A Conceptual Metaphor-based Approach to Facilitate English Idiom Comprehension by Kurdish University Students of EFL

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the pedagogical feasibility of Conceptual Metaphor-based Approach to teaching idioms to Kurdish university-level EFL students to find out to what extent the approach enhances idiom comprehension, and whether it is better than traditionally practiced approaches accordingly. Additionally, the aim of this study is to check the L1 transfer and interference role in comprehension of idioms by the participants, and how idiom grouping under corresponding Conceptual Metaphors helps students in figuring out L1 equivalents. The quantitative data were based on and collected from testing 73 participants who were divided into an experimental and a control group. Results showed that the experimental group participants outscored the control group participants, and the difference was statistically significant. Though, the traditional group had better posttest scores in comparison to their pretest. Findings also reveal that clustering idioms around corresponding Conceptual Metaphors was more helpful than randomly listed idioms; L1 transfer was observed in the idioms that have exact equivalents or closest equivalents, and sharing the same Conceptual Metaphors was helpful in understanding and finding Kurdish idioms, particularly for the experimental group. Besides, L1 interference was noticeable in all types of idioms being exact or closest equivalent or having no equivalent linguistically. Meanwhile, literal translation was also relied on by the participants as a strategy due to probably a lack of conceptual metaphor knowledge.

KEY WORDS: Conceptual Metaphor-Based Approach, Idiom, Kurdish Students Of EFL, L1 Interference. L1 Transfer

1. INTRODUCTION:

It is unanimously agreed upon that all languages possess idioms to various degrees, and idioms are of the essence for English-major students to demonstrate their language proficiency and competence. This shows how idiom learning, despite its challenges, necessitates being put forth in academic English programs. To Cornell (1999, p. 16) “Idioms are an aspect of the lexical mountain that should not be left to chance and the random exposure of advanced learners to the language.

Nor can these learners simply be urged to acquire works giving vast lists of idioms and learn them”.

By and large, idioms are traditionally deemed as any grammatical form (Hocket, 1958), two free morphemes (Makkai, 1972), a constituent or series of constituents (Fraser, 1970; Fernando, 1978), a string of words (Swinney and Cutler, 1979), multi-word units (Seidl and McMordie, 1988; Trask, 1993; Grant and Bauer, 2004), whose meaning is arbitrary (i.e., not deducible from its parts) and non-compositional.

From a cognitive view which involves much contrariety of traditionalists’ arbitrariness Kövecses and Szabo (1996, p. 330) state that “An idiom is not just an expression that has meaning that is somehow special in relation to the meanings of its constituent parts, but it arises from our more general knowledge of the world (embodied in our conceptual system)”.

Lakoff (1987) contends that idioms carry a systematic structure and inferences inside themselves, for instance, when a person who is foaming at the mouth has lost his cool shows that the idioms foam at the mouth and lose one’s cool are not
randomly structured to which the emotion of anger is attributed, however, there is a conceptually coherent arrangement underpinning them and other idioms which are metaphorical or metonymical in nature (p. 381). Further, Lakoff (1987, p. 448) argues that many cases may manifest the fact that idioms are semantically not arbitrary such as the existence of metaphor as a conceptual form in the conceptual system of human beings engenders a link between an idiom and the meaning it conveys; that is, to keep someone at arm’s length is largely motivated by INTIMACY IS PHYSICAL CLOSENESS and SOCIAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM IS PHYSICAL HARM conceptual metaphors. Hence, the cognitivists’ view on idioms is that “the meanings of a great number of idioms can be motivated by people’s conceptual knowledge of the referents to which idioms refer” (Gibbs, 1990, p. 418). In addition, Kövecses (2002) confirms that conceptual domains generate, if not all, most idioms and individual components that uncover their conceptualization process. For instance, fan the flames in the speaker fanned the flames of the crowd’s enthusiasm, is motivated by the human conceptual system rather than simply the matter of lexicon (p. 201). The term motivation, to Cserép (2014, p. 262) is “related to the discrepancy between the compositional meaning of an expression and its actual semantic content”. Lakoff (1987) connects motivation of expressions either in accordance with bodily or social experience, and such an embodiment uncovers the non-arbitrariness of the linguistic expressions.

Cognitive semanticists held the view that idiom meaning is motivated by cognitive mechanisms, chief among them is Conceptual Metaphor (hereinafter, CM). It is deemed a linguistic tool rather than being restricted to literary genres. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 5) in their seminal work account for the pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday language “the concept is metaphorically structured, and the activity is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured”.

Investigating the hypothesis that semantic motivation for idioms engenders more learning outcomes than its absence, Kövecses (2000) found that a cognitivist perspective of idioms can be conceivably essential for EFL learners to boost their idiom comprehension. On the teachability of motivated idioms implementing CMs, Berendi, Csábi, and Kövecses (2008, pp. 72-73) contend that “the systematic relationships that connect the literal and figurative meanings of an idiom, on the one hand, and the figurative meanings of several idioms, on the other hand, have considerable didactic potential”.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The present section subsumes three subsections. The first subsection throws light on the theoretical underpinnings of applying Cognitive Linguistic insights. The second subsection introduces CMs and then reviews the previous studies that have been carried out empirically concerning promoting student comprehension of English idioms by deploying the CM-based Approach as a medium of instruction. The last subsection expounds on L1 transfer and reviews the findings in the literature regarding its role in L2 idiom comprehension.

2.1 Applied Cognitive Linguistics

Cognitive Linguistics (henceforth, CL) emerged in the 1980s as “a relatively new school of linguistics, and one of the most innovative and exciting approaches to the study of language and thought that has emerged within the modern field of interdisciplinary study known as cognitive science” (Evans and Green, 2006, p. 5). Within CL, cognitive semantics has burgeoned which “concerned with investigating the relationship between experience, the conceptual system and the semantic structure encoded by language” (Evans and Green, 2006, p. 48). Appraising CL as an innovative initiative after the pioneering works of the cognitive linguists, Taylor (1993, p. 201) claims that “Any major innovation in linguistic theory is bound, sooner or later, to have an impact on the foreign language teaching profession”. To Putz, Niemeier, and Dirven (2001, p. xiii), the framework within which the CL theories are dealt with practically in relation to the fields of language acquisition, learning, and instruction is called “Applied Cognitive Linguistics” (henceforth, ACL). Later on, ACL was introduced in the first collective work by Putz, et al. (2001) and the work of Achard and Niemeier (2004) with the aim of transcending traditionally-held beliefs of the arbitrariness of language. That is, contrary to the traditional approach which treats language expressions as “arbitrary or unteachable, and perhaps even unlearnable”, the CL-oriented approach deems language elements rather manageable to instruction (Tyler, 2012, p. 62). Hence, the focus was shifted to the pedagogical issues concerning the applicability of CL insights including CMs since they are considered the heart of human thought, behavior, and communication that can be applied in L2 teaching and learning prosperously (Littlemore, 2009, pp. 4-8). Therefore, to Boers (2000, p. 553) “enhancing language learners’ metaphor awareness” is needed by instigating the recognition of omnipresent nature of metaphors, which underlie a wide range of linguistic expressions including idioms.

