

Kurdish EFL Learners' Competency in Recognizing the Meaning of Contextual English Idioms

Dekan J. Hama Saeed¹, Sonia F. Hasib², Atta A. Ahmed³

¹Language Consultancy Center, Charho University, Chamchamal/Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

²Language Consultancy Center, Charho University, Chamchamal/Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

³English Language Teaching Department, Tishk International University, Kurdistan Region, Iraq.

ABSTRACT

Idioms generally comprise basic elements of any language and culture. Master control of English idioms assists as a prime indication of language proficiency. The present study aims to explore the ability of Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners in recognizing the contextual meaning of English idioms. The researchers carried out the study using a quantitative method. The sample of the study comprised 76 learners, including 57 females and 19 males. Concerning the academic levels, 33 third year and 43 fourth year constituted the participants of the study. The research attempts to explore the variation between both genders and academic levels in recognizing the contextual meaning of English idioms. The participants undertook a test to detect their level of comprehension of the idioms. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to assess the differences between genders: male and female, and academic levels: third-year and fourth-year participants. The statistical test, independent sample t-test was used to analyze the data. The findings of the study demonstrated the lack of statistical differences between male and female participants in recognizing English idioms. Furthermore, no significant variations were observed between the academic levels. The results offer an understanding of our perceptions at which point gender and academic level of the learners may have implications in determining English idioms among Kurdish learners. This study focused on the significance of using quantitative methods to investigate language competency, highlighting the need for targeted instruction in language strategies to enhance the understanding of English idioms in language teaching.

KEY WORDS: English idioms, Idiom recognition, Kurdish EFL learners, Gender differences, Academic Level differences

1. INTRODUCTION

Mastering idioms is crucial for language proficiency because they offer deeper cultural insights and enable more vivid and expressive communication. Correspondingly, understanding the meaning of idioms shows learners' knowledge and awareness of the cultural references the native speakers use. Even though idioms form an important aspect of any language and culture,

teaching and learning idioms is a challenging task for foreign language teachers and learners. Yousif (2012) asserts that learners' poor performance of English idioms can be linked to the reason that the number of studies on EFL learners' idiom acquisition is not satisfactory. He further clarifies, that when it comes to language teaching and learning, usually non-literal meanings of words and idioms have not received much attention, meanwhile studying grammar received the primary focus. The negligence of idioms might be due to the fact that grammar and individual words have been considered as the main components of any language. However, metaphorical expressions such as idioms have not been regarded as the main elements of a language. Another

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reason for overlooking metaphorical expressions, such as idioms, is that they are often perceived merely as embellishments in speech when communicating with others. Furthermore, the meanings of idioms were considered as completely unanticipated. Teaching idioms is a challenging mission because there is no specific rule or determined way for the formation of idioms. Learners' only choice is to learn idioms on their own. The outdated view of considering idioms as "dead metaphors" which means expressions that cannot be taught and can only be learnt by heart is discussed by Vasiljevic (2015); idioms are still considered as expressions that need to be memorized by most language teachers. Nonetheless, idioms need to be taught, and learners need to understand the nature of idioms. Vasiljevic further refers to some reasons why idioms should be taught overtly, namely, the prevalence of idioms in any language, their difficulty to be comprehended by EFL learners due to their nature and structure, learners' limited vocabulary of the target language, and having no information of the target language culture are among some of the reasons that reiterate the significance of teaching idioms.

On the subject of idiom acquisition and the challenges EFL learners face, idioms can be categorized and elucidated in various ways: semantically, syntactically, and so on. There are many idioms with different structures and meanings. Regarding semantic transparency, some idioms are simple, and the hearer can comprehend the meaning easily as there is a relationship between the meaning of the idiom and its individual constituents. These are called transparent idioms. In contrast, opaque idioms are those of which the meaning cannot be deduced easily from its separate components. Nonetheless, the clearness or obscurity of an idiom cannot be determined in an unambiguous manner. The level of obscurity or transparency of an idiom depends on the person's knowledge and awareness of the world, target language traditions, culture, proficiency, and familiarity with the target language (Philip, 2009).

