

Importance Of Teaching And Learning Idioms At University Level In Kosovo - A New Perspective

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Abstract

The research paper to follow is an empirical study on some of the most important reasons not only why learn/teach idioms but also for restoring their usage and importance as well, in particular. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of teaching and learning English idioms at the university level in Kosovo. The research was carried out at three universities in Kosovo: AAB College in Prishtina, Fehmi Agani Public University in Gjakova, and Universum College in Prishtina and Ferizaj. Due to this reason, the findings will be divided into those from this research and those from the doctoral thesis. It also takes into account other researchers' works including the ones from Kosovo and the neighboring countries, such as: Albania. It will start by analyzing the works of other researchers worldwide and continue with the works of the researchers from the neighboring countries. Therefore, this is a study from a new perspective on idioms and their importance in teaching English to the Albanian students. Last, but not least, it will give new insights and further suggestions on the ways to teach and learn idioms in particular and English in general which is what many students desperately opt for. Further research on idiom-related issues will be carried out in the future to shed light on the importance of learning and teaching idioms at the university level. The suggestions will further be given to the Kosovo Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MEST).

Key words: Idioms, Kosovo, learning / teaching, context, new perspective.

1. Introduction

A question often asked when it comes to idioms is whether or not we need to learn / teach idioms and why we have to learn / teach them at all. The latter was one of the questions the researcher of this paper was asked in one of the scientific conferences he presented one of his scientific articles at and this paper will tackle this issue in more details using step-by-step approach. Starting from definition of idioms, their definition by various researchers and further on and most importantly their importance on learning and teaching them in Kosovo is at the core of it all. In dealing with idioms, apart from these issues, other idiom-related issues should also be taken into account one of them being frequency of their use by students in Kosovo and abroad. In fact, at universities in Kosovo, idioms have not been used very often. This lack of their usage is due to some recently-revealed issues some of the main ones being: lack of knowledge on idioms due to their figurative nature, lack of proper authentic literature on

idioms, unreadiness of professors themselves and then of the students in using them. This, of course, does not necessarily require that all professors master idioms but using idioms at the English Departments more often helps students become near-native speakers of English. Karunakaran and Maisa also emphasize the role of using idioms as well as their lack of usage at university level claiming that, “there are some word categories like idioms, collocations, proverbs and fixed expressions which are neglected by language teachers” (2013, p.111). At the undergraduate level, students are taught some idiomatic expressions, proverbs, phrasal verbs which they consider more important or while learning / teaching other language chunks. Of course, understanding the phrasal verbs like Look out, Get up, Turn off, Turn on, Set aside is not difficult as they might be used with their literal meaning but using phrasal verbs (and other idiomatic expressions) with their figurative meaning makes them more difficult to understand, if not impossible in

many cases. This is connected with the vocabulary that one uses daily or learns at later stages of his / her life. This further means that it is easier to understand idioms after being knowledgeable on as much vocabulary as possible. Many researchers also emphasize the role of vocabulary in learning idioms and consequently a language.

In recent years, there has been heightened awareness of the critical role of vocabulary in second language (L2) learning and teaching. Within this broad area of academic inquiry, there is also general consensus that the vocabulary of a given language is much more than a list of individual words (Zyzik, 2009, p.1).

What this means is that words are not to be considered just as words, rather they are to be given utmost importance. So, words are not to be learnt by heart one by one, rather much more importance is to be given to them by also associating different meanings and taking into consideration as many collocations as possible. This means that, "Expanded and rich vocabulary helps people speak more fluently and more understandably" (Suhodolli, 2020, p.1). Apart from this, "Most studies done in the area of lexis argue that vocabulary should be placed at the centre of language teaching because language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalized grammar" (Karunakaran & Maisa, 2013, p.110).

This is rather related to the importance of learning idioms as well the reason being that idioms are made up of words which give a different meaning as compared to the meanings of individual words. So, altogether, words that constitute an idiom are regarded as a unit. This leads us to a shift from just learning vocabulary (i.e. some words) to learning idioms. A good example is the fact that there is also a shift in the methodology of teaching English from Grammar Translation Method to Lexical Approach meaning teaching words. This further implies the necessity of regarding the words taught as multi-word units and the most important of all of them are idioms.

Lewis (1993) argued that, the lexical approach is a shift in language teaching from grammar to vocabulary teaching as 'language consists not of traditional grammar and vocabulary, but of multi-word prefabricated

chunks' Lewis (1997). These chunks include idioms, collocations, fixed and semi-fixed expressions" as cited in Karunakaran & Maisa, (2013, p.110).

1.1. The purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to underline the importance of teaching idioms at university level in Kosovo. This will further not only help students become more fluent but also native-like. Apart from this, emphasis is placed on the importance of context on learning idiomatic expressions and other language chunks faster.

1.2. Research hypotheses

The study in question was carried out based on the following hypotheses:

H₁ - Teaching idioms at university level helps students comprehend authentic texts more easily.

H₂ - Being familiar with a larger number of idioms helps students become more fluent in English language

H₃ - Context plays a crucial role in helping students comprehend idioms and consequently authentic texts

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition for idioms by various researchers

Different researchers give different definitions for idioms. Some researchers consider idioms a group of words, some others a unit of language. "Trask (2000) defines an idiom as a 'fixed expression whose meaning is not guessable from the meaning of its parts'" (as cited in Funtek, 2015, p.6). Whatever term they use, there is one thing that idioms have in common: the words that constitute idioms do not give the same meaning when used individually. In other words, idiom as a term refers to a group of words which carry a special meaning as compared to the meanings of individual words that constitute that idiom. "According to the most common definition, idioms are linguistic expressions whose overall meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of constituent parts (Kovecses and Szabo, 1996, p.326) as cited in Gusic (2016, p.3). Some researchers argue

that some of the idioms have a figurative nature and cannot be, therefore, translated based on the words separately and surprisingly, though, they consider some other idioms easier to be translated even based on the words that constitute them. They base their assumption on the fact that some idioms also have literal equivalents or they may even have literal meaning. Regardless of this, Webster's New World College Dictionary defines idioms as:

a phrase, construction, or expression that is recognized as a unit in the usage of a given language and either differs from the usual syntactic patterns or has a meaning that differs from the literal meaning of its parts taken together (Ex.: not a word did she say; she heard it straight from the horse's mouth (2010))

There are other definitions for idioms, as well. Funtek, for instance, gives another definition based on another researcher and claims the following:

Alexander's (1987) definition of idioms as 'multi-word units which have to be learned as whole, along with associated sociolinguistic, cultural and pragmatic rules of use' is a more effective definition of idioms applicable to language learning". (Funtek, 2015, p.3).

This shows that definitions for idioms have been given for a long time but "the majority of linguists use the popular definition of idioms as 'lexicalized expressions with idiosyncratic meanings', this definition has been used for more than a hundred years" (Funtek, 2015, p.3). In other words, many researchers and dictionaries define idioms as a group of words which cannot be understood separately.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary of English (2020), an idiom is 'a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own' as cited in Zulfikrova (2021, p.48).

