



# BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

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FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

**EXPLORING HOW EFL STUDENTS AT A  
TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM MANAGE  
TAUGHT AND/OR UNTAUGHT IDIOMS IN  
THE LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESS.**

**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Languages**

**For the degree of  
Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés**

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**Thesis Director: Dr. Michael Witten**



**SEPTEMBER, 2014**

**EXPLORING HOW EFL STUDENTS AT A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM  
MANAGE TAUGHT AND/OR UNTAUGHT IDIOMS IN THE TARGET  
LANGUAGE.**

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**Of the**

**Requirement for the degree of**

**LICENCIATURA EN ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLES**

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**SEPTEMBER, 2014**

## **DEDICATION**

To my beloved parents Manuel Enrique Blanco Alvarez and Ana Margarita Barroso Parada who have always been my constant source of inspiration.

All I have and will accomplish are only possible due to your unconditional love and sacrifices. Thanks for always encouraging me to have determination, self-discipline and give my best in everything I do.

Thanks for teaching me the most important things in life, to believe in myself, in my dreams, and in God.

I want you to know you are the best family a person could ever ask for.

To my brother Cesar and grandmother Celia for encouraging me as a professional and for your constant faith in me.

## **A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S**

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## **Exploring how EFL Students at a Teacher Education Program Manage Taught and/or Untaught Idioms in the Language Learning Process**

### **Introduction**

There are characteristics and differences between academic and conversational English in the foreign language classroom. While academic English is the language used by the educated and needed to succeed financially in society, conversational English refers to the common and familiar language that is used in daily-life. Academic language includes cognitive, linguistic, and social/psychological components. Some aspects of those components can be taught; others are less useful (Uribe, 2008).

Idioms are important to accomplish communication in authentic contexts or in daily life situations. Idioms are utilized to convey representations of the world, evaluate people and situations, signal conviviality and conflict, and even create coherent, cohesive texts (Fernando, 1996). Idioms are important to be taught because students attempting to improve their communicational means try to use idioms, but it seems that many teachers don't provide a comprehensive treatment of idioms from a functional perspective (ibid.). This seems to be the case at the BA in ELT (LEI) at the Faculty of Languages of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP) where teachers seem to mostly use English as Academic Language (EAL) as a resource for teaching. Unfortunately, many of these teachers do not consider it important to teach idioms. The situation may be frustrating for students since many students in the LEI are still unaware of how idioms are used and the situational obstacles related to these.

This could be the reason why the students of English often feel awkward when they try to use idioms as they will sometimes misunderstand the use of the idiom in a particular situation or use an idiom that is inappropriate. Idioms in English are basic to the language, and yet, they are one of the most difficult parts of it to learn (Allsop & Woods,1990).

### **1.1 The problem**

When learning English as a foreign Language at the LEI, one can observe that many teachers of English do not teach idioms because they do not place much value on that dimension of language learning. Teachers are not getting students immersed in the culture in order to understand the appropriate meanings of idioms or providing the necessary tools for students to enhance their understanding of this dimension of the target language. As one acquires more experience with the English language, we increase opportunities to interact with native English speakers, and we become aware of the difficulties that one can experience when confronted with idiomatic, conversational language. These problems may range from literal translation to outright confusion. Because of such problems, the author of this thesis became interested in investigating the meanings of the most common idioms in English. This process was laborious due to the fact that teachers did not provide much practice with idioms during classes. During this process, it became noticeable that there were students at the LEI who could manage idioms, so I began to ask them how they had learnt them. They said that they went to the summer exchange camps, and they interacted with native English speakers everyday. They reported that native English speakers always use idioms in informal conversations, which had provided them with practice.

Some researchers have assumed that proximal development necessarily involves interaction between an expert and a novice in which the expert eventually transmits ability to the novice through social interaction (Lantolf, 2000). If this is true, the students at the LEI require such interaction with idiomatic language in order to facilitate their acquisition.

## **1.2 Significance of the study**

This study is important because when I was studying and teaching English, I realized of how important it is to learn idioms. I realized how important it is for us to understand idioms when teaching because students always want to know different aspects of the language, regardless of the established syllabus. Teachers of English often try to get immersed in English culture in order to get closer to expressions a native English speaker would use, but it becomes apparent that difficulties will arise due to the lack of authentic context in which the language is learnt in the classroom. As such, this study is meant to investigate how students of EFL at LEI conducted their learning process when learning the real meanings that certain idioms convey and when it is appropriate to use them.

This is important for the teaching area because it would improve or enhance other students' abilities of LEI at teaching how to establish communication in English as a foreign language with native or non- native speakers as students focus primarily on communication. Academic English is needed to function at the university level and beyond, but it is important also, to have a broader curriculum design involving other lexical aspects used by native speakers for students of English as a foreign language in order to improve students' knowledge while helping them to face unexpected situations. This would provide a wider purpose in the curriculum design of LEI.