Regarding the structure of idioms and syntactic characteristics, Liu (2017) argues that there are various types of structures, such as phrasal verbs like "put up with", or phrasal compounds such as "high-handed." Another type is called *tourneures*; this type consists of a verb and two or more nouns, as seen in examples like "take the bull by the horns" (Makkai, 2009, as cited in Liu, 2017).

Although idioms are an integral part of language, the acquisition of English idioms by EFL learners and their ability to incorporate them into speech is a relatively new topic that has not received much attention from researchers. Investigating the learners' proficiency levels

and their ability to understand idioms is of utmost importance, as it provides language teachers and stakeholders with insight into how to address idioms, how to teach them, and how to design a curriculum that meets the learners' needs.

The research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent does context play a role in recognizing the meaning of English idioms by Kurdish EFL learners?
2. Does gender affect the learners' performance in idiom recognition?
3. Does academic level affect the learners' performance in idiom recognition?

Based on the above research questions, the following hypotheses were generated:

H₀: Gender and academic level of students have no significant impact on the ability of Kurdish EFL learners to recognize the meanings of English idioms.

H₁: Gender and academic level of students have a significant impact on the ability of Kurdish EFL learners to recognize the meanings of English idioms.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of Idiom

Scholars widely concur that arriving at a precise definition for idioms is a formidable task (Philip, 2009). There are many differences in the structure and quality of idioms in terms of syntactic and semantic properties. One general definition of idiom is that it is a complicated statement with a meaning that cannot be determined directly from the separate meanings of its components (Makkai, 2009; Mohammed, 2023). Thus, if one wishes to understand the meaning of "every cloud has a silver lining," checking the separate meanings of each word (the literal meaning) would not be helpful; it is the figurative meaning that requires investigation. Conversely, Philip (2009) asserts that this definition is also applicable to other expressions, such as phrases, collocations, fixed greetings, and so on. These expressions are not necessarily categorized as idioms. On the other hand, several characteristics distinguish an idiom from other expressions, these include; "1- the order of words within an idiom cannot be changed, 2- the words in an idiom cannot be deleted, 3- no extra words can be added to an idiom, 4- no words in an idiom can be replaced by another word, and 5- the grammatical structures of an idiom cannot be changed" (Baker 1992 as cited in Ismaeel and Mohammed, 2020. P. 305).

2.2 Classification of Idioms

Idioms can be classified in various ways by different

scholars. Hockett (1960, p. 310) mentions 6 types of idioms which are listed below:

1. Substitutes: Anaphoric substitutes act as idiomatic expressions. They have diverse meanings based on the circumstances and the situations they are applied to. The pronoun (she) refers to different people or even animals according to the sentence it is used in. For example, 'she didn't eat anything'. Here, she is an anaphoric substitute that might refer to a female or a female animal.
2. Proper names: There are several regular idiom formation activities known as naming that occur in all cultures and societies. Hockett exemplifies this sentence which acts as an idiom: 'Have you ever read the Egg and I' which is the title of a memoir by the American author Betty MacDonald. This title might sound unfamiliar or absurd to those who do not know about this reference.
3. Abbreviation: It is another common way to create idioms. Cutting off some part of the expression without ruining its meaning. For example, when people hear 'Massachusetts General' they instantly know that it is an abbreviation of 'Massachusetts General Hospital'.
4. English phrasal compounds: Certain noun phrases act as idioms; they have a special meaning. Hockett (1960, p. 317) explains this noun phrase 'a white house', which means a house that is white. However, the White House acts as an idiom which means the mansion of a President.
5. Figure of speech: It is an expression or word that means something different from the literal meanings of the words. The word lemon in the sentence 'he married a lemon' has a different meaning from the literal meaning of the word. Here, lemon refers to a woman who is imperfect. Therefore, figures of speech can be classified under idiom types.
6. Slang: they are words or expressions used in informal settings. They are also counted as idioms as they have distinct meanings and connotations. Slang is generally used in conversation. Thorne (2014) explains that the slang 'back in the day' means in my youth days.