The paper in question in fact deals with English as well as Albanian idioms. As much as this is connected with the origin of idioms, it is also connected with the fact that idioms are the core of a nation's culture and can, therefore, play the role of a bridge between the

Albanian and English. This is also seen in the scientific papers of some Albanian researchers who have written about Albanian and English idioms and the importance that idioms play in this regard. Based on this, it can be said that, "Provided that among different languages there exists the reciprocal giving and receiving or linking bridges such as idioms, which contain common meanings, knowledge of these linking bridges enables the best and fastest learning of a certain language" (Kosta, 2013, p.356). This does not merely mean that idioms play the role of the bridge between Albanian and English as two different languages but they are important in preserving the vocabulary used in the past as well.

2.2. The nature / origin of idioms and degree of their comprehension

Being multi-word units and their figurative nature makes idioms more difficult to be taught and learnt. Adding the cultural aspect is also what makes them very difficult to comprehend. In general, people could sometimes speak English without having to actually use them but they use idioms for a number of reasons, such as: the fact that it adds color to the language used; it makes people sound more native. This is exactly what poses one of the biggest challenges in understanding English speaking people. One can hardly speak with a native speaker without hearing words which one may not understand or may even have never heard before. That is why people in general and students in particular need to be exposed to idioms as much as possible. "In L1, idioms are typically acquired through exposure. This process begins in early childhood and continues well into the adulthood (Nippold & Rudzinski, 1993; Nippold & Taylor, 1995) as cited in Vasiljevic (2015, p.2). This means that the native English speakers learn the language including idioms and other words/ phrases with figurative nature continuously from a very young age. In fact, this is a crucial point which makes a distinction between a native and a non-native, thus,

Idiomatic expressions are an intrinsic feature of all natural languages. It is estimated that the English language contains over 10,000 idioms (Brenner, 2003). They are widely used in both spoken and written discourse and considered to be one of the hallmarks of

native-like proficiency (Vasiljevic, 2015, p.1).

Other researchers also wrote about the nature and the origin of idioms. The following is what Karunakaran & Maisa (2013, p.112) as cited in Suhodolli (2020, p.33) claim about the origin of idioms:

- 1) Many idioms are formed from work and technology, a large number of idioms come from a time when far more people worked on the land, there are many idioms which refer to farm animals, for example, the black sheep of the family, take the bull by the horns, don't count your chickens, etc.
- 2) Some idioms are formed from rural life, transport, for example, strike while the iron is hot, put somebody through the mill, eat like a horse, put the cart before the horse, etc.
- 3) Many idioms came into existence from science and technology, for example, she has a short fuse, we are on the same wave length, I need to recharge my batteries, etc.
- 4) Every year many idioms enter into the English language from the world of sports and entertainment, for example, have a good innings, dice with death, behind the scenes, play the second fiddle, etc.
- 5) Many idioms have entered English from literature and history, for example, sour grapes, the goose that laid the golden eggs, the streets are paved with gold, etc.
- 6) Idioms came from the Bible, Shakespeare's works, for example, the salt of the earth, fall by the way side, your pound of flesh, ships that pass in the night etc.
- 7) There are a large number of idioms in which a part of the body represents particular quality or ability, for example, use your head, the idea never entered my head, she broke his heart, he opened his heart, I speak from the bottom of my heart, the news finally reached her ears, keep your mouth shut, etc.
- 8) Many idioms come from feelings and emotions, for example, give him a black look, lose your hearings, in seventh heaven, in high spirits, it was love at first sight, come out of your shell.

2.3. The importance of learning / teaching idioms at universities and outside university settings

Native English speakers use a lot of idioms on a daily basis and this derives from the fact that "English is a language particularly rich in idioms – those modes of expressions peculiar to a language (or dialect)..." (De Caro, 2009, p.124). Idioms are not only used in spoken but they are used in written as well be it in various authentic textbooks or novels such as those of Shakespeare, for instance. Idioms have in fact been used ever since and some of the idioms used by Shakespeare are still used nowadays and are familiar to English speakers. Some of the idioms used by Shakespeare are:

- All that glisters is not gold
- It was Greek to me
- All's well that ends well
- Breathed his last
- Dead as doornail
- For goodness' sake
- Eaten me out of house and home

(Source:

https://media.shakespeare.org.uk/documents/Shakespeare_Idioms_B2.pdf)

As far as idioms and their importance is concerned, and it can be seen from the above examples, there were other researchers who dealt particularly with the idioms used by Shakespeare which further shows that in one way or another idioms are the core of a language and are thus never outdated. One such study titled "The Use of Shakespeare's Idioms in Present-Day English" was carried out by the Albanian researcher Krasnici, A. in 2021 as a part of his master thesis preparation in the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. He mentions some of the idioms used in the Shakespeare's works and gives more explanation on them. Writing about EAT SOMEONE OUT OF HOUSE AND HOME idiom, which is mentioned above, he writes "This idiom appears in Henry IV Part 2, Act II, Scene 1 when Mistress Quickly urges the authorities to arrest Jack Falstaff..." (Krasnici, 2021, p.47).

An example of the idiom eat someone out of house used in a sentence by Shakespeare

Then in a matter of days, or even one day, are they not up and about again eating us out of house and home? (Krasnici, 2021, p.47).

Therefore, knowing more idioms makes it easier for students deepen their knowledge in other subjects for example in literature. "Some idioms of the 'worldwide English 'have first been seen in the works of writers like Shakespeare, Sir Water Scott, Lewis Carroll or even in the paperbacks of contemporary novelists" (De Caro, 2009, p.124). The question often asked is: why should people learn idioms when they could say the same without having to use idioms? The following best shows the importance of using idioms when speaking or writing in English:

According to E. M. Kirkpatrick, CM. Swartz (1996: cover 4) 'Idioms are those modes of expression peculiar to a language which frequently defy logical and grammatical rules, but without which both speech and writing would lose much of their vitality and color' as cited in Robo (2014, p.311).

In other words, idioms are to be used as more often as possible for not only restore the old language not used for quite a long time but also for the students become more native-like and sound more fluent. It is advisable to use idioms as much as we can so that we can also understand idioms when used by native speakers of English. Funtek for instance suggests that we use idioms claiming the following "I would like to finish with one quote by Searle (1975) 'Speak idiomatically unless there is some good reason not do to so'" (2015, p.22). This shows the great role idioms have in a language.

In fact, we hear and see idioms in spoken and written, in formal and informal English. They improve a learner's language skills therefore the more idioms one knows the more fluent and native he/she sounds, thus,

Idioms are a colorful and fascinating aspect of English; they are commonly used in all types of languages, informal and formal, spoken and written. Learners' language skills will increase rapidly if learner can understand

and use them confidently and correctly (Cambridge Idioms Dictionary 2010 vi) as cited in Karunakaran and Maisa (2013, p.112).

This implies that idioms are found in every facet of life therefore we cannot avoid hearing people use them or sometimes even use them ourselves without us being aware that the expression we have used is, in fact, an idiom. Apart from this, we can see and hear idioms used in the movies, as well. The following are some idioms that came from movies:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| - Popcorn movie | - Kick |
| the Bucket | |
| - Get the show on the road | - Live up |
| to the hype | |
| - Bob's Your Uncle | - Head in |
| the Clouds | |
| - Blue in the Face | - Pardon |
| my French | |
| - Kick something off, kick off | - Hold |
| your horses | |
| - A storm in a Tea Cup | - Sell out |

(Source:

<https://www.wordscoach.com/blog/idioms-that-came-from-movies>)

An example of the **Popcorn movie** idiom used in context:

Many of the summer blockbusters that you see each year are **popcorn movies**, but you might be surprised to realize that the ones that do the best are ones that really make you think.