## **1.3 Research Question**

The Research Questions for the current investigation are:

1. What techniques and activities do students use to understand idioms in English?
2. What processes do students follow when investigating the meanings of idioms autonomously?
3. Are students provided with the necessary information about idioms in the target language courses at the LEI?

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter is about the different means by which English is taught, academic English and conversational English, and how students learn idioms through technology, the dictionary, and communication with native speakers of English. The main purpose is to identify how students manage to learn idioms through these means.

#### **2.1. Academic and Conversational English**

Cummins (cited in Oxford, 2000) postulates the existence of two different types of English, the academic or Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and the conversational or Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS). This section is about the two definitions.

##### **2.1.1. Academic English**

According to Scarcella, R. (2003, p.4), academic English is “needed to challenge the tenets of those in power who use it ... without knowledge of academic English, individuals may be excluded from participation in educated society and prevented from transforming it”. If students want to achieve socio-economic success, it is imperative that they are able to perform at the appropriate academic level. And performing at this level can be a continuing struggle, since academic English entails “multiple complex features of English required for long-term success in public schools, completion of higher education, and employment with opportunity for professional advancement and financial rewards” (Rumberger & Scarcella, 2000, p. 1).

Cummins (cited in Cambridge, 2002) describes academic language as cognitively demanding, it’s more obvious feature being that it is relatively decontextualized. It

relies on broad knowledge of words, phraseology, grammar, discourse structure and pragmatic conventions for expression, understanding and interpretation.

As we can see Academic English gather elements referring to subject matters. However, Academic English entails a broad range of language proficiencies but all of them are focused on subject matter. Even though, when students try to become more proficient in the language and sound like a native speaker of English using idioms, Academic English does not provide these elements.

For this study this is important because this allows us to know what is the difference between conversational English which entails exposition to English language through native speakers of English environment and academic English which entails a broad range of subject matter but is bound to that, so we can notice how important conversational English is as well in learning in order to attain more proficiency in the language.

### **2.1.2. Conversational English**

The basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) concept represents the language of natural, informal conversation. BICS are used by students when talking about everyday things in concrete situations, that is; situations in which the context provides cues that make understanding not totally dependent on verbal interaction alone (Cummins, 1980). It has been found by Cummins (1980, 1992) and more recently by Rosenthal (1996) that in context embedded or contextualized communication, the conversation deals with familiar events or matters that require that the speakers react and respond to each other.

According to these authors, we can say that the Conversational English is the language used in everyday situations. Students who develop the communicate skills can acquire phrase combinations and idioms which are new for them. BICS are acquired quickly because daily conversation is supported by a range of

contextual cues such as: a concrete situation, gestures, intonation, facial expression, etc.

For this work it is important because it includes aspects of communication that are used daily in routine communicative exchanges, that's why, students can acquire idioms through the Conversational English.

Conversational English is not considered important, and unfortunately, most of the teachers just focus in teaching Academic English

## **2.2. Idioms**

This section is just focus on idioms, the principal aspects to be mentioned here are the definition, the types and the fixed aspects of idioms.

### **2.2.1. Definition**

An idiom is a phrase which means something different from the meanings of the separate words that are a part of it. Usually it cannot be understood by the literal interpretation of the words that make up the expression. Used together, the words convey a meaning that is often unrelated to the individual words in the idiom. Some idioms have become so well worn that they are also cliches: overused or commonplace expressions. Some idioms are slang. They may be used to create an effect such as shock, irreverence or exaggeration (Laflin, 1993). Idioms seem like a confusing "secret" code reserved only for the native speaker of English. Idioms are certainly tricky beasts because it is the sum of all the words in the phrase which must be interpreted, not each word by itself. Idioms are simply and imaginative and expressive way to communicate an idea or thought. In order to be consider proficient in English, idioms must be learned since they are consistently used in books, magazines, television, movies, songs, American homes, etc. (Burke, 1998).

According to these definitions we could say that an idiom is a phrase that cannot be taken literally, since it has a proper meaning, in other words, an idiom is a combination of words that has a meaning very different from the meanings of the individual words. An idiom is a construction whose meaning cannot be logically deduced from the words that make it up. Idioms are pivotal in learning English. Native speakers of English use idioms all the time, often without realizing that they are doing so, that's why idioms are part of the native English speakers' world.

Idioms are part of daily speech by native speakers of English. They are so important in language learning because a student of a second language is informally considered "advanced" when and if he/she masters the use of idioms. Chiefly, their importance is that they're a major area of difficulty for non-native students; although illogical, idioms have to be learned because they're used a lot in conversational native English speech.

Idioms are everywhere. Students will find them in newspapers, books, magazines, on the radio, on the television, in everyday conversation and at work.

### **2.2.2. Types of idioms**

McCarthy, M. (2002) in his book *English Idioms in Use*, gives some classification about the different idioms. He presents in his chart one section for the grammatical section to be understood by the student; the second section is the example in a normal situation; and finally, the meaning where the person can check the context where he/she can use it.