Nonetheless, idioms can be classified in several other ways. Seidl and McMordie (1978) stated that idioms have various structures and kinds, including regular, irregular, and grammatical errors. According to Seidl and McMordie, there are three types of idioms: The first type is idioms that have irregular structures and transparent meaning, such as, 'give someone to understand'. The second type is regular idioms that have ambiguity in meaning, as in 'cut no ice'. Finally, the third type is irregular forms and ambiguous meanings, for example 'be at large'. Regarding the current study, the researchers used a list of idioms compiled by McCarthy and O'Dell (2017). These idioms likely fall into the category of 'regular idioms with ambiguous meaning' that Seidl and McMordie have mentioned in their study. Using a list of

idioms with ambiguous meanings to test the learners' ability helped the researchers explore their understanding of complex idiomatic language. In addition, insights were gained into how EFL learners understand and perceive these expressions in communication.

2.3 Effective strategies for teaching idioms

Context certainly proves to be crucial in language learning, the meaning of words and expressions changes according to the context. Wu (2008) suggests some strategies EFL teachers can use to teach idioms. For instance, idioms could be taught through stories. Learning the meanings of idioms through reading stories can be very effective because students tend to comprehend the meaning of idioms better when they are used in context. Moreover, she states that teaching idioms through group discussion helps the learners utilize the idioms when they express their ideas to the teacher or their colleagues. Learning is effective when the students practice what they have learned. She further proposes incorporating 'dialogue writing' and 'role play' as these two activities help the learners practice what they have learned and apply the new idioms to various situations. The findings of a study by Maisa and Karunakaran (2013) suggest that learning idioms can develop learners' language proficiency. Even though learning idioms is a tough assignment, employing the right techniques to teach idioms can bolster learners' ability to understand idioms and use them when communicating with others. One of the best techniques is to present new idioms as new vocabulary items that students have to learn. Then, prompting the students to deduce the meaning from the context. Another study by Asl (2013) confirms the positive impact of teaching idioms when they are used in contexts such as short stories. Therefore, exploring EFL learners' ability to understand idioms is essential as it helps educators tailor their teaching methods in a way that better supports students in mastering this aspect of language learning. Moreover, information gathered from conducting the current study can help curriculum designers and educators follow language teaching strategies that are much more effective.

2.4 Related Studies

Worldwide, researchers have studied the capacity of EFL learners to understand and use English language idioms. Orfan (2020) investigated Afghan EFL learners' perspectives on idioms, the strategies they use to learn idioms, and the difficulties they face in learning idioms. The results indicated that learners realize the significance of learning idioms. However, they had some issues acquiring and interpreting them, which were mostly due

to a lack of cultural awareness. They employed a number of ways to comprehend idioms. For example, utilizing idioms when they communicate in different social situations. Similarly, Ali (2001) examined Iraqi university students' level of understanding of idioms. He extrapolated that the learners' low performance might be due to students' dependency on using a literal translation of the idioms, lack of emphasis on teaching idioms at the university level, and lack of cultural knowledge. Another study by Cedar (2008) investigated the learner's ability to provide English idioms with similar meanings in their native Thai language. The results revealed that the majority of the learners face difficulty in finding English idioms that are equivalent to Thai idioms. The findings suggest more studies should be done on the effect of L1 idiom on L2 idiom recognition. Another study by Alhaysony (2017) examines Saudi EFL learners' techniques to recognize the meaning of idioms. The findings of this study confirmed the learner's poor performance in comprehending idiomatic meaning. With regards to the techniques, they used to understand idioms, they mainly presumed the meaning from the context or discovered the meaning by finding similar idioms in their mother tongue. A similar study by Ta'amneh (2021) examined the learning techniques of EFL learners and the challenges of learning idioms. The results showed that learners struggle with idiom learning. The two most utilized techniques to recognize the meaning of idioms were guessing or translating the idioms. The findings of these studies indicate EFL learners' low performance in recognizing the meaning of English idioms. This indicates that more studies about idiom comprehension by EFL learners is a necessity. Consequently, reading about previous works helps researchers comprehend the procedures, approaches, and theoretical frameworks employed in earlier studies, allowing them to create more in-depth research.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design of the Study