(Source: <https://www.wordscoach.com/blog/idioms-that-came-from-movies>)

From these and many other examples we see that idioms are vitally important be it for university or else outside university settings (on a day-to-day basis). "Also Cooper (1998) as cited in Rodriguez and Winnberg (2013, p.12) further explain that when a viewer sees or hears idioms on TV shows, for him/ her to even understand the plot, he/she needs to be able to understand the idioms used" (Suhodolli, 2020, p.22). Apart from this, at university level, idioms are used in some textbooks, within another subject which shows the great importance of being knowledgeable on

idioms. As for their importance, this is also proven in that more and more students are becoming aware of the necessity of using them. Some students even choose idiom-related topics for their Master Thesis and conduct research on idioms.

There are a number of other reasons why it is important to teach / learn idioms. “McCarthy and O’Dell (2010, p.8) mention the following reasons the idioms are used for, as cited in Suhodolli (2020, p.25):

- For emphasis, e.g. The singer’s second album **sank like a stone**. [failed completely].
- To agree with a previous speaker, e.g.
A: Did you notice how Lisa started listening after you said her name?
B: Yes, that really made her **prick her ears up**. [start listening carefully].
- To comment on people, e.g. Did you hear that Tom was invited for dinner with the prime minister? He’s certainly **gone up in the world!** [has more money-than before or a better social position].
- To comment on a situation, e.g. The new minister wants to **knock the economy into shape**. This means to take action to get something into a good condition.
- To make an anecdote more interesting, e.g. This was another disaster today, a sort of **domino effect**. [usually, when something bad happens and causes a series of other things to happen].
- To catch the reader’s eye. Idioms, in particular those with strong images-are often used in headlines, advertising slogans and play with the idiom or make a pun (a joke involving a play on words) to create a special effect. An example is: a debt of dishonor instead of the usual **debt of honour**. [a debt that you don’t owe someone for financial reasons, rather for moral].
- To imply the membership of a particular group, for example, the surfers **drop in** on someone. This

means to get on a wave another surfer is already on.

Other researchers have also underlined the importance of teaching idioms, thus

More and more researchers illustrate a great role of idioms in foreign language education. While a great deal of these researchers focuses on the positive impact idioms play in learning foreign languages, there is a need for more empirical research aimed at teaching idiomatic language, which requires effective teaching techniques (Konomatskaya, Yarmakeev, Pimenova & Abdrafikova, 2017, p. 651)

This shows the importance of teaching idioms and further on trying to find new teaching techniques to teach them. It is for this reason that other such studies will be carried out including a larger sample not only to raise the awareness of students and professors but also prepare idiom-related literature to be used at university level in Kosovo possibly starting from the first year of studies.

2.4. Comparing some Albanian and English idioms

Idioms are a crucial point where the differences between languages, in this case Albanian and English, almost come to an end. This can be seen in some instances when some Albanian and English idioms are compared. A comparison between some English and Albanian idioms was made by Kosta in his paper titled **On some common idioms in Albanian and English Language** where he states the following,

Duke marrë parasysh faktin që idiomat shprehin një pjesë të kulturës së një kombi, shkrimi i mëposhtëm synon të përfaqësojë grupe të caktuara idiomash, të cilat ruajnë të njëjtin kuptim gjatë përdorimit paralel në gjuhën angleze dhe në gjuhën shqipe” (Kosta, 2013, p.356).

In English language, this would be translated as:

Considering the fact that idioms express a part of a nation’s culture, the following article aims at comparing certain groups of idioms, which

maintain the same meaning while used parallel both in English and Albanian (Kosta, 2013, p.356).

Some such idioms mentioned by Kosta (2013, pp. 357-358) are:

- Të gjitha rrugët të çojnë në Romë - All roads lead to Rome.
- Roma nuk u ndërtua në një ditë - Rome wasn't built in one day
- Nyja Gordiane - Gordian Knot
- Mollë sherri - Apple of discord.
- Mori emër- To make a name for oneself.
- Rron si peshku pa ujë - (To be) Like a fish out of water.
- Ngul këmbë si mushka ose kokëfortë si mushka:: As obstinate as a mule.
- Me një gur vras dy zogj- To kill two birds with one stone.

These idioms, as written about by the researcher, are used in the same way in Albanian and most interestingly for the same purpose. The researcher in questions further explains the above-mentioned idioms by digging deeper into the origin of these idioms. A good example of such an explanation is the following:

The compared idioms correspond on all three levels, i.e. on the semantic, lexical and formal level.

behind sb's back	prapa shpinës së dikujt
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According to the researcher "this category covers the idioms that have the same meaning and follow the same syntactic structure of a verbal and non-verbal idioms" (Gaba, 2018, p.185)

- **Close Correspondence**

They are similar in meaning, use the same syntactic structure and correspond on the lexical level; nevertheless, they show small differences on the morphological level. For the study purposes they are further subcategorized according to their type of deviation

- Use of a different preposition (example fall under sb's eye – bie në sy të)

- **Të gjitha rrugët të çojnë në Romë - All roads lead to Rome.**

According to Kosta (2013), this is a Latin-based idiom which was used during the Roman Empire where every road would lead to Rome either directly or via one of the other main roads. This showed the importance of Rome for the empire as well as for the then trade. The researchers also make a correlation between learning idioms and the culture of a nation, in this case the Albanian culture. This is one of the key points / issues when it comes to idioms.

Other researchers have also compared the Albanian and English idioms. In his paper titled Comparative Analysis of English and Albanian Body Idioms Gaba (2018) compares some phraseological expressions related to body organs that are parts of basic vocabulary in English and Albanian languages. The researcher in question compares Albanian and English idioms based on their level of equivalence and further divides them into five categories, as follows:

All examples and divisions of the idioms below have been taken from Gaba (2018, pp.185-187)

- **Absolute Correspondence**

- Use of singular vs. plural form (blow one's nose – shfryj hundet
- Use of a preposition vs lack of it (put sb on the back – i rrah krahet (shpatullat, supet) dikujt
- Change of word order (skin and bone – kocke e lekure)

- **Partial Correspondence**

This group is represented by idioms which correspond only on the semantic level. The partial correspondence can be achieved in a number of ways:

- Use of different body lexeme (escape sb's lips – me shpeton nga goja
- Use of meronyms vs. holonyms (hand-to-hand fighting – luften trup me trup)
- Use of lexically different words (risk one's neck – rrezikoj koken)
- Use of a lexeme vs. a compound (presence of mind – Mengjeshkathtesi)

Example;

Below / under one's breath	Nen ze. Me ze te ulet
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- **Non Correspondence**

Non-correspondence is regarded as a wide category. It contains, on one hand, idioms, which do not have any

- **The whole idiom is expressed with different lexical means**

This subcategory includes all idioms which are formed by completely different lexical means in the two languages; however there is no change in the semantics of the idioms..

correspondent but it also comprises idioms which are expressed non-idiomatically.

Exmample

At first hand	Nga burime te drejtperdrejta
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Apart from giving examples of some idioms translated into idioms, Gaba has also tried to find similarities and differences between some Albanian and English idioms. This is very important due to the fact that idioms convey messages based on the cultural aspect of a language. The messages are not translated directly but just the meaning.

3. Methodology

In achieving the expected results, the researcher of this paper, apart from consulting the works of other researchers which was written about earlier herein, based his findings on the following:

a) The observations which were carried out at the AAB College during a semester (academic year 2021/2022)

These observations were carried out during the ILS Reading classes with four different groups of students in two campuses: three groups from Prishtina campus and one group from Ferizaj campus.