The complete section is presented in the following chart.

Form	Example	Meaning
Verb+object/complement (and/or adverbial)	Kill two birds with one stone	Produce two useful results by just doing one action.
Prepositional phrase	In the blink of an eye	In an extremely short time
Compound	A bone of contention	Something which people

		argue and disagree over
Simile (as+adjective+as or like+ noun)	As dry as a bone	Very dry indeed
binomial (word+ and+ word)	Rough and ready	Crude and lacking sophistication
Trinomial (word+word` +and+word)	Cool, calm and collected	Relaxed, in control, not nervous.
Whole clause or sentence	To cut a long story short	To tell me main pints, but not all the fine details.

(2002, p. 6)

We could notice that there are several types of idioms which we, as learners, need to know. We consider this chart is very useful for us to know more about the structures of idioms.

### 2.2.3. Fixed aspects of idioms

Most idioms are fixed in their form, and cannot be changed or varied. Sometimes, however, the grammar of the vocabulary can be varied slightly, for this reason, McCarthy, M. (2002) also gives the classification about the idiom's variations. He presents in his chart two sections, the first section for the description of the variation that an idiom can present, and the second one, examples to clarify these variations.

The two sections are presented in the following chart.

Variation	Example
Occasionally an idiom in the active voice can be used in the passive	Government Ministers always <b>pass the buck</b> if they are challenged about poverty. (blame somebody else/ refuse to accept responsibility).  <b>The buck has been passed</b> from Minister to Minister. No one seems prepared to accept

	the responsibility.
Some verb-based idioms also have noun-compound forms.	There is too much <b>buck-passing in</b> government nowadays. No one accepts prepared to accept for anything.
One or more words in the idioms can be varied.	Stop <b>acting the fool/goat!</b> (stop acting stupidly)

(2002, p. 6)

In this chart, we can observe the different forms or variations in which an idiom can be constructed and the examples in which they are presented such as active voice which can be changed in the passive voice, some verb-based idioms which can be constructed also involving noun-compound forms and finally, the variation of the words compounding an idiom. Regarding to this, students are to identify the different ways of what makes up an idiom.

### **2.3. How to learn and understand idioms?**

This section mentions the use of dictionaries and the technology as tools to learn idioms, also the communication with native English speakers to acquire them.

#### **2.3.1 Dictionaries**

McCarthy, M. (2002) in his book English Idioms in Use mentions the importance of the use of dictionaries in learning idioms, also explains how to work out the meaning of an idiom when looking up for it in a dictionary in traditional ways or using technology also to eases it.

##### **2.3.1.1. What do you look up?**

In spite of students have the words compounding an idiom it is difficult to carry out the understanding of what an idiom means since we know individual words are not providing any meaning because it cannot be logically deducted students are meant to look up idioms in a dictionary. When working with CD- room dictionaries

students are not facing problems at finding the idiom question, meanwhile looking up for it in a traditional dictionary students have to find the lists where the idiom is situated.

The more functional way of finding what Students are looking up in the dictionary is heading to the alphabetical index which is presented at the back of the dictionary no matter if students use the *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms* (CIDI) or the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (CALD). Students find in the dictionary a list of expressions containing a word involved in the idiom which will be found in the dictionary highlighted in bold. When students are using traditional dictionaries, they have to head to the introductory notes to see how idioms work with this, in that way boundaries about how to look up for the element student is not trying to find will be avoided.

### **2.3.1.2. What information does students dictionary to get rid of?**

Dictionary provides the meaning of a lot of different things than what you are looking up as well as the meaning of the idiom. Idioms are used fixedly so reading carefully the note that the dictionary provides is important to understand idioms properly.

McCarthy, M. (2002, p. 8) indicates a student will find all these things in a good dictionary of idioms:

- Information about words that are interchangeable, e.g. drive/send sb round the bend
- Information about how the idiom is used- brackets, for example, show if any words in the idiom can be left out, e.g. I (can) feel it in my bones.
- Notes about the grammar of the idiom- there may be notes, for example, to say that an idiom is usually used in a passive construction or in a continuous form or in a negative sentence
- Examples of the idiom in use.
- Comments on register- the register labels used in CIDI are *informal*, *formal*, *very informal*, *old-fashioned*, *taboo*, *humorous* and *literary*.

- Notes about regional variations in use- this is important as many British idioms will sound very strange to an American and vice versa.

We consider that dictionaries are a very important language learning tool and also dictionaries play an important role in this process. Students manage to understand the usage of a dictionary when looking up idioms because, as McCarthy mentions, dictionaries are mostly focused on providing the meaning of a particular word which does not allow students to get the functional meaning of an idiom. Students have to become aware of how to use their particular dictionary effectively reading its introductory section where students find out how the entries are arranged. Once student locates the word, there are several useful elements that the student can discover about the word from the dictionary entry. Student read the information given about this entry, and depending on their dictionary student might find idioms.