2.2 Introducing CMT to English Language Classes

To most people metaphor is a literary and ornamental device that is counted on to consider their language
elegant and their speech eloquent. In contrast to this view, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 1) state that “metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature”. For instance, in ARGUMENT IS WAR to understand the concept of argument, which is abstract, language users presumably depend on the concept of war, which is concrete or less abstract. Both concrete and abstract concepts are the two conceptual domains that comprise CMs (Kövecses, 2002, p. 4). An important term to digest CMs is metaphor set (Li, 2003, p. 64), which is “a cluster of linguistic metaphors organized under and relatable to a certain conceptual metaphor”. To illustrate, the CM, OPTIMISM IS LIGHT, can be embodied in the idioms look on the bright side, light at the end of the tunnel, etc. (Gibbs et al., 1997, p. 153).

Pedagogically CMT has been introduced in the last three decades, especially, to teach the linguistic expressions including idioms. Since then, a handful of publications have been published to support such initiative in ACL field, particularly in relation to idiom comprehension and retention. The researchers (Kövecses and Szabó, 1996; Boers, 2000; Li, 2003; Berendi et al., 2008; Kömür and Çimen, 2009; Vasiljevic, 2011; Samani and Hashemian, 2012; Chen and Lai, 2013; Doiz and Elizari, 2013; Hung, 2019; Guo, 2019; Pan, 2019; Pham and To, 2019) are of the opinion that implementing CMs as a medium of teaching idioms with appraising the students how different sets of idioms are motivated by specific CMs aid comprehension and retention of a wide range of idioms.

In an informal study with Hungarian students of English, Kövecses and Szabó (1996) concluded that teaching idioms through CM arrangement was better than the traditional way of explanation and memorization. Boers (2000), with learners whose L1 is either Dutch or French, explored how organizing idioms deploying CMs assists in retaining words and idioms. Likewise, with Chinese students, Li (2003) found that the CM-based Approach, though less effective than image schemas to facilitate idiom comprehension, was better than instructing students with idioms listed under semantic topics. With Hungarian college students majoring in English, Berendi et al. (2008) found that the use of CM-based Approach to teaching idioms facilitated English idioms comprehension and retention. Kömür and Çimen (2009) also found that employing CMs facilitated better idiom comprehension by the Turkish students of EFL. Further, Vasiljevic’s (2011) findings with Japanese non-English major students were in line with the hypothesis that grouping idioms according to their underlying CMs is easier to understand. To check how Iranian L2 learners understand and produce idioms with the implementation of CMs compared to the traditional approach, Samani and Hashemian (2012) reported that the development of metaphorical awareness helped the CM participants to decipher idiom meaning successfully. Conversely, the traditional participants could learn idioms, however, were unsuccessful in drawing idiom senses as they had not developed metaphor awareness. Conducting a case study with non-English major Chinese, Chen and Lai (2013) found that the participants’ understanding and use of idioms improved due to their exposure to CMs. Testing the understanding and remembering of anger-related expressions by Spanish students, Doiz and Elizari (2013) concluded that in the short term the CM group students outperformed the group, who followed the traditional approach of idiom translation. However, no such difference was recorded in the delayed post-test between the groups. In addition, Hung’s (2019) results are also in favor of CL-inspired teaching of idioms compared to the rote-learning method. Guo (2019), with Chinese students, also found positive impact of CM-oriented instruction on idioms motivated by structural metaphors rather than orientational and ontological ones. Contrary to most previous findings, Pham and To (2019) concluded that exposition of CMs facilitated Vietnamese students of EFL in reception over an extended period, thus, the approach can be considered more effective than the traditional approach in the long term. Likewise, Pan (2019), exploring idiom instruction by clustering them around the underlying CMs against rote-learning and L1 translation of idioms being presented via functional usage themes, found that in the immediate posttest CM participants were better though not statistically significant, and interestingly acquired better results in the one-week delayed posttest.

To bridge the literature and local gaps, such as the inconsistencies observed in the previous findings, the implementation of intermittent instructional treatment and the lack of enough time between the pre-and post-tests in the previous studies, and being an un-tackled topic in the Kurdish EFL context, the present study, in part one of the experiment, follows these procedures. It tends to consistently expose students to teaching idioms for an extended period of time between the pretest and posttest in order to explore the extent of the effectiveness of the CM-based Approach to teaching idioms in enhancing idiom comprehension among Kurdish-speaking university students of EFL as CMs and idioms are pedagogically marginalized in many EFL university programs in Kurdistan Region. It also explores whether understanding the underlying CMs, which structure seemingly different idioms, can facilitate idiom comprehension in comparison to the traditional (i.e., non-cognitive) approach to teaching idioms.
2.3 Idioms and Language Transfer

There is a consensus that foreign language learners, when interacting with the target language world, unintentionally their L1 has impact on L2. Therefore, L1 linguistic features transfer and interfere with L2 (Gass, 1979). Irujo (1986, p. 288) states that “transfer concept is based on the idea that previous learning affects subsequent learning”. That is, when a stimulus is comprehended, it eases the comprehension of the succeeding stimuli.

Several experiments (Irujo, 1986; Abdullah and Jackson, 1998; Charteris-Black, 2002; Hu and Fong, 2010; Taki and Soghady, 2013; Türkler, 2016) that explored L2 idiom comprehension have observed the issue of L1 transfer. Their findings show learners’ reliance on L1 varied based on similarities and differences between L1 and L2 linguistically and conceptually. Furthermore, Boers (2000) hypothesizes that L1 transfer often does exist due to the closeness of learners’ L1 and L2 which accelerates learning when the learners’ attention is grabbed toward metaphoric themes that underpin the linguistic expressions. However, such closeness can cause L1 interference. In the same vein, Beréndi et al. (2008) experimented the grouping of idioms around associated CMs, despite the difference between the participants’ L1 and L2, the results showed L1 transfer with regard to comprehension, meanwhile, L1 interference was discernible in connection with recalling.

