the meaning of their component words because of their arbitrariness.

Furthermore, the Jordanian students in this study stated that the absence of knowledge relating to the cultural and historical setting from which idioms are derived increased their learning challenge. This finding is in keeping with Orfan (2020) and Al-khwaldeh et al. (2016). The fact that educational program curricula do not include idioms and that these expressions are poorly taught in a formal setting exacerbates the problem; These issues could be related to higher educational institutions' failure to place an emphasis on the idiomatic aspect of the English language. In fact, idioms have a minor position in Jordanian university English curricula. The exposure to the target language and hence practice is limited. Even when Jordanian students have the chance to be exposed to language and employ idiomatic expressions, they prefer to avoid them in their speech and writing. In Jordanian universities, there is a clear lack of appropriate materials for teaching English idioms.

The findings demonstrated that rather than using a single learning strategy, the study participants used numerous strategies to comprehend idioms in different contexts. This is in line with Kennedy's (2008) belief that there is no perfect strategy for acquiring idioms. Idioms are lexical entities whose meanings are frequently deduced from the individual meanings of their components, according to (pucelj,2018). This property means that they typically have to be acquired by rote learning which is a significant obstacle to most language students. However, this contradicts the findings of Orfan's (2020) study, which found that this strategy is one of the least commonly utilized by Afghan EFL learners. This disparity can be explained by the influence of grammatical structure acquisition, which is primarily reliant on memorization, implying that students in Jordan appear to learn idiomatic expressions in the English language in a similar manner to the way they approach English grammar.

Jordanian students' second most common strategy is to look up the meaning of unknown idioms in dictionaries. The third most common method is to infer the meaning of idioms from their context. This suggests that guessing from context is important for comprehending idioms, and that contextual knowledge can help learners understand idioms more rapidly. The importance of lexical inferencing strategy in acquiring English idioms has been found by various researchers (Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997) and Schmitt (2008). The findings back up the findings of Al-Houti, & Aldaihani (2018), who found that contextualization was the most favored learning approach among Kuwaiti EFL college students. Furthermore, the participants stated that they try to infer an idiom's meaning by translating it into Arabic, implying that they rely significantly on their L1 to interpret English idioms. This conclusion is consistent with Saleh & Zakaria's findings (2013). It also resonates with the findings of Alhaysony (2017) who observed the marked dependence on Arabic language to interpret idioms owing to vocabulary limitations.

Conclusion

The research explored the attitudes of EFL students in Jordan with respect to the emphasis that they placed on learning English idiomatic expressions, the challenges that they encountered and the strategies that they employed to facilitate their comprehension. It can be concluded that the study's undergraduate participants held a positive attitude, especially in relation to the importance of learning such expressions. The findings indicated that students were aware of the associated challenges, inferring that they arose from the lack of idiomatic counterparts within their native language, non-literalness of idiomatic expressions, their

relative inexperience of processing idioms, absence of apposite cultural and historical information, meeting rare or unknown idioms and the idioms that occurred out of context. Furthermore, it was shown that the learners employed a range of approaches to assist their idiom comprehension. The most favored was rote learning; the least commonly exploited were usage within sentences and etymological explanation.

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