Participants:

In total there were 90 students from the first year of studies involved in the research: 75 students from Prishtina campus (three groups with 25 students each) and 15 students from Ferizaj campus as shown in the table below:

Table 1. Participants involved in the study

AAB COLLEGE (FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS)		
PRISHTINA CAMPUS	FERIZAJ CAMPUS	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS INVOLVED

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total		
25	25	25	75	15 STUDENTS	90

Procedure: the students were observed while doing reading comprehension exercises of different types. Authentic texts with follow-up questions and different text-related exercises were given to the students. The texts were chosen carefully because the main aim of the researcher was to find out more on the importance of teaching idioms to and learning idioms by the students involved. Some texts contained more idioms and some other texts fewer idioms to see the difference in the students' ability to comprehend and answer questions about the texts. The students were first not given explanation on the idioms used and on later stages the meaning of idioms was explained to the students. Apart from this, some movies were played to the students to see their ability to understand the movie when they were not familiar with the idioms used. The students were also divided into groups and they were expected to give their opinions on the texts read and their ability to understand them. Apart from this, the students were required to take some idiom tests/quizzes (one of them is attached at the end of this paper as an appendix). Notes were taken carefully to see the students' progress.

b) The research carried out by Suhodolli, M. (2020) for his doctoral thesis (dissertation).

The research was carried out in three universities: the AAB College, the Universum College and Fehmi Agani Public University in Gjakova. Out of all the

research instruments used in preparation of the doctoral thesis for the paper in question, the researcher used only the following instruments: pre-test, observations, and post-tests. The observation helped the researcher find out more on idioms and compare the results of the observation from the thesis and the observation mentioned in **a)** above. The pre-test and the post-test were vitally important as they would give a deeper insight into the students' ability to comprehend idioms after they were given the context and consequently comprehend an authentic text when they were familiar with the idioms used.

Participants:

This was a large-scale research. In total, there were 260 students and 19 professors involved in the study: 160 (one hundred and sixty) students and 10 professors from the AAB College English department in Prishtina, eighty (80) students both male and female from the first and 80 students from the second year of studies, 80 students: 40 students from the first year and 40 students from the second year and five (5) professors from the Universum College in Prishtina and Ferizaj campuses as well as twenty (20) students from the fourth year of studies and four (4) professors from Fehmi Agani Public University in Gjakova, The following tables show the participants involved in the research. **Table 2** shows the number of students involved in the study whereas **table 3** shows the number of professors involved in the study:

Table 2. The number of students involved in the study (from the Doctoral Thesis by Suhodolli, 2020)

AAB College Prishtina	Fehmi Agani Public University Gjakova	Universum College Prishtina and Ferizaj campuses
First year students		First year students

80	Fourth year students	40
Second year students		Second year students
80		40

Table 3. The number of professors involved in the study (from the Doctoral Thesis by Suhodolli, 2020)

AAB College Prishtina	Fehmi Agani Public University Gjakova	Universum College
10 professors	4 professors	5 professors

Procedure: This research, as mentioned earlier herein, was part of the doctoral dissertation preparation titled “**The Effect of Context on Acquisition of Idioms by Albanian EFL Learners at University Level in Kosovo**” which, as mentioned above, was carried out in three universities in Kosovo. During the research, the students were first given a pre-test to fill in with tasks containing idiom-related issues most importantly on the effect of context on acquisition of idioms by the Albanian EFL Learners at University Level in Kosovo. This also included the importance of teaching and learning idioms to and by the Albanian students. This was done to see how familiar the students were with idioms so that, in later stages of the research, once the researcher would be done with the observation, the students take the post-test and then see the differences. Upon completion of the pre-test the students were observed in several literature classes when students were expected to deal with the works of various writers. Apart from this, the

researcher received feedback from the professors involved by discussing various issues concerning idioms.

4. Data analysis and results

4.1. Results from this research (from a. above)

During the ILS Reading classes, the students were observed doing reading comprehension exercises where the researcher used authentic texts with idioms and comprehension questions as well as tests / quizzes which had follow-up questions or multiple-choices with idiomatic expressions. Apart from this, movies were played and then students were required to answer questions about and discuss the movies watched. The movies were selected carefully. The following table shows the main issues observed:

Table 4: The issues observed during ILS (Integrated Language Skills): Reading classes

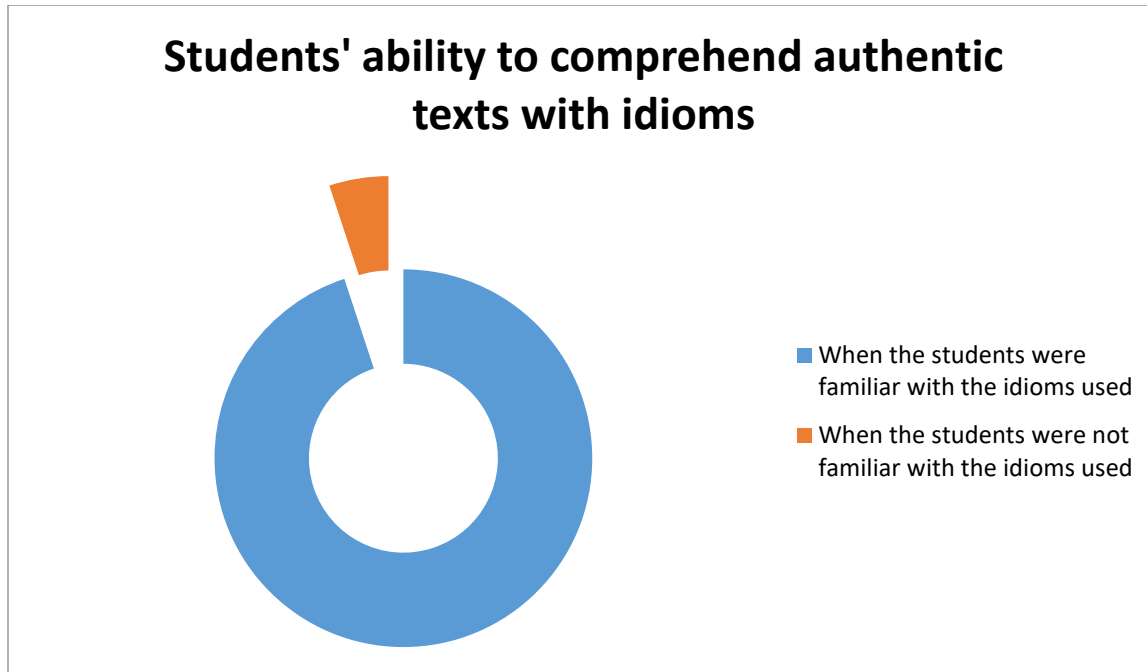
The issues observed during ILS Reading classes	Results
The time the students needed to translate the given authentic texts when the students were not familiar with the idioms used in the given authentic text	The results showed that students could hardly translate the whole text and it took them about 40 minutes to

	translate the text but still could not give proper translation
The time the students needed to translate the given authentic text when they were given clarification on the idioms used. The students were not given the same text as this would not give reliable results.	The results showed that the students were able to translate the given text in about 25 minutes which is 15 minutes faster than before and the translation was much better
The tasks the students were able to complete when they were not familiar with the idioms	Out of 4 tasks, the students in general were able to complete only 2
The tasks the students were able to complete when they were familiar with the idioms	The students were able to complete 4 out of 4 tasks given.
The students' ability to understand a movie with idioms used when they were not familiar with most of the idioms used	The movie lasted for about 90 minutes but the students were required to watch the first 25-30 minutes of the movie so that they did not lose focus. They were able to understand only about 40 % of the movie part played which means about 10 minutes from the movie.
The students' ability to understand a movie with idioms used when they were familiar with the idioms used	The movie lasted for about 90 minutes but the students were required to watch the first 25-30 minutes of the movie so that they did not lose focus. They were able to understand about <u>85 %</u> of the movie part played which means about <u>22</u> minutes from the movie played and this means about twice as more.
The effect of familiarity with idioms on the students' ability to understand an authentic text	The researcher noted that the students involved were able to understand an authentic text much better when the students were familiar with the idioms used.