The current study employed a quantitative approach to examine the proficiency of Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners in recognizing English idioms within context. Participants underwent a test that focused on English idioms in context to assess their accurate proficiency. A quantitative approach to student assessment, as described by Black (1999), uses statistical analysis and numerical data to gauge and analyze students' performance. The goal of this method is to indicate and measure the knowledge, skills, and capacities of the students.

3.2 Sample of the Study

There were 76 participants in this study, 33 of whom were from the third year and 43 from the fourth. There were 19 male and 57 female learners. The study's participants were third-year and fourth-year students from the Department of English Language and Literature at Charmo University. The participants carried out a test of English idioms in context to ascertain the level of comprehension of English idioms. It is important to mention that the researchers selected only the two abovementioned years of the academic levels since in the third and fourth stages translation module is studied. Also, idioms along with their contextual meanings are incorporated as a part of the translation subject. For this reason, the researchers excluded the other two levels, i.e., the first and second stages.

It is also significant to address that we strictly adhered to the ethics of the publication while conducting the research. We ensured that all considerations of ethics have been obtained from the administration of the department and the participants who took part in this study. This commitment underscores the ethical considerations of the study.

3.3 Data Collection Tool

The researchers collected the data by providing the participants with a proficiency test regarding the recognition of English idioms in context. The test consisted of 15-item idioms (Appendix A) in context with a multi-level of difficulty ranging from simple (common) idioms to difficult (uncommon) ones. It is of crucial importance to insert that the level of the idioms' difficulty was not determined by the researchers; the book that was utilized to base the test on, namely *English Idioms in Use* (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2017), starts from simple idioms and moves on to difficult ones gradually. Furthermore, each item in the test comprised three options, the participant would choose the correct one relying on the contextual meaning of the idiom.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The current research utilized the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), an effective data analysis tool, to thoroughly inspect and process the collected data. To ascertain that data was compiled appropriately, the normality assumption was confirmed subsequently by parametric analysis. An independent samples t-test was used to determine whether there were any significant differences in the responses of the participants and to observe whether there were significant differences in the means between the two groups: male and female participants. Additionally, the study explored the

differences in recognizing English idioms in context between third-year and fourth-year students.

3.5 Issues of Reliability and Validity

The study's reliability lies in its focus on the participants, i.e., selecting two levels of learners from the same department to assess Kurdish EFL learners' competency in contextual English idioms. The participants were from two different academic levels (3rd year and 4th year), as only these stages study English idioms and their Kurdish equivalents in the translation module. Additionally, these groups are familiar with English idioms in their curriculum. To increase content validity, the researchers selected English idioms to observe the connection between linguistic and academic competence. The list of idioms was taken from English Idiom in Use (Intermediate) by Cambridge University. The test was approved by three PhD holders specialized in applied linguistics and TEFL, from the Department of English Language/College of Education at Charmo University.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Recognizing English Idioms in Context

The findings elucidate differences in Kurdish EFL learners' ability to recognize the contextual meaning of English idioms. Nevertheless, not all participants demonstrated equal proficiency in understanding the idioms; consequently, there are individual differences in the students' performance.

Table 1

Mean scores and standard deviation of participants' comprehension of English idioms in context.

