

MASTERING IDIOMATIC EXPRESSION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH READING COMPREHENSION OF FIFTH SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT UNISMA

Miswak

sagauteam@gmail.com

Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,
English Education Department,
University of Islam Malang

Abstract

The aim of this research was to find out whether there is relationship between mastering idiomatic expressions with reading comprehension of fifth semester students of English department at University of Islam Malang. The population and the sample of this research were from fifth semester students and it was made up of 30 homogeneous students in the F class and was chosen using the cluster sampling method. The instrument from the idiom test which was adopted from online and offline source, and consist of 25 questions with multiple choice answers. Then, reading comprehension test consist of 25 multiple choice questions, contains several of idioms in the text which is adopted from reading TOEFL test. The result showed that the mean of the idiom mastery scores for the participants is 69.03 and the standard deviation is 5.430 and the mean of the reading comprehension scores for the participants is 78.40 and the standard deviation is 3.971, for the result Pearson-Product Moment Correlation indicates that the correlation coefficient table of df at 5% significance is considered to be .374. It shows that it is lower than the correlation coefficient table score, which is $.303 < .374$, based on the correlation coefficient of the measurement, which was .303. This means that H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected. Namely, there is no significant relationship between students who have good ability in mastering idioms and students' comprehension of reading skill.

Keyword: idiomatic expression, reading comprehension, relationship

INTRODUCTION

Students learn four skills to acquire English; reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

Reading is one of skills which the resources are easy to be obtained. English texts are readable in various media, for example: magazine, newspapers, books, advertisements, novels, film, and even status in Social Media. By reading, a lot of new information can be obtained by the students.

As receptive skills, reading skill seems to be considered as passive skill. Actually, this skill actually is not passive skill but very active skill, since it obliges the reader to obtain meanings, process it, and create an understanding what kind of information was delivered. Reading is not easy since it needs numerous of prior knowledge and dexterity of comprehension. If the readers are unsuccessful to obtain the goal of information, their reading also is failed.

Brown notes about that the goal of teaching reading is to encourage students to understand and respond to what writings have been read. Recognizing the relevance of the text is one of the reading markers in the curriculum. Based on the syllabus, it is expected that senior high school students can master some basic word in English. It is really important to understand the words because well knowing the words in the textual idea that the students read allows them to understand the context.

In Lidya Casteliana, Haris argues that about 6.7 percent of phrases or sentences in reading materials use idioms. One of the language components of learning English is an idiomatic expression. Sridhar and Karunakaran state that idiom is “a group of two or more words which are chosen together in order to produce a specific meaning or effect in speech or writing”. Apart of that, an idiom is an expression that is a concept or a phrase whose meaning cannot be derived from the basic meaning and the arrangement of its elements, but instead it refers to a figurative meaning understood only by common use. It is difficult to grasp or conceive idioms since it is not possible to find out the terms of the idioms from the individual words. A reader should therefore be able to improve his or her knowledge of idiomatic speech to prevent errors and understand the reading well..

Idioms have distinctive meaning from its lexical meaning. It usually consists of two words or more then create new meaning. For instance, “Costs an arm and a leg” which means

something that is overpriced or very expensive (Merriam-Webster.com, n.d), it will become weird and irrational if the readers translate it using their original meaning literally and word by word. The purpose of learning idiom is to understand and to get a complete comprehension what the idiom means based on the context. Idiom is differed from its individual word so the readers cannot translate it word by word, but students sometimes translate the text word by word, and this is why it is difficult for some students to grasp the text of idioms well since many students lack prior knowledge of idioms.