The observations showed that the students proved to have understood the authentic text, including the idiom-related exercises and other reading comprehension exercises with follow-up questions much better when the students were familiar with the

idioms used in the text. This is best shown in the chart below:

Chart 1: Students' ability to comprehend authentic texts with idioms used



The above chart clearly shows the role / importance of idioms on students' ability to comprehend an authentic text and the importance of teaching idioms at university level in Kosovo. Apart from the reading comprehension texts which contained idioms, there were also discussions on idioms with the students. The main issue discussed with the students was the importance of teaching idioms to the students at university level. Some of the comments the students gave are:

- The student A: "I personally think that idioms are the most important part of any language. The more idioms one is familiar with, the more native-speaker that person can become"
- The student B: "We all want to learn English better and knowing more on idioms is the best way to become very fluent and be able to understand native speakers when speaking in English"
- The student C: "Almost every time that I watch a movie in English, I hear expressions

which I can hardly understand or translate into Albanian and now I realize that those expressions are idioms"

- The student D: "I think that in line with learning about other language chunks, as students, we should be taught idiomatic expressions as idioms are used almost in every situation and almost everywhere"

4.1.1. Results from the test 1 and 2 containing idioms

During the observations, quizzes in the form of tests were also used to check the students' ability to understand authentic texts before and after getting the meaning of the idioms used. This was done in order to see how important idioms are in understanding more authentic texts and consequently the importance of teaching and learning idioms at university level. The following table shows the students' scores in the tests /quizzes before and after being familiar with the idioms:

Table 5. The students' results from the idiom test before and after they got the meaning of the idioms

The students' results before they got the meaning of idioms (test 1)	The students' results after they got the meaning of idioms (test 2)	The difference in the accuracy of the test
45 students (50% of the students) got 5 out of 15 answers right (or 33.3 % of the test)	50 students (55.5. % of the students) got 11 out of 15 answers right (or 73.3 % of the test)	From 5 to 11 = 6 more correct answers which is 40 % better than before
20 students (22.22 % of the students) got 3 out of 15 answers right (20% of the test)	25 students (27.7 % of the students) got 8 out of 15 answers right (or 53.3 % of the test)	From 3 to 8 = 5 more correct answers which is 33.3 % better than before
25 students (27.7 % of the students) got 2 out of 15 answers right (13.3 % of the test)	15 students (16.6 % of the students) got 7 out of 15 answers right (or 46.6 % of the test)	From 2 to 7= 5 more correct answers which is 33.3 % better than before

As it can be seen from the above table, the students got better results in the authentic text test when they were familiar with the meaning of idioms. The number of students who got the right answers increased. It is worth emphasizing that the tests that the students took did not contain the same idioms used previously as the results would not be reliable due to the possibility for the students learn the meaning of the idioms used. In other words, they did not know which idioms would be used in the next idiom test (quiz).

4.2. Results from the doctoral thesis by Suhodolli, M. (2020)

During this research, the students were given a pre-test to fill in with idiom-related tasks (which is attached at the end of this paper as an appendix). The students were also observed during their literature classes. During this time, the researcher also discussed various idiom-related issues with the professors involved in order to get their opinions. By the end, the students

were given a post-test to fill in (this is also attached as an appendix) to see the differences of the results from the pre-test and the post-test.

4.2.1 Results from the pre-test

This test contained 4 different tasks with 42 idioms in total. In the first task, the students were required to underline the idioms used in five (5) sentences. The main aim of this task was to see how familiar the students were with some more common idioms so that when the post - test would be given to them the researcher could see the differences more clearly. The second task required students to translate some idioms into Albanian. The third task required students to match the idioms on the left with their definitions on the right. In the task four (4) the students were required to use one of the three or four idioms to fill in the gaps in the sentences given. In this test, the students scored low. The following table shows the overall results of the students from all universities:

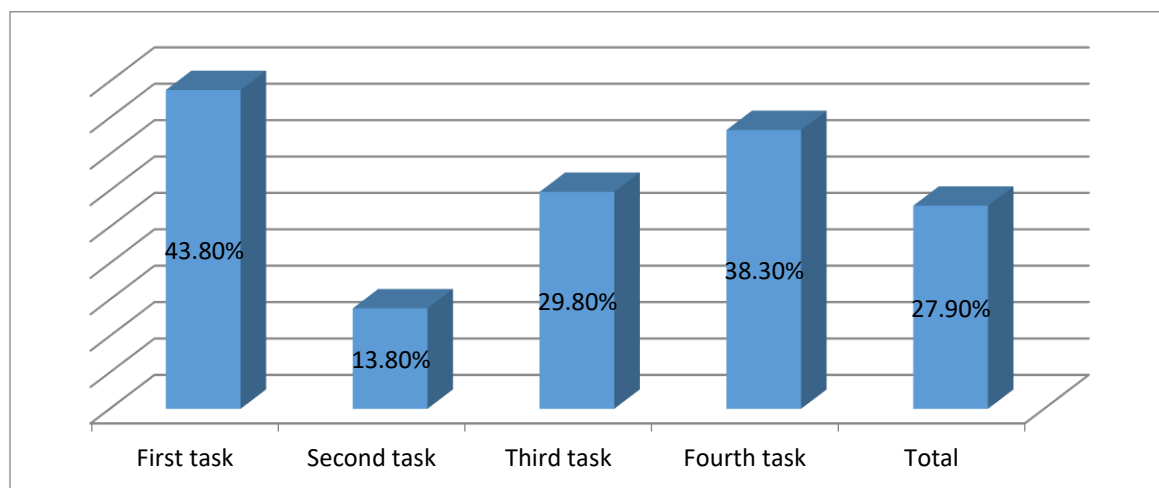
Table 6. The overall results of the students from all universities in the pre-test (Suhodolli, 2020, p.141)

	Total points from the pre-test 45				
260 students in total	Task 1 – 5 points in total	Task 2 – 15 points in total	Task 3 15 points in total	Task 4 10 points in total	Total points in percentage in the pre-test (for all the students)
The percentage of the pre-test on each task for all the students	43.8 %	13.8 %	29.8 %	38.3 %	27.9 %

As it can be seen from the table, in the first task the students got 43.8 % of the first task right, 13.8 % of the second task right, 29.8 % of the third task right and

38.3 % of the fourth task right. In total, the students got 27.9 % of the pre-test right which is quite low. The same is shown in the chart below.

Chart 2. The overall results of the students in the pre-test



The table and the chart show that the students were not able to get the meaning of idioms used in the text except for a few of them. This means that apart from the context, being as more knowledgeable as possible with idioms helps students understand authentic texts much more easily.