Based on the previous findings, the second part of the present study investigates the amount of aid L1 transfer grants Kurdish-speaking students in English idiom comprehension despite the differences between English and Kurdish languages. Additionally, it investigates how L1 transfer assists idiom comprehension when grouping idioms around CMs compared to presenting idioms in lists randomly, as participants are informed of idioms by CM-based vs. Traditional Approaches.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The current study was based on the data obtained from the participants’ pretest and posttest scores, which aimed to compare the participants’ performance in comprehending the idioms after being exposed to two distinct instructional treatments (i.e., the Traditional Approach and the CM-based Approach) which extended over a full-semester period (i.e., 12 weeks for teaching and 2 weeks for testing the studied materials) in order to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent does each approach (i.e., the CM-based or the Traditional) boost idiom comprehension among Kurdish students of EFL?

2. To what extent is teaching idioms using the CM-based Approach more effective than the Traditional Approach in facilitating idiom comprehension among Kurdish students of EFL?

3. To what extent does L1 transfer (i.e., L1 linguistic and CM knowledge) influence idiom comprehension by Kurdish students of EFL?

4. To what extent does informing Kurdish students of shared CMs between Kurdish and English assist idiom comprehension?

3.2 Participants

Based on the method of Convenience Sampling (Creswell, 2012, p. 145) the participants of the present study were selected. The participants were 73 junior Kurdish students of EFL at the Department of English, College of Education, University of Garman, in Kurdistan Region, Iraq. The participating students were recruited in two groups, experimental and control. The experimental group consisted of 40 students, while the control group members were 33. The unequal sample size was mainly due to the simple random assignment of the participants as they were the regular students of the two junior groups in the Department of English in 2021-2022 academic year.

3.3 Instruments

To get the quantitative data, the study implemented an instructional instrument and a pre-and post-test instrument whose items were piloted. The instrument used in the instructional treatment phase consisted of two handouts. The first handout contained 143 idioms as stimuli for the process of pretest, treatment, and posttest; they were listed randomly. The idioms were mainly presented in short texts and sentences, which were mainly examples of their usage in day-to-day language. They were mainly adopted from dictionaries (Collins Cobuild, 1995; Cambridge, 1998) and books (McCarthy and O’Dell, 2002; Wright, 2002). Some of the contexts were contrived for the experiment purpose. The second handout, which was prepared for the experimental group, contained the same idioms grouped under 19 corresponding CM mappings based on (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lakoff and Kövecses, 1987; Gibbs, 1990; Gibbs et al., 1997), and presented accordingly.

3.4 Procedures

1. Test Validity

The test instrument (pre-and post-test) was developed, validated, and checked to assure its reliability. To establish test validity as deemed determinant of instrument selection and application (Lynn, 1986), a draft test, comprising 50 items was submitted to a jury of ten experts. Six of them accepted to contribute to the development of the instrument. They
are university teachers, one is a native English emeritus professor in Applied Linguistics, the others are assistant professors of ELT. Based on what Lynn (1986, p. 384) devised, the quantitative content validity method is to obtain viewpoints regarding a 4-option rating scale for all content validity assessments as follows (1 = not relevant; 2 = unable to assess relevance without item revision or the item is in need of such revision that it would no longer be relevant; 3 = relevant but needs minor alternation; 4 = very relevant and succinct).

The items that had 0.83 and above were considered acceptable as Polit and Beck (2006) posit that at least six experts’ ratings can be acceptable when the score of CVI is 0.83; others remained with some revisions that were advised by the experts, meanwhile the rest were eliminated. This reduced the number of items to 45. To illustrate, the I-CVI of 45 items equals 1.00 or 0.83, and the remainder which was eliminated equals 0.5 or less. The S-CVI/Ave equals 0.90. In addition, 34 out of 50 items received relevance ratings of 3 or 4 by the total number of the experts, which evince moderate content validity of the instrument. As much as the time of the test concerned there was a general consensus among most of the validators to allot (80 minutes) for the test.

2. Pilot Testing

Prior to the pretest, the test questions and items were piloted with 14 randomly selected 3rd-year students of English, who were the classmates of the study group participants. The aim of pilot testing, as proposed by Kiss and Nikolov (2005, p.112) is to “check the appropriacy of the test tasks for the target population, . . . gauge the difficulty of the tasks, [and] to compare achievement on the different tasks within the test”. To Mackey and Gass (2016), a pilot study “is an important, if not essential, means of assessing the feasibility and usefulness of the data collection methods and making any necessary revisions before they are used with the research participants” (p. 52). After obtaining the results, some questions and items were revised totally or partially, while the other questions and items were accepted without any change. However, some of the items were replaced with other items.

After the pilot test, the data were collected from the participants. Then, the quality of each particular item was analyzed in terms of Item Difficulty and Discrimination using Microsoft Office Excel. On this point, Sabri (2013) states that “Item difficulty is basically the proportion of students who responded correctly to an item. Meanwhile, item discrimination is a measure to differentiate between the performance of students in the high score group and those in the low score group” (p. 2). Item difficulty index ranges from 0.0 to 1.00; the higher p-value the easier the item is (Ebel and Frisbie, 1979). Based on this, 13 of the items were very difficult. Hence, they were revised.

Regarding analyzing item discrimination index, its normal value extends between -1.0 to 1.00; the higher the value, the more discriminating the item (Ebel and Frisbie, 1979). Because of a limited number of items for the experiment, no items were discarded, however, 6 of them were thoroughly checked and revised.

3. Test Reliability

In addition to the item analysis, a reliability test (KR20) was also conducted. According to Bretz and McClary (2015), in order for an obtained score to be reliable, the KR20 reliability coefficient needs to be 0.70 or above. The results (N 45, M 20.86, Std. 7.89) showed that approximately half of the items were answered correctly on average. The reliability of the test result was high enough and indicated a reliable KR20 value of 0.86.

4. Pretest and Posttest

The participants of the present study were equally provided with the same question items investigating their idiom comprehension ability. Prior to responding, the participants were provided with test instructions.