In regard to the descriptions above, the researcher also experienced the difficulty in his reading class which focus on extensive reading, especially in understanding text that contain idioms such as novel. Mostly, idioms that occur in text are in form of phrasal verb. A phrasal verb is verb that combine verb with adverb and preposition, verb and preposition or verb and adverb. For instance, *take off*, *get in*, *turn on*, etc. Students may guest the idiom interpretation differently by converting the words from the actual meaning. The misinterpretation will possibly disturb students' comprehension, since overall comprehension is only able to be obtained as they understand the meaning of expressions, such as idioms, formed from certain words.. Besides, this situation may occur when students are not aware of the idioms they read in the text. In line with those explanations in order to understand the nature of language, Fromkin and Rodman (cited in Darmono, 2013) claimed that it is a must for students to understand the nature of this internalized, unconscious collection of rules that are part of any language's grammar. This stresses that in reading, idioms need to be learned, since reading comprehension is also impaired by it.

It is interesting to note the correlation of both variables when analyzing them, since the idiomatic expression is not new comer in the English language. In both written and spoken

languages, idioms are very common. Particularly in written languages, idioms are commonly found in magazines, novels, newspapers, etc. So, to understand the message of texts, students need to be able to master the idioms. Students who master idioms well can be said to be better at reading comprehension than they do not. Then, learners who lack idiom mastery often lack understanding of reading. Since students need to consider the definition of idioms themselves when reading a text and discovering idioms. At least, in order to get a whole understanding, they guess the definition of idioms by context.

Previous study was represented by Gautama (2014), this research for students of English Language Education aims to discover the advantages of studying English idioms. Using two styles of major theories on vocabulary learning and lexical chunks, the researcher investigated the answers to the research query. And by using library research, three advantages of studying English idioms were discovered by previous investigators. At the first, learners can increase their awareness of vocabulary mastery. Second, in speaking English, learners will gain fluency, which means that they will be able to construct words, phrases and sentences sounding more natural and informal. The last, the students of English Language Education should avoid misinterpretation when engaging with native speakers of English using idioms on a daily basis. In sum, it concludes that by learning idioms, students will be more advanced in English, specifically on spoken skill. Present research aims to find out correlation between idioms mastery and receptive skill, particularly in comprehension of readings.

Based on the explanation of the author above, he believes that reading comprehension is linked to mastering idioms, so the author would like to perform a research with the title:

Mastering Idiomatic Expression and Its Relationship with Reading Comprehension.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Definition of Idiom

There are words in languages all over the world that cannot be readily interpreted in literal terms. It can therefore not be seen as a normal confidence in the understanding of the meaning. Because of not having a proprietary purpose the idioms typically are erratic or unpredictable. And if people know all the words already and their meanings in a phrase and completely understood all structure rules grammatically in the phrase, occasionally a signification of the phrase is constantly confusing. A type of these phrase or sentence is called idiom (Spears, 2004). Readers can find this type of phrase or sentence in many kinds of text such journal texts, magazines or newspaper advertisements.

Idiom comes with two more words that vary in significance from their original sense of distinct words. Idioms produce new meanings that are typically unpredictable and distinct from the meanings of separate words. In addition, In a bunch of words that have already had their prior meaning, the idiom introduces a new meaning (Makkai , Gates, & Boatner, 1987).When these assimilated words form a phrase or sentence, it will bring out a new meaning into those words.

Redman and Gairns (2003) argued “Idiom is a sequence of words which operates as a single semantic unit, and like many multi-word verbs the meaning of the whole cannot be deduced from an understanding of the parts”. Also, the reader should not translate or divide the words into a single part of the semantic unit in order to understand the meaning of idioms, since the meaning of the idiom can be understood by the interrelation of its meanings. If the learners translate the phrase containing the language, for example, in “this works are piece of cake for me” this may be a strange meaning, but the sentence can be interpreted as if the idiom is not translated literally as “this works are easy for me”

An idiom is a word assimilation that varies from the previous meaning as a single of words that stands with their own meaning. It will give you a clue based on the context to guess the meaning if you understand each word separately and have previous knowledge about it. Idiom also distinguishes several varieties to the language, helps us to emphasize interest of using variation style of language which has a different meaning and makes our observations, judgments and explanations of the language live and interested. These styles of language are also absolutely wonderful tools to use for communication of a great deal in a use of variant words in language. It is also a language style usually used in several formal writings or communicative writing, so the writings will attract the readers' interest to get the focal point of contextual writings.