No. Students	No. Items	Mean	SD
76	15	68.6	18.22

The result of this section presents the total number of participants in the study, which consists of 76 learners. The students conducted a test, and the mean of their results shows that students obtained 68.6, suggesting a good result that was designed as a measurement of the students' performance in identifying the contextual meaning of English idioms. The third column demonstrates the standard deviation, which is a statistical measurement that shows the scattering of individual students' grades. The standard deviation of 18.22 implies diversity in the students' grades. Most learners' grades fall within 18.22 below or above the average (i.e., within 50.4 and 86.8). The moderately high standard deviation

points out that although some learners achieved remarkably higher or lower than the average, there is still a wide array of efficiency levels among the learners. The finding suggests that while the overall ability to recognize contextual English idioms is generally high, it also needs to be addressed that there are some learners below the average level. Educators need to consider these learners who have difficulties during the learning process so that they can receive instructions that might benefit them in recognizing English idioms in context. This result is in line with a study by Wu (2008) who recommends teaching English idioms in context for better acquisition by EFL learners. She recommends using short stories as an effective tool. Asl (2013) supports the influence of context on idiom comprehension and urges language teachers to utilize them among learners.

4.2 Gender-Based Differences of Kurdish EFL Learners' Competency in Comprehending English Idioms

This part examines the influence of gender on the competency of Kurdish EFL learners to understand the contextual meaning of English idioms, allowing them to discover and extend their language skills effectively.

Table 2
English Idiom Interpretation Proficiency: A Gender-Based Comparison

Group Statistics						
	Gender	N	Mean	SD	P-Value	T-Value
Result	Female	57	67.61	18.36	.708	-.821
	Male	19	71.58	18.03		

Table 2 exhibits the differences between both genders. Through an Independent Sample T-test, the proficiency of the Kurdish EFL learners is investigated in understanding the meaning of English idioms in context. The learners consisted of 19 males and 57 females. The mean scores illustrate the average for each group. The mean score for male students is 71.58 while the mean score for female ones is 67.61. This outcome shows that male participants have a higher mean score than female participants. The standard deviation (SD) measures the amount of distribution in the individual learners' results. The standard deviation for female participants is 18.36, while the standard deviation for male participants is 18.03. The standard deviation for both groups is comparatively high, indicating a substantial diversity in the participants' scores. This suggests that learners have considerable individual differences from the group mean. A low standard deviation implies that the value tends to

be close to the mean of the results. However, a high standard deviation suggests a dispersed result across a larger range.

From this result, it can be concluded that the close relationship between the standard deviation of female and male participants suggests that the average scores are different and consistent among both genders. The P-value demonstrates significant differences between male and female participants of Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners in recognizing the contextual meaning of English idioms. The P-value is .708, which is greater than .005, revealing that there is no significant difference between the two groups. There is a 70.8% chance of random differences in the mean scores of male and female participants. It appears from the statistical insignificance that there is no perceptible impact on undergraduate Kurdish EFL learners' competency in determining the contextual meaning of English idioms. This shows that both male and female learners are able to apply English idioms in various contexts.

As it pertains to this investigation, the T-value illustrates the overall result of the t-test, which is a statistical analysis for detecting significant variations between the means of female and male learners. The result of the T-value of the male participants is -.829 and the result of the female participants is -.821, which are intricately connected to each other. With that knowledge in mind, the inference could be drawn that the difference between the two groups is insignificant for the mean scores.

In general, the result of the present section suggests that there is an insignificant difference between the two groups: male and female undergraduate Kurdish EFL participants in the levels of competence in identifying English idioms in context. It is illustrated that both genders are able to perceive the contextual meaning of English idioms. In pursuit of promoting this argument, the result is in line with the finding of Al-Aghbari et al. (2016), which demonstrates that there is an intended consequence in recognizing the meaning of English idioms in context. Furthermore, the finding of this study is consistent with Ababneh's (2016) result which explores the connection between gender-based variation and comprehension of English idioms in the context of Jordanian students. He pointed out that there is no difference between the two genders in recognizing English idioms.