The pretest was used to compare the participants’ background knowledge. According to the obtained results (details are presented in the data analysis of part one), the participants were very unlikely to already know the idioms targeted in the experiment. It is noteworthy that, the participants were not informed that they would have to work with the learned materials again. After the instructional treatment, which is explained in the coming section, the participants underwent the process of posttest similar to the pretest with some differences in the items.

In the posttest, the focus was on two main points. The first point was part one of the experiment to observe which approach, CM-based or Traditional, facilitated the participants to have better performance in an idiom comprehension test. The second point was part two of the experiment which was to elicit information as the participants were required to provide equivalent Kurdish idioms in the equivalent task which consisted of twenty items within the entire test. This was to obtain data regarding the potential effectiveness of L1 transfer and the shared CMs between the participants’ L1 and L2 in comprehending idioms, particularly presenting the control group with randomly listed idioms within sentences, however, while for the experimental group the idioms were grouped under corresponding CMs, based on Boers (2000) and Berendi et al. (2008). The idioms in the equivalent items in the posttest were new since an idiom in the pretest could be remembered by the participants in the posttest. Different answers like correct, incorrect, and missing were expected from the participants. Any correct answer could be exact equivalent, nearest equivalent, or a Kurdish idiom within the same CM, though not having equivalent wording. However, any incorrect response entails

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idioms from different CMs or no CM, or their literal translation, meanwhile, no answer was treated similarly.

5. Instructional Treatment

The setting, materials, and allocation of instructional time were identical for both study groups; however, the manner of presenting idioms was utterly different based on the comparison of the assigned approaches. Simply put, the control group was taught the English idioms using the Traditional Approach; whereas, the experimental group received the idioms in accordance with the CM-based Approach. The Traditional Group (hereinafter, TG) members were presented with randomly listed idioms without referring to the motivation that matches them together. They were familiarized with idiom definition, description, synonyms, L1 equivalents, and illustrations. Rot- learning was encouraged to help them memorize through continual repetition or translation of idioms into L1. However, the Conceptual Metaphor Group (hereinafter, CMG) members were instructed about how metaphor is pervasive in everyday language, and how it motivates the meaning of idioms and clusters seemingly different sets of idioms around corresponding CMs. Besides, how idioms and metaphors exist in languages. A course of teaching idioms during a semester was prepared and taught within 12 weeks, and each week a session of (90 minutes) was given with taking exercises inside the classroom.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Part One

Before starting with data analysis, the data were added to the data pool in SPSS 26. Then normality test of the obtained data was checked by running Shapiro-Wilk test. After assurance of the distribution normality of scores, a Levene’s statistic was run to see whether the groups’ mean scores of the pretest were homogenous, then the study commenced by following the administration of the pretreatment-intervention-posttreatment style. Next, a within-subject design was used running a Paired-Samples t-test; a between-subject design was also used to conduct an Independent-Samples t-test.

1. Results

To answer the first and second research questions which investigate the difference within and between both study groups’ mean scores after implementing the approaches, the following procedures were followed. The participants’ descriptive statistics were computed. Besides, the Assumption of Normality of the pretest was checked by running Shapiro-Wilk test, to determine if the pretest was normally distributed, which is recommended for everyday practice as it has got more power to detect normality (Thode, 2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Shapiro-Wilk Statistic</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>.965</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>.347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMG</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>.709</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As scores were normally distributed, a Levene’s statistic was run for pretest score homogeneity. Regarding Confidence Intervals, Pagano (2009, p. 131) articulates that 95% CI “an interval such that the probability is 0.95 that the interval contains the population value”. Based on Levene’s Test value, $F(71) = 2.257, p = .396 > .05$, in Table 3, it can be concluded that the homogeneity of variances was not violated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.257</td>
<td>.137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.975</td>
<td>-2.490-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After maintaining the assumption of homogeneity of variances and assumption of normality, between-group and within-subject differences were taken into consideration. A Within-Subject Paired-Samples t-test for each group was run to determine how different the means of their test scores were after being exposed to idioms by applying two distinct approaches to check
how facilitative each one was in boosting comprehension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Paired-Samples Statistics for the TG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>Pretest Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posttest Score</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
<th>Paired Samples t-test for the TG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>Pre-Posttest Score</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Tables 4 and 5, there was a significant difference in the TG scores for pretest (N 33, M 13.24, SD 3.32) and posttest (N 33, M 21.00, SD 6.72); t(32) = 7.84, p < .001 (two-tailed). The mean increase in both test scores was 7.76. That is, the TG in the posttest obtained higher scores as a result of the possible traditional instruction effect.

Concerning the scores gained by the CMG (N 40), as shown in Tables 6 and 7, there was a statistically significant difference between the pretest (M 14.00, SD 4.11) and the posttest (M 27.82, SD 7.15); t(39) = 15.46, p < .001 (two-tailed). The mean proliferation in both test scores was 13.82 (i.e., nearly doubled). Such a high score of the CMG members in the posttest is presumably a manifestation of the effectiveness of the instructional intervention which was oriented by CMs. The results unearthed that CM awareness-raising had a considerable effect on the experimental group participants, who were exposed to English idioms through CM-based Approach. In general, it can be concluded that the CMG mean score was twice as large as TG mean score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6</th>
<th>Paired-Samples Statistics for the CMG</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2</td>
<td>Pretest Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posttest Score</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, a between-subject design was used to conduct an Independent-Samples t-test to compute the post-test score (see Table 8) to figure out if the instructional approaches, to which the two groups were exposed, were different since there was equality, to a great extent, in both groups’ mean scores in the pretest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7</th>
<th>Paired-Samples t-test for the CMG</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
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<tr>
<th>Table 8</th>
<th>Independent-Samples t-test for the Groups Posttest Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CMG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The posttest results revealed that the mean scores between the TG (N 33, M 21.00, SD 6.72) and the CMG (N 40, M 27.83, SD 7.15) were statistically significantly different, p < 0.001. It is noteworthy that, the mean difference in the pretest was 0.76, while in the posttest became 6.83, where the result was in favor of the CMG, though, the TG’s improvement was noticeable. To sum up, the impact of the instructional treatment incorporating CMs could increasingly facilitate the CMG participants’ comprehension of idioms and assisted them in outperforming their counterpart group in the posttest.