Dictionaries come with an array of other useful information that's why they can be used for other purposes such as encountering the meaning of idioms or phrases associated with the word, and slang usage. In addition, the dictionary may explain whether a word is formal or informal.

Finally we can say it is very difficult attaining the meaning of an idiom without the help of a dictionary and by the way it is very helpful to use it when learning idioms.

### **2.3.2. Technology**

Erben, Ban & Castañeda (2009) in their book *Teaching English Language Learners through Technology* talk about the importance of technology. They mention in other words that using technology to teach English language implies the use of computers and other technologies as tools or method of teaching as providing support to English students throughout every area of content.

Teaching English Language Learners through technology provides flourishing methods for different levels of access. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) refers to human interaction by computers.

Since the early 1990s, Kern & Warschauer (cited in New York, 2009) say that research into computer-mediated communication has examined how electronic media can be used to enhance the learning of a second language.

We need to exploit Computer-mediated communication settings throughout a curriculum, mainly in contexts where English Language Learners need to enhance their English. Students need to be provided with comprehensible input interaction, computer-mediated communications which are potentially comprehensible so that students turn out to be encouraged learners produce comprehensible output as promoting negotiating of meaning.

We can say that this allows us to become aware of the importance of technology in language learning. The use of technology can also help students to visualize difficult-to-understand idioms. This technology also provides access to a vast array of information, including digital libraries or data for analysis as finding other people who provide information and feedback about idioms. We can see that technology can also provide new tools to enhance learning. Technology can create an active environment in which students not only solve problems, but also find their own problems and exploring through some others. Technology can bring real-world problems into student's lives to solve as enhancing their understanding.

Interactivity provided by these technologies environments is a very important feature for learning. Interactivity allows students to explore more fully environments in which they can face problems to solve or even create their own and this allows students to enhance their understanding through receiving feedback, as getting them to reflection about that and revision.

In conclusion, the use of technology when learning idioms enhances student leaning and achievement. Interaction allows students to test ideas, receive

feedback, creating contexts that students can re-examine, and expose themselves to the language as it is recommended to learn idioms earlier on so we can say that technologies play an important role for students in learning idioms.

### **2.3.3. Communication with native English speakers**

Learning to speak a foreign language requires more than knowing its grammatical and semantic rules. Learners must also acquire the knowledge of how native speakers use the language in the context of structured interpersonal exchange, in which many factors interact. During interaction, every speaker plays a double role both as a listener and as a speaker. Diversity in interaction involves not only verbal communication, but also paralinguistic elements of speech such as pitch, stress, and intonation. (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Dowd, Zuengler, & Berkowitz (cited in Cambridge 2002) say that the way one speaks has a great deal to do with the impression nonnative speakers want to create in a particular context. It claims that more learners who interact with native speakers of a second language, the more likely they are to sound like native speakers.

In our opinion, exercising the speaking skills with a native English speaker is the key to success. Being able to master idioms is almost essential if someone wants his English to sound more native and become more proficient in the language.

Idioms convey meaning quickly and when students get involved in conversations or get exposed to native speakers of English, idioms are often easy to learn early on. This is the only experience that will allow students to take over common words and expressions used only in spoken language or even idioms. It is true that it might not be the most accurate version of that language from a grammar point of view, but it is a way students can acquire idioms. Communicating with a native speaker will offer students the chance not only to develop speaking skills, but also to get idioms.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

In the following chapter, the methodology that was used to acquire data from the subjects will be presented. The Methodological framework, the Participants, Setting and Instruments that were used in the research will all be described, as well as the procedures that were followed to gather data.

#### **3.1 Methodological Framework**

The method used for this study is the quantitative research. According to Cohen (1980), quantitative research is defined as social research that employs empirical methods and empirical statements. He states that an empirical statement is defined as a descriptive statement about what “is” the case in the “real world” rather than what “ought” to be the case. Typically, empirical statements are expressed in numerical terms; another factor in quantitative research is that empirical evaluations are applied. Empirical evaluations are defined as a form that seeks to determine the degree to which a specific program or policy empirically fulfills or does not fulfill a particular standard or norm.

Moreover, Creswell (1994) has given a very concise definition of quantitative research as a type of research that is `explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods. There is often a binary distinction made in the literature between qualitative and quantitative types of research. Quantitative research is generally considered to be “...obtrusive and controlled, objective, generalisable, outcome oriented, and assumes the existence of ‘facts’ which are somehow external to and independent of the observer or researcher” while qualitative research assumes that “all knowledge is relative, that there is a subjective element to all knowledge and research, and that holistic,

ungeneralisable studies are justifiable...” (Nunan 1992: 3). Recently, there has been a growing tendency among researchers to attempt to bridge the gap between the two paradigms. Dornyei (2001: 242) comments that, “the combination of qualitative and quantitative designs might bring out the best of both approaches while neutralizing the shortcomings and biases inherent in each paradigm.”