4.2.2. Results from observations

During these classes the students were required to look at and analyze the works (poems) of various writers. One of the poems analyzed during one of the literature

classes was **To the lighthouse** by Woolf in 1927 (as cited in Suhodolli, 2020, p.164).

To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail within touch. Since he belonged, even at the age of six, to that great clan which cannot keep his feeling separate from that, but must let future prospects with their joys and sorrows, cloud

what is actually at hand since to such people even in earliest childhood any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallize and transfix the moment upon which its gloom or radiance rests. James Ramsay, sitting on the floor cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue of the Army and Navy Stores endowed the picture of a refrigerator, as his mother spoke, with heavenly bliss.

As seen from the above text taken from the poem, some idioms are underlined. This was one of the lessons in literature class. The professor was trying to do the following: a) find out if the students were familiar with the idioms used; b) make students guess the meaning from the context and c) see the importance of idioms on understanding authentic texts. This showed how important idioms are in understanding English. Another observation worth mentioning was with the fourth year students from Fehmi Agani Public University where the students were required to choose some of the idioms among those the professor had given to them and try to teach them to their classmates. The students were given 20 idioms and try to teach them to their classmates. This activity did not only help the researcher see the importance of idioms in understanding a language, in our case English, but the role of context in comprehending idioms and consequently the entire

text, as well. Apart from this, through this activity, the researcher was also able to see some of the methods that can be used to teach idioms to the university students and come up with some recommendations.

During the observations, the professors discussed different idiom related issues and tested their students on their ability to comprehend the idioms on the one hand and the authentic texts in general on the other. The observations showed that the students were able to understand authentic texts much more easily when they were familiar with the idiom used. This might seem quite simple but the issue is that it is difficult to read an authentic text in which idioms are not used.

4.2.3. Results from the post-test

The post-test helped the researcher come to results after using the context to help the students understand their meaning. This would give better insights into the role of context in understanding idioms and consequently the role of familiarity with idioms on understanding an authentic text. The post-test contained about the same number of idioms as the pre-test. Some of the idioms used in the post-test were the same with those used in the pre-test and some others were different. This was done on purpose to avoid the possibility of students learn those idioms by heart and most importantly for the results be as more reliable as possible. The following table shows the overall results of the students from all three universities in the post-test:

Table 7. Results from the post-test (as cited in Suhodolli, 2020, p.184)

260 students in total	43 points in total			The total percentage of the students scores in the post-test
	Task 1 15 points in total	Task 2 20 points in total	Task 3 8 points in total	
The average percentage of students 'scores in each task	63.7 %	49.1 %	53.7 %	55.1%

The results from the post-test showed that the students were more able to first of all understand idioms much better when the context was given to them and this further helped them understand authentic texts better and faster (which is proven in the total percentage of 55.1 % as compared to the pre-test). The post-test contained only three tasks because the context was given to them and they needed more time to complete the test. So, there were three main issues deriving from the research:

- The great positive effect that context has on comprehending idioms and furthermore authentic texts
- The role of idioms on understanding authentic texts.
- The necessity of teaching idioms at university level.

4.2.4. Results from discussions of different idiom-related issues with the professors involved

Apart from the students, the professors also gave their valuable comments / opinions on the issues related to idioms. Discussions were focused on the following issues:

- The importance of teaching idioms at university level
- The importance of using context on teaching idioms and consequently vocabulary to EFL students
- The necessity for using textbooks which would help professors on the one hand and students on the other teach / learn idioms
- The necessity for using new teaching techniques in teaching idioms to students

Most interestingly, all the professors involved in the research (19) unanimously claimed the importance of teaching idioms at university level (Bachelor's level) and the difficulties that they had in teaching them due to the figurative nature of idioms. Apart from this, the professors claimed to use context in teaching idioms and furthermore authentic texts for example the works of various writers (Shakespeare's for instance). Engaging students in different in-class activities (such as: role-plays) was also considered very important in achieving the goals.

5. Discussions

The paper presents some of the most important idiom-related issues the students and professors in Kosovo should place emphasis on nowadays, such as: the importance of teaching / learning idioms at universities in Kosovo, frequency of their use, some of the reasons as to why their usage in Kosovo has to some extent faded or otherwise been seen unimportant, how to learn idioms more easily and much more. This is vitally important not only for students but for university professors as well in that it gives a clearer picture on some of the challenges/difficulties the students and professors face in trying to learn and teach idioms on the one hand and English language, on the other. The paper is very important in that it paves the way for the other such studies to be carried out and find solutions to the issues concerning idioms. Observations taken from the previous research (for Doctoral Thesis by Suhodolli, 2020) and the ones carried out during the last semester in 2021/2022 academic year provided the researcher with clearer data on dealing with idioms more easily in the future and relating other future studies to this one. The pre-test and the post-test used from the doctoral thesis helped the researcher find out more on the importance of idioms and think of possible future new methods to teach idioms to university students. Discussions with professors, as a part of the research by Suhodolli (2020) for his Doctoral Thesis, also played a very important role because the researcher was able to get insights for the paper in question from the professors' perspective, not only from the students'.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

As seen from the study, using context to learn and teach idioms is very important. Most importantly, using idioms helps students improve English language skills as this will help them understand native speakers of English more easily be it when communicating or else when reading authentic texts written by the natives. The study also sheds light on the necessity of teaching idioms at university level (Bachelor level) meaning either incorporating idioms in as many subjects at the English Departments as possible or else teaching them as a separate subject. A number of other researchers' works who dealt with idioms have been carefully consulted in as many idiom-related issues as possible, such as: the importance of idioms in learning

English, the role of context in teaching idioms and consequently English, the link between vocabulary in general and idioms in particular, the necessity for coming up with new teaching methods in order to teach idioms and this will further help in learning English much faster and better. In addition, Albanian researchers' works were also consulted and this and the methodology used helped the researcher in question ground the hypothesis further yet. Within observations carried out during the last semester 2021/2022 academic year, the researcher was able to also use other instruments: idiom tests/ quizzes, movies and discuss idioms with the students wherein the students expressed their deep interest on further research on idioms.

In other words, the study proves the necessity of teaching / learning about idioms at university level and the following recommendations are given in this regard:

- Idioms should be taught at the Bachelor's level
- Initially, they should be incorporated into another subject and then be taught in a separate subject: they can first be taught within lexicology and then separately,
- Researchers from Kosovo and other neighboring countries, such as Albania, for instance, should come up with new literature on idioms
- New methods for teaching idioms should be used
- Attention is to be paid to the works of different native English writers and they should be analyzed thoroughly
- Students should be given idiom-related tasks be it via internet links or other forms
- When trying to teach idioms to their students, professors should pay particular attention to the culture of the students and the context the idioms have been used in
- Professors should try to use as many idioms as possible during their lectures
- English should be used most of the time, if not all the time
- Different activities with the students are to be organized during lectures, such as: role-play which engage students in learning process
- University professors on the one hand and English departments from different universities on the other should cooperate closer in compiling new textbooks and coming up with new methodology for teaching idioms. This could include professors teaching lexicology, those teaching literature and others conducting research on idiom-related issues.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Pre-test (Suhodolli, 2020, pp.232-234)

Pre-test University _____ Academic year: _____ Male/ Female, Age _____

Note: The following idioms, metaphors, phrasal verbs or proverbs have been used out of the context on purpose. This was done to see how much you will be able to understand these expressions when the context is not given. You are not expected to be able to translate or know them but it is for study (research) purposes only.