### 4.2 Part Two

The evaluation procedure categorized respondents’ answers according to Correct, Incorrect, and No Answer. Since there were no missing answers, automatically the other two categories of responses were considered, which cover five possible answers each idiom might be provided with as follows (Different-CM, Literal Meaning, No-CM were considered incorrect), and (Exact/Closest Equivalent and Not-Equivalent but staying within the Same-CM were considered correct). After scoring the 20 items within the entire test, based on the answers, the data were calculated for the Percent, Mean, and SD by running Descriptive Statistics in order to see whether the two groups were statistically significantly different based on the correct answers. Besides, Inferential Statistics was run for the p-value of the scores. Furthermore, the analysis of the correct and incorrect responses was thoroughly done to answer the research questions 3 and 4.

#### 1. Results
The results revealed that the TG members’ understanding was 45.2%, compared to the CMG subjects’ understanding, which was 54.8%. After running an Independent Samples t-test, the results, as shown in Table 9, indicated that the CMG (N=40, M=13.13, SD=1.28) were better than the TG (N=33, M=9.33, SD=1.14). The difference between them was statistically significant at p<.001.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9</th>
<th>Percentage and Mean Score of the Equivalent items for both groups</th>
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<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equivalent Items</td>
<td>TG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CMG</td>
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</table>

Concerning the effect of L1 transfer, the common CMs that underly the idioms in both languages, and the assigned approaches of idiom instruction on the participants’ responses in providing Kurdish equivalents to English idioms, the results on Tables 10, 11, and 12 are analyzed below.

Note: consider the abbreviations (Gr: Group, TG: Traditional Group, CMG: CM Group, M: Mean, E: Exact Equivalent, C: Closest Equivalent, S: Same CM, D: Different-CM, L: Literal Meaning, N: No-CM). Besides, regarding the participants’ answers, hereinafter, all the Kurdish idioms and their English translation are enclosed by curly brackets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10</th>
<th>Exact Equivalent Items Responses Percentage and Mean</th>
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<tr>
<td>Idioms</td>
<td>Gr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be in seventh heaven</td>
<td>TG</td>
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<tr>
<td>Add fuel to the fire</td>
<td>CMG</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain the upper hand</td>
<td>CMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twist everyone around one’s (little) finger</td>
<td>CMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growling at someone</td>
<td>CMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make one’s blood boil</td>
<td>CMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep a (very) tight rein on sb/sth</td>
<td>CMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 10, the idiom be in seventh heaven and the equivalent [le hewtemin tebeqeyi asmane, one is in seventh heaven] are underlay the CM, BEING HAPPY IS BEING IN HEAVEN. The CMG members were better than their comparison group. The answers were not out of L1 interference as some CMG members used the Kurdish variation [le xosîda bifrite hewtemin tebeqeyi asmane, of happiness to fly to the seventh heaven], and a TG participant provided [le xosîda demrim, dying of happiness]. Meanwhile, some participants provided the literal sense of being happy.

The idiom add fuel to the fire which has a relatively exact equivalent in Kurdish [benzin be agîrda dekat, one pours petrol on the fire] has the same CM, ANGER IS HEAT IN A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER, and the metaphorical entailment MAINTAINING INTENSITY IS MAINTAINING HEAT in both languages. Hence, both group members were able to answer correctly in a similar way (CMG 90.0%, TG 90.9%). Their answers are the realization of L1 interference, as ‘petrol’ was used instead of ‘fuel’ and ‘pour’ instead of ‘add’.

For the idiom gain the upper hand, the CMG (70%) surpassed the TG (42.4%). The participants chose the Kurdish equivalent [destî le bane/ bala deste, gain the upper hand], which is motivated by CONTROL IS UP. It seems that the CMG members took benefit from their exposure to the target CMs, as they also relied on other common expressions inside Kurdish society such as [bibette dem rasit, to be cock of the walk] and [şe be sepan nazarê, one does not consider king as a reaper]. Whereas, many TG members incorrectly had [dest le naw dest bê, to be hand in hand] as their response.

The idiom twist everyone around one’s (little) finger and whose exact equivalent [hemw kes be dewri penceyida desîwûrê] are motivated by the same CM in both languages CONTROL IS TOUCHING, received considerably high correct answers by the CMG participants (97.5%) and the TG ones (81.9%). Among the correct answers, the participants (CMG 7.5%; TG 18.2%) used [hemw kes dekate helê w le penceyî dekat, he/she makes everyone a ring and wears them], which is a variant of the idiom. Further, a CMG member replaced the word ‘finger’ with ‘hand’ as in [hemw kes le ser destî desîwûrê, one twists everyone on one’s hand], and three of the TG participants provided the variant [hemw dîniya be dewri yek penceda desîwûrê, one twists the whole world around one’s finger], which evinces LI interference.

In translating the idiom growling at someone into Kurdish [lêyî/lê kesêk demîrêwe], which are identical in both languages and rooted within the CM, ANGRY BEHAVIOUR IS AGGRESSIVE ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR, the CMG participants achieved higher (62.5%) than the TG members (39.4%). The idiom, to Lakoff and Kövecses (1987, p. 208) conveys the idea when someone shows his/her anger by verbal behavior or acts like an animal, particularly a dog due to being agitated by territoriality, possession aggression, or sometimes pain. Nevertheless, two CMG members incorrectly replied with ‘burst upon me’ which is
motivated by ANGER IS HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER. Meanwhile, one-third of the CMG and nearly two-thirds of the TG members wrote down ‘being extremely angry’ which was deemed a wrong answer.

The idiom to make one’s blood boil which is [xwênim dekwênêtê/đehênlêtê ços, makes my blood boil/seethe] in Kurdish was answered correctly by 65.0% of the CMG, and 45.5% of the TG. In the answers, L1 interference was noticed, for instance, ‘makes my nerve boil; makes my blood bubbling’, which all are within the same mappings or entailments of ANGER IS HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER. However, some of the participants of both groups equally misunderstood the idiom with respect to expressions whose motivation is different CMs as follows; for instance, out of one’s mind is motivated by ANGER IS INSANITY; one is breathing fire and one smokes are motivated by ANGER IS FIRE. Meanwhile, a small number of the participants, particularly the CMG translated the idiom literally into to make someone angry.