According to our research it is appropriate to use a survey research which provides reliable results following a step-by step process. This method was selected because the collected data attained from interviews, questionnaires or observation is based on student’s point of view according to their own experiences.

### **3.2 Setting**

This survey was carried out at Facultad de Lenguas at the Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla. Our context is based on students of Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Inglés at this language faculty, whose main purpose is to train students to become professionals at developing communicative, linguistic, sociocultural, occupational, and technical competence, which are required to promote intercultural education in the various languages in order to meet the globalised world challenges.

### **3.3 Participants**

The subjects under investigation were 2009 LEI students and their ages ranged from 21-25 years old from the advanced level of English in the language faculty. They have already completed Lengua Meta V. They are non-native English speakers. In total there are 322 students.

### **3.4 Instruments**

As previously mentioned, the method used for this study is the quantitative research. According to our research it is appropriate to use a survey research which provides reliable results following a step-by step process. This method was selected because the collected data attained from interviews, questionnaires or observation is based on student’s point of view according to their own experiences.

The type of quantitative tool used for this research is survey. Kraemer (1991) identified three distinguishing characteristics of survey research (p. xiii). First, survey research is used in our research to quantitatively describe specific aspects of 2009 LEI students at BUAP such as investigating the meaning of an idiom and the procedures that they engage in to accomplish the understanding of such idioms. These aspects often involve examining the relationships among variables. Second, the data required for this survey research are collected from students and involves their perceptions, therefore, making the data subjective. Finally, this survey research uses a representative portion of students from which the findings can later be generalized back to 2009 LEI students at BUAP.

### **3.5 Procedures**

A survey questionnaire was formulated and distributed to LEI students. The survey questionnaire was used as the main data-gathering instrument for this study .The questionnaire was divided into two main sections: theory and practice.

In the practice section, questions 1 and 2 explore the students' perceptions about the frequency that they are taught idioms in the language faculties' curriculum as well as their perceptions about the importance of learning idioms as a future language teacher. Questions 3, 4 and 5 are to describe how students accomplish their learning process through describing what techniques and/ or activities help them get better outcomes when learning idioms.

In the theory section, questions 1 and 2 explore the students' knowledge about what idioms are and their perceptions about the importance the role of idioms when engaged in authentic communication. Four choices are provided for every question. Questions 3 and 4 continue to explore the students' knowledge about what an idiom is and what kind of idioms there are.

In order to test the validity of the questionnaire used for the study, this instrument was checked by 19 LEI students. These students as well as their answers were not part of the actual study process and were only used for testing purposes. After the questions were answered, the students were asked for any suggestions or any

necessary corrections to ensure further improvement and validity of the instrument. we revised the survey questionnaire based on the suggestion of the students and we excluded irrelevant questions and changed vague or difficult terminologies into simplest ones in order to ensure comprehension. All this feedback provided valuable information, which was utilized in the refinement of the final questionnaire.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

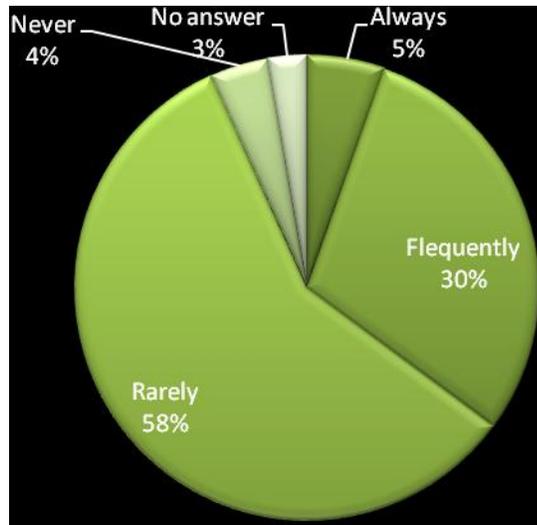
#### 4.1 Analysis of the results

In this chapter, the results of the questionnaires will be presented and discussed. The results will be presented in graph form, and the more salient results will be examined in further detail. There are two questionnaires, one for the theory section and one for the practice section. One graph is presented for each question of each questionnaire. The results are presented in the order of the questions of the questionnaires.