Task 1 Identify and underline the idioms, metaphors, phrasal verbs or proverbs in the following sentences. Then, translate the part you have underlined.

1. My sister goes to the cinema once in a blue moon. _____
2. People in my country waste a lot of money on clothes but they actually have to cut their coat according to their cloth. _____
3. People poured out of the hall at the end of the lecture. _____
4. Look out! That dog is going to bite you. _____
5. My unit is working hand in glove with the other units, so that we can finish everything by Friday.

Task 2. Try to translate or explain in your own words the following idioms into Albanian

English	Albanian translation
1. Bad mouth	
2. Off balance	
3. To have someone over a barrel	
4. On the blink	
5. Blow-by-blow	
6. To buck	
7. Butter up	
8. To not see the forest for the trees	
9. To buy	

10. By and by
11. To chip in
12. To chew out
13. To chomp at the bit
14. Chopped liver
15. A cinch

Task 3: Match the idioms on the right with their definition on the left by putting the letter of the definition next to the idiom

Idiom	Definition
1. A couch potato _____	A. Someone who spends too much time watching TV and not exercising
2. Count _____	B. In difficulty or trouble with no solution
3. Crack (to crack a joke) _____	C. Someone who will later become very good or very special
4. The cream of the crop _____	D. The best of the best
5. (creek) up a creek without a paddle _____	E. To try to fall asleep without success
6. A creep _____	F. Of poor quality or appearance
7. Crummy _____	G. An unpleasant, strange or bad person
8. Damned if you do, damned if you don't _____	H. To be unable to remember something
9. A diamond in the rough (A diamond) _____	I. To pay the entire amount even for other people
10. To draw a blank _____	J. Likely to be criticized equally by those who are for it and those who are against it
11. At the end of one's rope _____	K. To be in the best of health and spirit
12. To feel in one's bones _____	L. To take someone's place, especially in a job
13. To feel like e million dollars _____	M. Having no more patience; exhausted emotionally
14. To fill someone's shoes _____	N. To have a feeling that something is about to happen
15. To foot the bill _____	O. To tell a funny story

Task 4. Choose the correct idiom

1. **Jack has an egg _____ because he couldn't remember how to spell "Batman"**
 - a) on his teeth b) on his face c) on his shirt d) on his fingers
2. **As the maestro lifted his baton the theater was so still you could hear _____.**
 - a) his heartbeat b) a pin drop c) bird wings d) the drum beating
3. **I don't agree with you, but your idea certainly gives me food _____.**
 - a) for fun b) for consider c) for thought d) for thinking
4. **I think I understand the nuts and _____ of the operation.**

- a) screws b) hammer c) nails d) bolts
5. **I'm afraid hip hop isn't my cup of _____.**
a) tea b) java c) coffee d) wine
6. **Just a moment...I've got the answer on the _____ of my tongue.**
a) top b) tip c) tap d) back
7. **Look, I will pay you back. Would you please call the _____?**
a) hunters off b) tigers off c) dogs off d) apes off
8. **Ever since he married Jane, he's had a new _____ on life.**
a) rent b) lease c) title d) loan
9. **Oh, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that. I guess I really put my _____ in my mouth.**
a) foot b) hand c) elbow d) knee
10. **I'll be back in the twinkling of _____.**
a) eye b) a smile c) a lighting bolt d) a laugh

Taken from: Defense Language Institute English Language Center (2001) American Language Course BOOK OF IDIOMS: Slang, Special Expressions, & Idiomatic Language. Defense Language Institute English Language Center, Lackland Air Force Base Texas.

Appendix 2: One of the idiom tests used during the observations

Name: _____

Idioms Test 1

(Source: <https://www.ereadingworksheets.com/worksheets/figurative-language/idiom-worksheets/idiom-test-01/>)

Directions: Determine the meaning of the bolded expression. Choose the best answer.

Idiom: A common expression understood figuratively, as the literal definition makes no sense.

1. After going to the zoo, the mall, and the movies, Cassie was sick of **bending over backwards** to entertain her nieces.
- a. Cassie was doing very little to entertain her nieces.
b. Cassie was making small efforts to entertain her nieces.
c. Cassie was trying very hard to entertain her nieces.
d. Cassie was not trying at all to entertain her nieces.
2. Bobby would have been playing ball **until the cows came home** if it hadn't been for Suzie dragging him home for dinner.
- a. Bobby was just about to stop playing ball.

- b. Bobby didn't even want to play ball to begin with.
- c. Bobby prefers nature to athletics.
- d. Bobby would have continued playing ball for a long time.
3. Mr. Johnson was very particular about the arrangement of his classroom, so the thing he hated most was when his students caused a ruckus with their wild **horseplay**.
- a. Mr. Johnson hated when his students pretended to be animals.
- b. Mr. Johnson hated when his students played sports.
- c. Mr. Johnson hated when his students wrestled around with each other.
- d. Mr. Johnson hated when his students made animal noises.
4. Eric wanted to fix his cousin's computer, but he was already having problems setting up his Aunt's Wi-Fi network and he didn't want to **open a whole new can of worms**.
- a. Eric was sick of spending his time helping his family.
- b. Eric wanted to go fishing instead of working on computers.
- c. Eric was having difficulties untangling the computer wires.
- d. Eric was not ready to begin working on a complicated new problem.
5. Even though Candace already had a new job, she submitted her two week notice and conducted herself in a professional way at her old job because she didn't want to **burn bridges**.
- a. Candace didn't want to ruin her positive relationship with her old employer.
- b. Candace wasn't ready to start her new job.
- c. Candace was really going to miss her old job.
- d. Candace was waiting until her last day to rub it in everyone's face that she was leaving.
6. World renowned country western super group The Mountain Boys can sell out an arena **at the drop of a hat**.
- a. The Mountain Boys may be able to sell out an arena, but it will take a long time.
- b. The Mountain Boys can sell out an arena very quickly.
- c. The Mountain Boys are always willing to perform at charity events.
- d. The Mountain Boys enforce a dress code at all of their shows.
7. Vivian expected Craig to sob uncontrollably when she broke up with him; however, Craig **kept a stiff upper lip**.
- a. Craig cried even more than Vivian had expected.
- b. Craig cried about as much as Vivian had expected.
- c. Craig cried a little less than Vivian had expected.
- d. Craig did not cry.

8. Mrs. Robinson expects Cassie and my presentation to be good, but we have been working on it every night for the last week, so we are really going to **knock her socks off**.

- a. Cassie and the speaker are not prepared to give a good presentation.
- b. Cassie and the speaker intend on hitting Mrs. Robinson rather than presenting.
- c. Cassie and the speaker's presentation will far exceed Mrs. Robinson's expectations.
- d. Cassie and the speaker's presentation will meet Mrs. Robinson's expectations.

9. Over the summer Brian was really excited about being placed in the advanced math class, but after getting his syllabus on the first day and seeing the workload, he was ready to **jump ship**.

- a. Brian was even more excited about the math class than he was over the summer.
- b. Brian wanted to start working on his math assignments right away.
- c. Brian did not want to be in the advanced math class anymore.
- d. Brian wanted to cause some trouble in the advanced math class.