The idiom to keep a (very) tight rein on somebody/something has its exact equivalent [çlewêj kesêk/sîtêk/barudoxêk be twîndi bigîft, keep a tight rein on somebody/something/a situation], and the CM, CONTROL IS TOUCHING, is underlying them. The CMG had better performance (65.0%) than the TG (45.5%). It can be interpreted that due to its agropastoral culture, the Kurdish language has [lixaw, bridile] in its metaphorically motivated expressions, therefore, such L1 interference was discerned in four of the responses by the CMG and three of the TG members. The rest of the responses were controlling somebody or having control over something which were considered incorrect.

As shown in Table 11 the results varied. For instance, the idiom to keep something under one’s hat received 82.5% of the right answers by the CMG, and 42.4% by the TG members. The idiom’s closest equivalent is [bixe jêr ‘abaket, keep it under your ‘Aba]. ‘Aba is a looser outer garment, worn by women in most eastern-Islamic societies. Meanwhile, the variant [berdêbêkê lëser dênê, put a stone on it], which is often used by some Kurdish people to ask for keeping something secret. Interestingly, the idiom in both languages is motivated by KNOWING IS SEEING, where the act of seeing provides humans with the chance of knowing (Kövecses, 2002, p. 158). Other answers were the idiom’s literal sense, or [demit bigre w selamet be, keep calm and stay safe], which TO BE SAFE IS TO BE SILENT is underlying it.

Moreover, like English, the Kurdish language has the same CM, PROBLEM IS AN ENTITY, which underpins stir up a hornet’s nest [dest dekate şane zerdewala, put hand into a hornet’s hive]. The right responses by the CMG doubled the TG. L1 interference was also discerned when the participants had the Kurdish variant ‘put one’s hand into’ rather than ‘stir up’. Further, a student chose hornet’s hole instead of hornet’s nest. The rest of the answers included the literal translation ‘to stimulate a problem’.

Regarding a millstone around one’s neck, Kurdish speakers often use [bibite tewiq be mîlyewê, to become cangue around one’s neck], where these idioms in both languages are motivated by PROBLEM IS A PHYSICAL BURDEN. The results (CMG 77.5%; TG 57.6%) showed that the CMG members’ apprehension of CMs reflects their better idiom comprehension as it does have the nearest equivalent. Four of the CMG participants deviated from the original form ‘neck’, and used ‘head’, and other four chose ‘shoulder’. Similarly, three TG members chose ‘head’, and four others used ‘shoulder’, as they perceived burden on the shoulder, which affirms L1 interference.

The idiom cold shivers run down one’s spine [tezw/mwêçirik be lêşi kesêkda bê, chill/shiver goes through one’s body] is motivated by a metonymy-based CM, FEAR IS COLD, in English (Kövecses, 2005, p. 289) and in Kurdish as well. The result (CMG 70.0%; TG 54.5%) showed that the L1 background knowledge could have helped the participants in understanding the expression. Additionally, with the realization of the shared CM, the CMG accomplished a higher score than the TG. Other answers included being frightened or one’s spine gets cold which were incorrect.

The idiom jump down one’s throat is [çw be qûrigîmda, went into my throat] in Kurdish, whose underlying CM is ANGRY BEHAVIOUR IS AGGRESSIVE ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR in both languages. The result showed that more than half (52.5%) of the CMG, and one-third

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(33.4%) of the TG could understand the idiom, among which a CMG member wrote {hêlêxâ be rîwämda, climbèd up mîy my face} which also describes one’s angry behavior resembles ferocious animal behavior. For the incorrect answers, six participants in each group wrote one exploded and like boiled milk one spills over, where ANGER IS HOT FLUID IN A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER underpins them. Others provided becoming very angry as a literal translation.

To make a name, personality, project, or intentions known, native English speakers often use blow one’s cover, which is motivated by KNOWING IS SEEING. Similar to English, the CM is entrenched in Kurdish culture which underpins the idiom {perdeyî le ser helmalî/labird, blow one’s/something’s curtain/veil}. Responding to the idiom, nearly two-thirds (62.5%) of the CMG provided variants within the same CM {perdeyî le ser helmalî/labird} or {demamîkekeyî kewt, one’s mask fell}, which implies someone’s mask slips in English. Similarly, 42.4% of the TG members provided blow one’s curtain/veil and one’s mask has fallen. Additionally, a considerable number of both groups’ participants wrote the literal translation revealing secrets which was unacceptable.

As usual, the CMG members had a better understanding (50.0%) compared with the TG members (33.3%) with s/he breathes fire [agîrî lê debarê, s/he showers fire on] which is motivated by ANGER IS FIRE, INTENSITY IS HEAT in both languages. Several participants from both groups (CMG 32.5%, TG 27.3%) responded with idioms in different-CMs including [agîr xoş dekat, fan the flame] in ENTHUSIASM IS FIRE [yarî be agir dekat, plays with fire] in DANGER IS FIRE, [aw bikeyît be agîrda, pour water on fire] in DECREASE IN INTENSITY IS A DECREASE IN THE DEGREE OF FIRE. The remainder wrote the literal meaning of the idiom {fw kirdin le agîr, blowing at the fire}.

Table 12 displays that the CMG had also better performance with the idioms that have no wording equivalent, but they are motivated by the same CMs. For instance, to blow one’s stack was correctly replied by more than half (52%) of the CMG participants, however, less than one-third (30%) of the TG members, where according to Kövecses (2001), they conceivably counted on ontological mappings, i.e., the elements that the source and target domains are composed of. The correct responses included a wide range of variants, as delineated below.

The idioms {hêlêx lê helêdêstê, one gets steamed up} and {dwekî le gwêyêkânîyêve derdeçw, smoke was coming out of one’s ears} were noticed in the participants’ responses many times. The conceptualization of these idioms is depicted by Kövecses (2005) as follows; the target domain is the person who gets angry and the ‘smoke’ in his/her body (i.e., container) represents the source domain, where there is a container that has a vent to where the smoke passes out. The idiom {le pêstî xoî helyederê, one got out of one’s skin} which expresses anger in Kurdish, unlike English which is used for fear, was also noticed in the answers, and it is another notable evidence of L1 interference. In addition, the idiom {teqîyêve le twêryêtya, one exploded with anger} was found in the responses, which is a variant, according to Kövecses (2002), motivated by the metaphorical entailment WHEN ANGER BECOMES TOO INTENSE, THE PERSON EXPLODES.