Several meanings of idioms explained above can be summarized as an idiom is a group of one or more assimilated words that as part of them have a different meaning from the separate words. Another, it cannot be converted into literal meaning, but idiom has a sense of a whole contextual-meaning words. Some of the idioms are often ungrammatical and irrational, while others, through guessing from the context, are grammatical order and logical intent.

The Definition of Reading

Based on Stoller and Grabe, (2002), "reading is the ability to draw meaning from printed text and interpret the information. A reader has several purposes and each purpose has different skills and strategies to understand the text." Reading is a passive communication between the writer and the reader to deliver the idea which the writer needs to explain. In other word, the main point of writing is provided in the text messages by the writer, and somebody who needs the whole information about the idea will understand about what the writer's desire to share. In addition, reading is also process to comprehend idea contextually on the text. The readers' need is to understand what the writer intends to express using textual means. They as receivers of textual

information have to be careful in conceiving the summary of the message by having many prior knowledge and information, so that there will be no misunderstood idea between owner of the idea and receiver.

Harmer (1998) in the same manner also declared that reading is very useful ways for several purposes too; any mastery to English is very useful and great skill to enlarge students' languages. Some of languages drive in their minds as a part of language acquisition process, and if they are interested and persuaded to read the texts, acquisition likely work them out easily.

As the definition of reading above that the experts explained about, it sums up that reading proceed to writer's messages to deliver for the reader. The readers' eyes observe the textual writings and save the information into the brain and cultivate them with the background knowledge that they have as information. Some of the readers read to get information while some do it to have fun but the basic goals of reading is when the readers read the writing they get the desire of idea the writer expects to share with.

METHOD

In this case, the researcher used quantitative research method; he collected and analyzed the data statistically from the instrument idiomatic expressions and reading comprehension in order to find out mastering idiomatic expression and its relationship with reading comprehension of fifth semester students of English department UNISMA. Two variables independent variable and dependent variable were existed. The predictor variable (a.k.a. X variable) is idiom competence and it is the variable that explained and predicted another variable. Because the criterion variable (a.k.a. Y variable) is reading comprehension, it is the variable being predicted by predictor variable.

The populations of this research are 172 students from fifth semester students enrolled in the English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty at the University of Islam Malang were the target population of this study. The study, meanwhile, is intended to take samples from large populations for being data collection. It was made up of 30 homogeneous students in the F class and was chosen using the cluster sampling method.

The data are collected using two types of tests to be the instrument for measuring mastery of idiomatic competence and their ability of reading comprehension to get the idea from the text what they have read before. The writer gives two continuous tests: First, twenty five multiple-choice questions of idiom test is given to them in order to measure their idioms mastery. As soon as they have done well, the writer gives reading test consist of twenty five multiple-choice questions and it is composed three passages. In order to measure their reading comprehension, the researcher put five questions each passage. The test is held via online medium, which is Jotform. Tests are administered in the same time to get valid data. For analyzing the data, the researcher uses IBM SPSS to get reliable calculation. Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula is used to find out the relationship of both variables.

RESULT

In the descriptive statistic, the result showed the result of mean, standard derivation; N is as a participant in test. The result of descriptive statistic can be seen in table as follow.

Descriptive Statistics Analysis

		Statistic	Std. Error
X	Mean	69.03	.991
	Median	68.00	
	Variance	29.482	
	Std. Deviation	5.430	
	Minimum	60	
	Maximum	78	
	Mean	78.40	.725
Y	Median	78.00	

Variance	15.766
Std. Deviation	3.971
Minimum	72
Maximum	88

The descriptive statistics analysis of idiom mastery score of the participants shows that: the maximum score is 78, and the minimum score is 60; the mean of the idiom mastery scores for the participants is 69.03 and the standard deviation is 5.430. For reading comprehension score, it shows that: the maximum score is 88, and the minimum score is 72; the mean of the reading comprehension scores for the participants is 78.40 and the standard deviation is 3.971. Meanwhile the following table shows the output of idiom mastery and reading comprehension.