10. Jose had a hard time comparing the iPhone to the Samsung phone because to him they were **apples and oranges**.

- a. Jose can hardly tell the difference between the two phones because they are so similar.
- b. Jose believes that the phones are so different from one another that they cannot be compared.
- c. Jose doesn't know anything about phones so he may as well be thinking about fruits.
- d. Jose is too hungry to think about phones at this time.

11. When Brian felt pretty good about getting the a pair of roller-skates for his birthday, until he saw his twin brother Ryan open up his GameBox X-9000, and then Brian felt like he **got the short end of the stick**.

- a. Brian felt like Ryan received a better gift than he.
- b. Brian was quite pleased with his roller skates.
- c. Brian wanted a long stick that he could use to support himself on hikes.
- d. Brian feels bad for Ryan because Ryan wanted roller-skates.

12. After Ms. Smith caught Darnisha chewing gum for the third time, Ms. Smith scheduled a parent teacher conference with Darnisha's mother. When Darnisha's mother came into Ms. Smith's classroom, she was chewing gum. Ms. Smith thought to herself, "**the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.**"

- a. Ms. Smith thinks that Darnisha dresses like her mother.
- b. Ms. Smith thinks that Darnisha acts a lot like her mother.
- c. Ms. Smith is surprised to see that Darnisha's mother came.
- d. Ms. Smith thinks that Darnisha's mother lives very close to the school.

13. Brad was accusing us of stealing his phone until he found it, and now he's trying to **sweep it under the rug**.

- a. Brad thinks that his phone will be safer if he hides it under the rug.

- b. Brad wants to do something to make up for his mistake.
- c. Brad is trying to locate a signal for his phone so that he can use it.
- d. Brad wants to pretend that the incident never happened.

14. Keisha got up and started yelling at Ronnie and threatening him but Ronnie didn't even flinch because he knew that her **bark was worse than her bite**.

- a. Ronnie thinks that Keisha will get in trouble for yelling.
- b. Ronnie thinks that Keisha has bad breath.
- c. Ronnie thinks that Keisha is loud but not dangerous.
- d. Ronnie thinks that Keisha has a crush on him.

15. You might think that Billy Parker is the kid who has everything, but if you saw the list of chores his parents give him, I guarantee that you wouldn't want to **be in his shoes**.

- a. You wouldn't want your shoes to get as dirty as Billy's when he's doing his chores.
- b. If you have to do as many chores as Billy, you'll want a pair of comfortable shoes.
- c. Billy shoes are so uncomfortable that doing his chores is really unpleasant.
- d. Billy has so many chores to do that it is unpleasant to imagine doing them all.

Appendix 3: Post- test (Suhodolli, 2020, pp 248-251)

Post-test University _____ Academic year: _____ Male/ Female, Age _____

Note: The following idioms have been used in context to see how much you will be able to grasp their meaning. Apart from this, this test is meant to see the effect of context on acquisition of idioms. Therefore, please try to complete the tasks to the best of your knowledge.

Task 1. Read the following sentences and try to translate the idioms underlined

The sentence with the underlined idiom	Your translation
Steve <u>bad-mouthed</u> Pete after they lost the soccer game.	
I was caught <u>off balance</u> when I was asked to sing in front of the whole group.	
Sue has Steve <u>over a barrel</u> .	
My car is <u>on the blink</u> again, so I need to get a ride.	
The captain gave us a <u>blow-by-blow</u> description of the attack.	
It would be useless <u>to buck</u> the decision to buy the new computers.	

We tried to <u>butter</u> the instructor <u>up</u> in order to get a good grade.	
Henry can't <u>see the forest for the trees</u> since he always focuses on the unimportant issues.	
The boss didn't <u>buy</u> Rita's story about running out of gas on the way to work this morning.	
I know you don't understand any of this now, but you'll learn it all <u>by and by</u> .	
We all <u>chipped in</u> to buy Jean a birthday present.	
John got <u>chewed out</u> for failing to get the necessary supplies.	
Rob is <u>chomping at the bit</u> wanting to know what he made on yesterday's test.	
I felt like <u>chopped liver</u> when everyone was ignoring me.	
Fixing the fuel pump in my old car was <u>a cinch</u> for a skilled mechanic like Al.	

Taken from: Defense Language Institute English Language Center (2001) American Language Course BOOK OF IDIOMS: Slang, Special Expressions, & Idiomatic Language. Defense Language Institute English Language Center, Lackland Air Force Base Texas.

Task 2. Read the story and try to match the idioms on the left (used in the story) with their definition on the right. The idioms are in bold.

Young and Free: Prerequisite for Success

Let's face it: In today's business world you need to be young and free of attachments to strike it rich. It's a dog eat dog world out there and you're going to have to work quite a lot. Of course, not only will you have to work quite a lot, you'll need to be flexible and ready to take advantage of anything. That's where the "free" part comes in.

I've got a young friend, he's only 25, but he fits the bill perfectly. He's single and he's hungry. He's willing to

start from scratch and, best of all, he isn't afraid of putting his nose to the grindstone for those 80 hour weeks. He decided to take the bull by the horns by going starting up his own business. He found a software developer who knew the internet inside out. This young man was also very ambitious. He left his safe job at the drop of a hat. They were both reaching for pie in the sky, and they were ready.

They also were lucky. They founded a startup and got into the whole social networking business in 2002. In other words, they were early birds and they were willing to sink or swim. Probably the most important ingredient in their success was that they were willing to play things by ear. They kept their ears to the ground, moved full steam ahead and drove hard bargains. Soon, their business was growing by leaps and bounds. Of course, they had some stumbling blocks along the way. Who doesn't? Still, they got the jump on the competition and by the year 2008, they were multi-millionaires. This sort of success for the young and free now has copycats around the world.

at the drop of a hat _____	very competitive
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by leaps and bounds _____	someone or a company who tries to do things like another person or company
dog eat dog _____	to make a business deal that is very advantageous for you
copycat _____	to have the right characteristics for something
drive a hard bargain _____	to have expert knowledge about something
early bird _____	to improvise in a situation, react to a situation as it occurs
fit the bill _____	to continue with full commitment
sink or swim _____	to become rich, often by creating a new product or service successfully
get the jump on someone/sth _____	something very hard to achieve, a dream
startup _____	to work hard and put in many hours
have (keep) one's ears to the ground ____	to start from the beginning
play something by ear _____	someone who takes early advantage of a situation
know something inside out _____	very quickly (used with improvement)
full steam ahead _____	to get the advantage over someone by starting early
pie in the sky _____	to pay attention to rumours, news, and industry insiders
start from scratch _____	immediately
put one's nose to the grindstone _____	a small company that begins to do business, usually in technology
take the bull by the horns _____	a difficulty or hurdle that stands in the way of success
strike it rich _____	to confront a problem and deal with it
stumbling block _____	succeed or fail

Task 3: Use the appropriate idioms from the table to fill in the gaps.

I think Peter _____. He's perfect for the job.

It's _____ on the project. We have no time to waste.

Don't pretend you're like Kevin. Nobody likes a _____.

The business person _____, but we had to accept her offer.

I think it's best to _____ the meeting _____. We need to consider everything.

He founded a _____ in 2008 and made millions.

Our business has grown _____. We're very happy.

I'm afraid I think that idea is _____. It will never work.

Kenet, B. (2018, August 12) Young and free: Prerequisite for success. Thought Co. Retrieved from:
<https://www.thoughtco.com/young-and-free-prerequisite-for-success-1210197>