Moreover, among Kurdish people, both milk and lentil soup are used in two Kurdish idioms, on regular basis, to describe someone getting angry suddenly. The conceptualization of anger is mapped on the milk/lentil soup when overheated and boiled, inside the container pressure builds up, and when the top layer grows larger and comes up, the milk/lentil soup suddenly spills over, as in {weku şîr/nîskêne helêdêctê, one spills over as boiled milk/lentil soup}. In addition, other idioms like {gëyuştîwête kwne îwtîm, anger has reached up one’s nostril}, {fiywizî kîrd/ wayerekînî dawiyane le yek, blow one’s fuse} were also observed among the answers which are commonly used by Kurdish speakers when they are about releasing anger or have released their anger. These examples are all evidence of L1 conceptual knowledge since they are all motivated by the same CM, ANGER IS HOT FLUID IN A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER, in Kurdish which can be considered helpful for the understanding of the participants, whence the CMG members received the lion’s share.

The groups’ responses (CMG 20.0%, TG 36.4%) also included idioms within different-CMs, as elaborated below;

{ṣëki/eshâheyî/ ỳymànî/ asmânî nemawë, one no longer has sheikh/ashâhe/sky, or one is out of faith} which are
religiously oriented and motivated by ANGER IS LOSS OF FAITH.

\[ \text{ag̣rî lê debarê, one breathes fire} \] is motivated by
ANGER IS FIRE.

\[ \text{peti bêrê, one untethered oneself, [cwteyî hawîşit, to kick
out someone with hoeses]}, \] which are motivated by
ANGRY BEHAVIOUR IS ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR in
Kurdish. And \( \text{[set bwe, one became mad]} \) is motivated by
ANGER IS INSANITY.

For the idiom \( \text{quake in one’s shoes} \) \( \{\text{wek bê na aw
delerzêt, shake like dropping willow}\} \), the shared
metonymy-based CM, FEAR IS A PHYSICAL CHANGE, between
English and Kurdish is probably facilitative in comprehending the idiom. Further, as
the CMG (82.5%) surpassed the TG (66.7%) could be interpreted as the effectiveness of CM-based Approach
implementation.

Regarding the English idiom \( \text{hit the brick wall} \), and the
Kurdish idiom \( \{\text{twšî kosip/tegere bîbit, to come upon
a stumbling block/snag}\} \) which have the shared CM,
PROBLEM IS AN ENTITY, the percentage (CMG 55.0%;
TG 45.5%) implies how L1 transfer due to the shared
CMs could mainly help the study subjects digest the
idiom. The 10% difference in their performance is likely
the outcome of enlightening the CMG participants of the
underlying CMs. A CMG participant wrote the variant
\( \{\text{rwerwî şaxêk bîbitewê, to come upon a mountain}\} \), while
such distinct wording and linguistic structure are the
manifestations of L1 interference. Others preferred
literal translation.

Furthermore, lack of equivalent contributes to less
comprehensibility of the idiom \( \text{doing a slow burn, by both
groups (CMG 30.0%; TG 15.2%)}, \) particularly the TG.
This would reveal that by sharing the same CM culturally,
Kurdish students could think of another idiom rooted within the same CM \{\text{dwekəl dekat, one
smokes}, [dwekî lê helestê, smoke rises up from one}\] which all instantiate ANGER IS FIRE. However,
the participants (CMG 22.5%, TG 18.2%) chose \( \text{one is
seething, one explodes, and make one’s blood boil} \), which are
all rooted within ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER. Besides, one-third of the CMG and nearly
half of the TG members answered literally.

\( \text{Down in the mouth} \) is an idiom that is motivated by
the orientational metaphor SAD IS DOWN in both
languages. No idiom is found in the Kurdish linguistic
repertoire to be identical to the English one with respect
to wording; however, a similar expression like \( \text{liçî šorkrend, one hung one’s lip} \) can be found which implies
one’s lower lip is down. The other variant is \( \text{liçî šorewebewe, one’s lip has been hanging out} \) which renders
one’s lower lip bend downwards. The results (CMG 55.0%,
TG 33.3%) were in favor of the usefulness of shared CM
between Kurdish and English. Another variant within
SAD IS DOWN was observed among the correct
responses \{\text{paporekeyî/keştîyeyekî nîqum bwe, one’s
vessel/ship sunk}\}. Other answers were considered
unacceptable, which included expressions with no-CM
and literal translation.

Lastly, though the idiom \( \text{fall flat on one’s face} \) is
motivated by FAILURE IS DOWN in both English and
Kurdish, lack of an exact equivalent made the study
subjects (CMG 40.0%; TG 21.2%) count on the idiom
\( \{\text{texti erîz bwe, fall flat to the ground}\} \) which is commonly
used to symbolize failure to fall down to the ground.
Besides, a great number of the participants in each
group literally translated the idiom.

All things considered, the results in this part of the
experiment revealed that the participants depended on
their L1 to comprehend the idioms. That is, idioms that
simply have an exact equivalent in English and Kurdish
were better understood, possibly due to L1 transfer and
the shared CMs between both languages. In general, the
CMG members had better performance except the idiom
\( \text{to add fuel to the fire} \) which both groups had substantially
similar performance (CMG, M 4.60; TG, M 4.57). This
also revealed how effective teaching idioms using CM-
based Approach was in understanding idioms,
particularly informing students of how different sets of
idioms can cluster around specific CMs. Further, for
most of the idioms the CMG provided correct responses
either relying on one-to-one equivalent, very close
equivalent, or the same-CM, except in the idioms \( \text{be in
seventh heaven and blow one’s cover}\). However, the TG
members rather relied on the same-CM; while with \text{jump
down one’s throat} both groups equally used the same-CM
variation. L1 interference was also observed with all
types of the studied idioms to a different degree.
Further, some participants relied on literal translations
from both groups.

5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Part One

The discussion of the first part of the experiment was
specified to answer the first two research questions.

1. Discussion of Research Question One

The results obtained by the application of CMs in
teaching English idioms facilitated the comprehension of
idioms by Kurdish students of EFL confirm the earlier
findings (Kövecses and Szabó, 1996, Boers, 2000; Li,
2003; Berêndi et al., 2008; Kömür and Çîmên, 2009; Chen
and Lai, 2013) which is putting idioms into groups
under corresponding CMs and expose students to them
can facilitate idiom retention and comprehension.
Furthermore, the present study found that the CM-based
Approach had its efficacy equally for the idioms
motivated by all CMs, while Guo (2019) found the
influence of CM-mediated instruction on the idioms
motivated by structural rather than orientational and

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ontological metaphors. Besides, the traditional approach helped the participants to develop, but not as much as the aid that the CM-based Approach offered the participants. What the control group participants’ performance displayed was that they were disinclined to properly comprehend idioms and relate them together and to the right CMs that underlying the idioms.