## Questionnaire 1

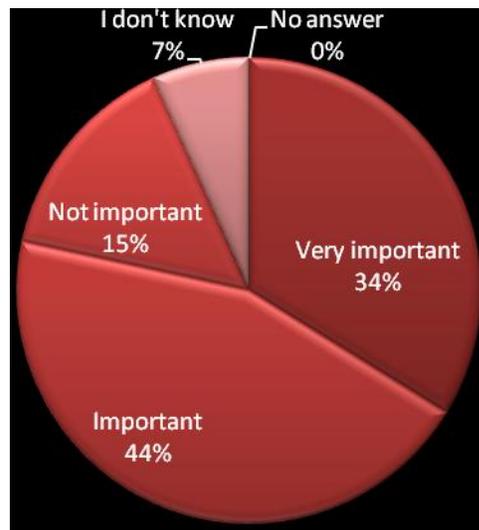
### Practice

**Figure 1. - How often idioms are taught in the target language.**



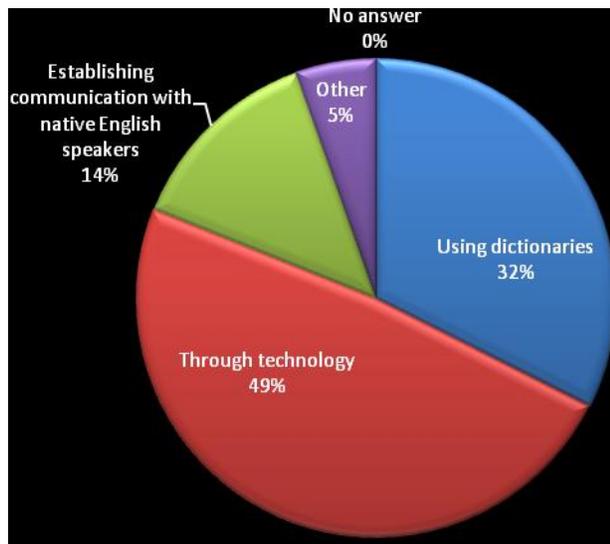
As we can see by the graph above, 58% of the participants answered rarely, 30% of the participants answered frequently, 5% of the participants answered always, 4% of the participants answered never, and 3% no answer. We realized idioms are rarely taught for a large majority of the participants in their target language. This is significant because it shows that academic English is predominantly taught in the target language. It seems as though conversational English, which involves idioms, has not been taken as important as it is during the target language, even though it is mainly important in order to accomplish communication in English.

**Figure 2. - Idioms importance for teachers when teaching a second language.**



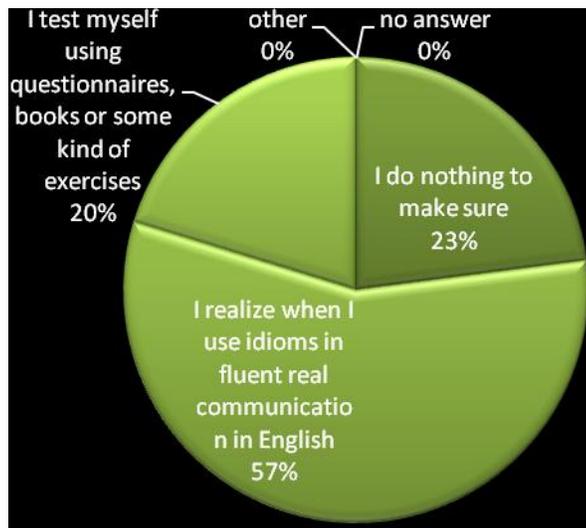
As we can see by the graph above, 44% of the participants answered important, 34% of the participants answered very important, 15% of the participants answered not important, 7% of the participants answered I do not know, and 0% no answer. As one can see, a great majority of the participants notice that idioms are important for teachers when teaching English as a second language. It shows us that teachers are aware of the importance of teaching idioms when teaching English as a Second Language which let us know they consider teaching idioms important but it shows that since the curriculum focuses on Academic English as a priority, sometimes the necessary information about idioms cannot be completely provided.

**Figure 3. – How you manage to learn and understand the meaning of an idiom without teacher’s help (techniques and activities).**



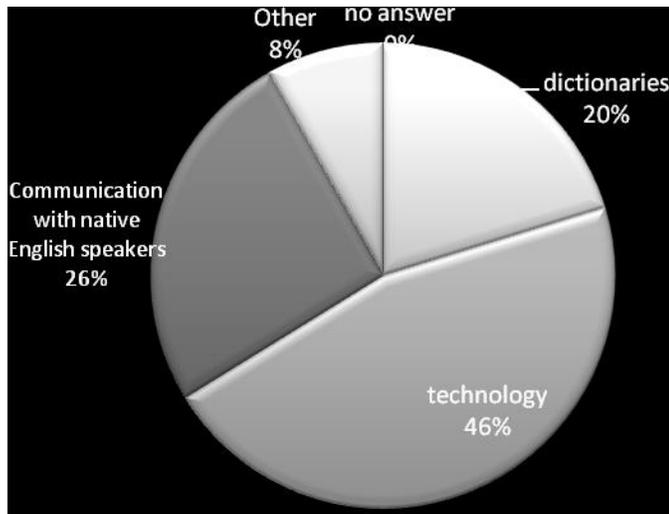
As we can see by the graph above, 49% of the participants answered through technology, 32% of the participants answered using dictionaries, 14% of the participants answered establishing communication with native speakers, 0% no answer and 5% of the participants answered other such as learning idioms in an English speaking context, guessing and internet. As we can see a large majority of 2009 LEI students manage to learn or understand the meaning idioms through technology when they do not advise with a teacher. It shows how students solve the problem when not being provided with the necessary information about the topic.