To come up with some conclusions as, to why female and male Kurdish EFL learners do not have significant differences in understanding and recognizing the contextual meaning of English idioms, the researchers suggest the possibility that both male and female learners

are equally exposed to the language learning process, particularly in learning English idioms. Moreover, the instructional materials employed in teaching English idioms may have a comparable impact on learners of both genders. One last possible assumption for the equality of the learners' performances might be the sample size of the study, which is insufficient to determine the generalization of results between males and females. To perfectly understand the complexity of English idiom recognition among males and females, these reasons together highlight the need for a more thorough examination of instructional strategies, sample size characteristics, and exposure models.

4.3 Impact of Academic Levels on Idiom Recognition Performance

To attain comprehension of the way learners from different academic levels navigate the insights of the contextual meaning of idiomatic expressions, we explore and analyze the performance of the learners and the influence of recognizing English idioms in context.

Table 3. English Idiom Interpretation Proficiency: Academic Level

		Group Statistics				
Academic level		N	Mean	SD	P-Value	T-Value
Resu	Third-year	33	64.25	18.92	.551	-1.852
It	Fourth-year	43	71.94	17.19		-1.829

The result of the academic levels is demonstrated through Independent Samples T-test to assess the Kurdish EFL learners' capability to differentiate English idioms between third-year and fourth-year learners as indicated in Table 3. The statistics provide intriguing details about the idiom recognition score distribution. The number of the third-year participants consists of 33 students whereas the group of the fourth-year includes 43 students. The mean score of the third-year students is 64.25 which is lower than the fourth-year students. On the other hand, the mean score of the fourth-year learners is 71.94 suggesting that, on average, fourth-year participants have a higher competency than the third-year participants. The third-year learners' standard deviation is 18.92, offering a higher diversity in the competency scores of the individual participants within their group. On the contrary, the fourth-year learners' standard deviation is 17.19, suggesting a moderately limited dispersion in their academic achievement scores within their group. The P-value measures the significant differences between the mean scores of the third-year and fourth-year learners in acknowledging the mean scores of

English idioms in context. Based on the outcome of the present study, the P-value is .551 which is significantly higher than .005, exhibiting no significant difference between third-year and fourth-year. The mean scores of participants in their third and fourth years differ at random by 55.1%. The lack of statistical significance suggests that there is no discernible effect on the ability of undergraduate Kurdish EFL learners to understand the context of English idioms. This in turn shows that both groups, third-year and fourth-year students, are almost equally capable of utilizing English idioms in context. The t-test emphasizes central tendency and is generally used to evaluate mean differences and statistical significance. It could potentially be influenced by various factors such as sample size and effect size.

In the context of this exploration, the T-value portrays the total result of the t-test, and statistical analysis to determine the significant variations between the mean scores of the third-year and fourth-year learners. The T-value results of the third year is -1.852 and the fourth year is -1.829, respectively showing a strong association with each other.

This elucidates that no significant variation can be observed in the difference in the mean score between third-year and fourth-year students. Overall, the results of this part suggest that the Kurdish EFL learners' competence is not remarkably different in detecting the contextual meaning of English idioms. It is verified that the students from both academic levels can recognize the meaning of English idioms in context. Moreover, the finding of a study conducted by Ababneh (2016) endorsed that the learners' proficiency in detecting the meaning of English idioms is not influenced by the academic levels of the Jordanian EFL students.

The researchers of the present study presented several reasons for the statistical insignificance between the two groups: third-year and fourth-year. First, both groups of students could have obtained comparable curricula. This suggests that third- and fourth-year students experienced similar exposure to language, particularly English idioms across their teaching programs. Second, homogeneity in academic major, both groups of learners might have consistent backgrounds and shared experiences regarding their language exposure, educational environments, and corresponding capability in recognizing English idioms.