2. Discussion of Research Question Two

The findings of the present study are in line with the previous findings (Boers, 2000; Beréndi et al., 2008; Vasiljevic, 2011) that teaching idioms using the CM-based Approach is more effective than the Traditional Approach in aiding English language students to comprehend idioms. For instance, the participants who were informed of idioms being clustered around the underlying CMs comprehended and retained the taught and new idioms better than the ones who were taught traditionally. It is also aligned with the findings that the CM-based Approach remains effective after an extended period of exposure and adequate time between the tests (Samani and Hashemian, 2012; Hung, 2019; Pan, 2019; Pham and To, 2019), however, the results oppose Beréndi et al. (2008) and, Doiz and Elizari (2013) as they reported no effect of CM-mediated instruction in the long-term.

5.2 Part Two

This part is devoted to discussing the second part of the experiment which tries to answer the last two research questions.

1. Discussion of Research Question Three

The tested idioms all sound to be comprehensible without posing a high level of difficulty as what has been found by (Irujo, 1986; Charteris-Black, 2002; Hu and Fong, 2010; Türker, 2016) who reported that an idiom that is prevalent in L1 and L2, leads to L1 transfer in its comprehension and learning.

The English idioms with the exact and closest equivalent to Kurdish wording and being within the same CM were comprehended, to a great extent, by the CMG participants, and to some extent by the TG participants. This can indicate how facilitative L1 transfer is which endorses the literature findings (Boers, 2000; Charteris-Black 2002; Beréndi et al., 2008; Türker, 2016).

Moreover, the existence of the same CM in Kurdish and English behind many of the idioms can be the most feasible delineation of the responses provided by both groups. Regarding the idioms that are not equivalent linguistically, while identical CMs underlying them in Kurdish and English, the findings revealed that the participants had difficulty comprehending all but one, ‘doing a slow burn’, the result is not in full agreement with Charteris-Black (2002) as Malay students had a good performance with the expressions that are not equivalent linguistically, but conceptually. In addition, the idioms jump down one’s throat and one breathes fire were understood by half of the CMG members and one-third of the TG ones, which can be assumed that the participants’ misunderstanding was due to their unconcern about the elements that comprise each of the source and the target domains (Kövecses, 2001, p. 101).

Despite the L1 transfer, L1 interference (i.e., negative transfer) was observed in the answers given by the CMG and TG members, though, the TG members were expected to rely on the L1 interference as they were not aware of the motivated CMs. In addition, L1 interference was observed in the responses to all non-equivalent idioms and almost all the exact and very close equivalent idioms. Further, the findings revealed that with the idioms that do not have exact equivalents, the participants from both groups seemingly searched to find out the exact equivalents, consequently, they relied on other Kurdish variants within or outside the CMs that underlying the stimuli, which is compatible with the claim that “the instantiations of shared metaphoric themes vary across languages” (Boers, 2000, p. 557). L1 interference, though, impeded the participants to comprehend idioms, it informed us that there are idioms and CMs that are bounded to Kurdish culture. Thus, Kurdish EFL students’ awareness needs to be raised accordingly in order to help them perceive how seemingly different sets of idioms are clustered around corresponding CMs.

Moreover, the CMG participants were more liable to depend on the linguistic structure of Kurdish idioms rather than the TG ones, especially in the idioms be in seventh heaven, add fuel to the fire, gain the upper hand, stir up a hornet’s nest, cold shivers run down one’s spine, and, keep it under one’s hat. This could be attributed to the cultural differences between the participants’ L1 and L2, which endorses Hu and Fong’s (2010) observation of L1 interference that occurred due to the English and Chinese cultural differences. It also validates the findings by Beréndi et al. (2008) where L1 interference was observed due to the perceived difference between L1 (Hungarian) and L2 (English). However, other findings confirm that L1 interference occurrence sources from semantic similarities (Abdullah and Jackson, 1998) or other shared features between L1 and L2 (Boers, 2000). In addition, the findings also endorse Irujo’s (1993) finding as a number of group participants, particularly TG members, translated the idioms literally as a strategy.

2. Discussion of Research Question Four

The results corroborate the hypothesis that “an enhanced metaphor awareness through the categorization of idioms by CMs can enhance at least short term retention of the idioms” (Beréndi et al., 2008, p. 77). That is, grouping idioms under corresponding
CMs helps students in comprehending and finding out L1 equivalents better than listing idioms randomly as traditionally practiced in EFL classes in the Kurdish context. This also experimentally corroborates the hypothesis that a detailed explanation of the CMs that semantically motivate idioms and being aware of shared CMs enhance students’ comprehension capacity (see Boers, 2000). This is also supported by the better performance of the CMG members in understanding all the idioms including no-equivalent idioms.

6. CONCLUSIONS

From the findings, it can be concluded that applying the CM-based Approach facilitated the Kurdish students of EFL to comprehend English idioms to a great extent. Meanwhile, the traditional approach could help idiom comprehension capacity to some degree. The CMG participants were remarkably better than the TG ones, which is evidence of the effectiveness of the implementation of the CM-based Approach rather than the Traditional approach to teaching idioms in EFL context with Kurdish university students. Wherefore, a complementary approach like the CM-based is needed to be consulted. The data also revealed that idiom comprehension by Kurdish university students was not merely a matter of the CM-based Approach implementation in idiom teaching, however, it could be the interplay between the idiom meaning comprehension and L1 transfer, the same underlying CMs of seemingly different idioms within and between English and Kurdish languages, and the cultivation of shared or different L1 and L2 CMs in the students’ mind through raising their awareness. Lastly, some participants in both groups, particularly TG, resorted to the literal translation of idioms as a strategy, which is likely due to a lack of knowledge pertaining to the idiom wording and the CMs underlying each idiom.

It is also necessary to acknowledge the study limitations, namely, the participants’ number, the unequal sample size assignment, the setting, the studied idioms and their underlying CMs, and the teaching and learning activities practiced. Hence, the results cannot be generalized to the all EFL population.

7. REFERENCES


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