**Figure 4.- How you make sure you are achieving your learning process when investigating idioms.**



As we can see by the graph above, 57% of the participants answered I realize when I use idioms in fluent real communication in English, 23% of the participants answered I do nothing to make sure, 20% of the participants answered I test myself using dictionaries, books or some kind of exercises, 0 % of the participants answered other, 0% of the participants answered nothing. We realize a great majority of the participants make sure they are achieving their learning process about idioms when using it in fluent real communication in English. This is significant because it shows the importance of idioms in daily life communication. This result reveals that idioms are important to accomplish communication in real situations.

**Figure 5. - What techniques or activities you would use to understand the meaning of this idiom: *I met him after a long time, but he gave me the cold shoulder.***

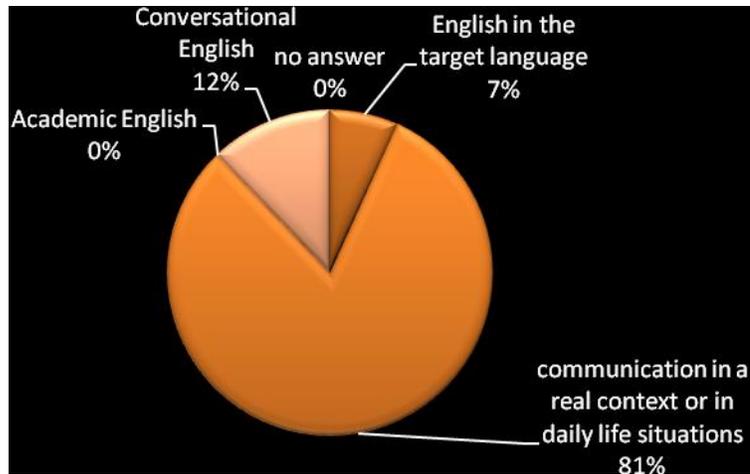


As we can see by the graph above, 46% of the participants answered technology, 26% of the participants answered communication with native English speakers, 20% of the participants answered dictionaries, 8% of the participants answered other such as internet, guessing by context, and I'd give meaning being helped by the whole sentence, 0% of the participants answered nothing. As one can see, a large majority of the participants would use technology to investigate the meaning of an idiom. This is significant because we identify that technology is the main vehicle towards the understanding of an idiom for 2009 LEI students at Facultad de Lenguas BUAP which let us know that technology is the most useful technique for participants when investigating the meaning of an idiom.

## Questionnaire 2

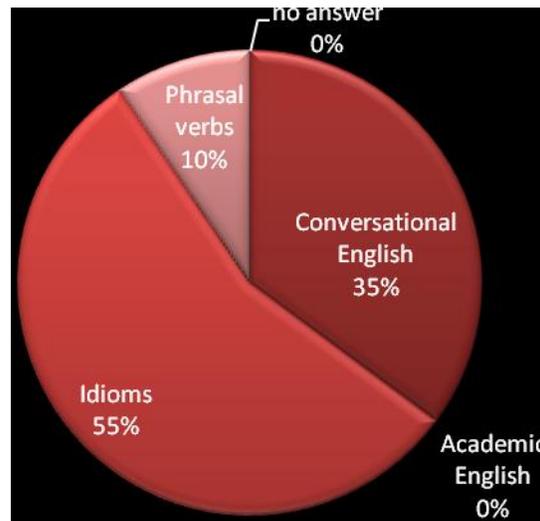
### Theory

**Figure 6. - Idioms are so important to accomplish...**



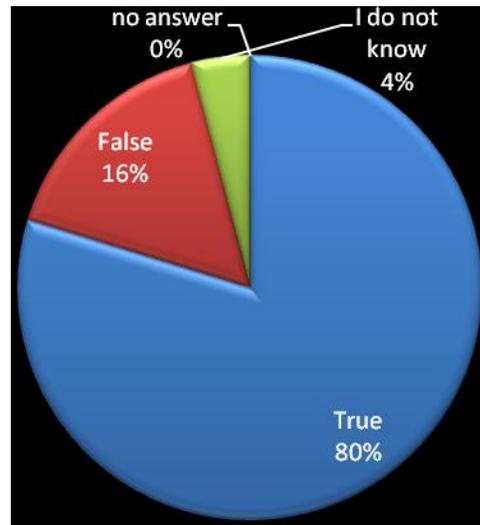
As we can see by the graph above, 81% of the participants answered communication in a real context or in daily life, 12% of the participants answered conversational English, 7% of the participants answered English in the target language, 0% of the participants answered academic English, 0% of the participants answered nothing. We realize that a great majority of the participants think that idioms are so important to accomplish communication in real context or in daily life situations. This is significant because this answer let us know that a large majority of the participants are aware of the importance of an idiom when interacting in daily life situations. This reveals that participants consider important to use idioms when interacting with some other speakers of English.