In light of the above results, the researchers accept the null hypothesis which states that 'gender and academic level of students have no significant impact on the ability of Kurdish EFL learners to recognize the meanings of English idioms' and reject the alternative hypothesis which asserts that 'gender and academic level of students have a significant impact on the ability of Kurdish EFL

learners to recognize the meanings of English idioms'.

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the study can be summarized into three main points, each one referring back to one of the research questions:

First: The results show that Kurdish EFL learners are able to recognize contextual English idioms to a high degree, taking individual differences into consideration.

Second: There is no significant difference between female and male undergraduate Kurdish EFL learners' proficiency levels in recognizing English idioms in context. In other words, gender has no influence on students' capacity to recognize idioms.

Third: The statistical results contributed thorough details that there is a lack of significant differences between the third and fourth-year students. It would suggest that the academic level of the learners does not have any positive impact on identifying the meaning of English idioms in context.

The current study provides the insightful recommendation that Kurdish EFL undergraduate students determine the contextual meaning of English idioms, bringing to the attention the importance of intensive examination and teaching methods toward English idioms. It further highlights that differences between gender and academic level are not major factors influencing the proficiency and comprehension of English idioms in the learning and teaching in the field of English as a foreign language.

Although the study contributes a detailed comprehension on identifying English idioms by Kurdish EFL students, it consists of some limitations that future researchers could investigate. The finding of the present study does not have the quality of being generalizable due to its restriction to solely Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners in the third and fourth stages. Cultural context is another restriction since different backgrounds may have various recognition of idiomatic expressions. These restrictions emphasize the necessity for deeper investigation and provide insights for novel research.

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APPENDIX A

Choose the correct meaning for each idiom, please.

1. It's great to hear from you. It's really made my day.
 a. make you feel very happy
 b. slightly unhappy

- c. built something for me
2. The neighbors' loud music every night is driving me up the wall.
 a. climb the wall at night
 b. make someone angry/bored
 c. very interesting
3. I'm not sure if I know her, but the name rings a bell.
 a. to set off an alarm
 b. to have a vague memory of it
 c. sounds familiar
4. I don't know all the ins and outs of the situation, but it seems that David has decided to move out of the flat he shares with Ruth and Monica.
 a. how to get in and out
 b. the directions of
 c. the details of
5. I always knew Ahmed would go places. He's been an excellent athlete since he was a teenager.
 a. travel outside
 b. be successful
 c. go sightseeing
6. So, now we are all going to have to face the music.
 a. accept the consequences
 b. listen to music
 c. enjoy it
7. The Democratic Party is behaving as if victory was already in the bag.
 a. certain to be achieved
 b. put in the bag
 c. not certain
8. Once Sara explains why she acted as she did, everything will fall into place.
 a. start falling down
 b. collapse
 c. be understood/go well
9. Certainly, boarding school is hard for children. The other side of the coin is that they learn to be independent.
 a. a coin has two sides
 b. a different view
 c. a worse case is
10. I'm not sure if David is telling the truth, but I'm giving him the benefit of the doubt.

- a. doubt what he is saying is true
- b. believe something good about them despite the odds
- c. be suspicious of something

11. To add insult to injury, one day, when some money disappeared from someone's handbag, she told people she thought I'd stolen it.

- a. to make it even worse
- b. to feel insulted
- c. to be injured

12. Rolf's been trying to keep a lid on his emotions, but every now and then his anger erupts.

- a. continue to let out
- b. dismiss it
- c. control it

13. A: My boss just congratulated me on my report.

Should I ask him for a pay raise now?

B: Yes, go on. Strike while the iron is hot.

- a. hit the iron well
- b. do it when you have a good chance
- c. hot iron is useful to strike

14. We won the match by the skin of our teeth.

- a. only just succeeded
- b. our teeth got hurt
- c. scored a lot

15. The boss asked me to go to London tomorrow, and I need a trip to London like I need a hole in the head. I may pretend to be ill!

- a. I am so excited for it
- b. my head is punctured
- c. I don't need or want it