Table 4.3 Pearson Product Moment Output

		X	Y
X	Pearson Correlation	1	.303
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.103
	N	30	30
Y	Pearson Correlation	.303	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.103	
	N	30	30

The correlation coefficient was .303, and the level of probability (p) significance (sig.2-tailed) was .103. It means that p (.103) was higher than .05. Thus, there was no significant relationship between the students' idiom mastery and their reading comprehension. the correlation coefficient table of df at 5% significance is considered to be .374. It shows that it is lower than the correlation coefficient table score, which is $.303 < .374$, based on the correlation coefficient of the measurement, which was .303. This means that H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected. Namely, there is no significant relationship between students who have good ability in mastering idioms and students' comprehension of reading skill.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to investigate whether idiom mastery in fifth semester students of the University of Islam Malang is linked to reading comprehension. Two different instruments; idiom mastery and reading comprehension tests; were administered to find out the research questions.

The outcome indicates that there was no significant correlation between both variables. This led to an evidence that other significant variables could have a greater effect on reading comprehension than idiom mastery. In particular, on reading comprehension rather than on idiom mastery, the result also showed a higher mean score. This finding may be linked to the fact that vocabulary is an aspect that students practice more often. In addition, the acquisition of vocabulary elements can be the easiest area to master for EFL learners.

The score of students was relatively low from the data description of idiom mastery. The mean score of only 69.03, which is far from the standard completion in normal academic scoring, was shown. The reasons for this claim were supported by Foster's (2001) argumentation, which argued that non-native speakers learn much of their language not with lexicalized routines, but by rules, as opposed to native speakers. Therefore, even though students having low skill of mastering idiom can achieve better score of English reading ability if they are good in vocabularies, structure and morphology aspects.

In the meantime, it showed opposite results on the basis of reading comprehension results, as can be seen from the average score of 78.40. This shows that other significant variables can affect reading comprehension more than idiom mastery. This finding may mean that more than idiom mastery, other variables can influence reading capacity. Studies have

already shown that reading is not a simple skill, but an active and complicated psychological mechanism associated with a number of variables (Kwon, 2005)

The reading comprehension test, which in this case uses TOEFL's adapted test, uses vocabulary and syntactic linguistic decoding, and understands the local message, is as worthwhile as understanding the global message and using prior knowledge to make the interpretation of the written more meaningful message. These variables may probably affect the achievement of reading, besides idiom mastery. As Alderson (2000) said, there are many factors that affect the reading process and product, such as their perspective and subject/topic comprehension, culture, target language, and linguistic knowledge. While students lack idiom mastery, it can be inferred that it barely affects their understanding of reading as well.

In short, the results showed that idiom mastery is not the only dominant feature that affects understanding of reading. The researcher hypothesized that understanding of reading is affected by some of the factors, including lack of prior knowledge of contextually comprehending reading and lack of motivation caused by pandemic Covid-19 to develop their understanding of reading. They are still not well prepared of unpredictable situation or not already used to be in this difficult condition yet. Therefore, to be good at reading comprehension, students should not learn single aspect, but they have to learn some other aspects such as vocabularies, structure, morphology, background knowledge etc.

CONCLUSION

According to the previous chapter, it shows that the idiom mastery of students is weakly linked to their reading comprehension of fifth semester students of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at the English Department of the University of Islam Malang. The relationship is shown by the .303 correlation coefficient, which is significant at the .05 level, where it is smaller

than the .374 correlation coefficient table. This implies that H0 is welcomed and H1 is discarded.

The correlation coefficient shows that there is no significant relationship of both variables.

Therefore, the conclusion is that idiom mastery cannot be used to predict reading

comprehension. It also means that lack of idiom mastery does not mean they are deficient on reading comprehension.

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