**Figure 7. - It is refers to the common and familiar language used in daily-life, ordinary situations.**



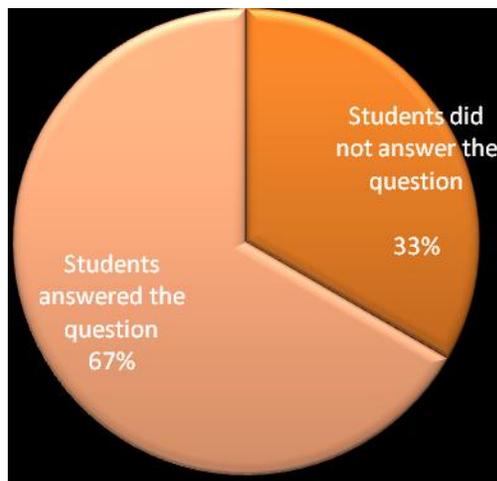
As we can see by the graph above, 55% of the participants answered idioms, 35% of the participants answered conversational English, 10% of the participants answered phrasal verbs, 0% of the participants answered Academic English and 0% had no answered. As one can see, a large majority of the participants think that idioms refer to the common and familiar language used in daily life or ordinary situations. This shows that the participants are aware that idioms represent an important part of communication in daily life situations but this reveals that most of the participants do not see clear that idioms are part of conversational English.

**Figure 8. - An idiom is a phrase which means something different from the meaning of the separate words that are part of it.**



As we can see by the graph above, 80% of the subjects answered true, 16% of the participants answered false, 4% of the participants answered I don't know, 0% of the participants answered nothing. We realize a large majority of the participants answered that an idiom is a phrase which means something different from the meaning of the separate words that are part of it. This is significant because we realize that most of the participants have been exposed to idioms somehow. This reveals that in spite of the curriculum design cling to Academic English in the target language, participants are aware of how an idiom is compound.

**Figure 9.- Types of idioms**



As we can see by the graph above, 67% of the participants answered the questions and 33% of the participants did not answer the questions. As one can see, a large majority of the participants answered the questions. This is significant because it shows that idioms have been reviewed academically in the target language which means that a necessity exists for more focusing on idioms as an important part to accomplish real and fluent communication in English. Some of the students that didn't answer the question revealed they had several reasons for not doing it such as they found it boring or they thought it would take a lot of time to do it, some of them didn't have the knowledge to answer this section and some of them learnt it but they did not acquire it. We noticed that even though some students don't know how idioms are compound, they are able to know what the idiom means, in other words, the form in which an idiom is compound does not prevent that this can be understood or used.

## **4.2 Conclusion**

In the next paragraph we present how at times, results from questionnaire 1 contrasts from those in questionnaire 2. As we can see in the practice section question 1, participants reveal that idioms are taught rarely in the target language and in question 6 of theory section, we can see how participants consider important to use idioms when interacting with some other speakers of English. Even though we can see that a large majority of students are aware of the importance of conversational English which involves idioms, we can see that according to their answers in question 4 from the practice section 23% of the participants do not make sure they are achieving their learning process when investigating idioms. As we can see some of the results reveal that idioms are important for teachers and students but the necessary information about the topic sometimes is not provided as it should due to the curriculum of the target language.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This Chapter deals with the conclusions of the present investigation. The chapter will first summarize the most important findings of the investigation. Then the conclusions of the study will be presented. Finally, the chapter will review the limitations present in the current investigation, further research and pedagogical implications.

#### **5.2 Summary of Key Findings**

The main purpose of this research was to identify the different aspects that 2009 LEI students manage to learn and understand when engaging with idioms. The investigation also intended to identify the manner in which students conduct and achieve their learning process when learning idioms. It was also of interest to identify how often idioms are taught in the target language classroom.

The results show that idioms are rarely taught in the target language classroom in spite of the fact that idioms are important for teachers according to what participants say. We can also notice that participants consider it important to use idioms when interacting with speakers of English. Even though we can see that a large majority of students are aware of the importance of using idioms to accomplish communication in a real context or in real daily life situations (conversational English) which involves idioms, we can see that some of the

participants do not make sure they are achieving their learning goals in relation to learning idioms.

According to the results we can see that participants consider it important to use idioms when establishing communication in English, nevertheless, a large majority of participants do not get involved in conversations in English as a technique or activity to help improve the understanding of an idiom. It seems that they would rather use technology. In spite of the fact that participants know that idioms represent an important part of communication in daily life situations, a large majority are not aware that idioms are part of conversational English, and it seems that they are often confused as to what conversational English is.

The results show that participants are aware that idioms are important to accomplish communication in a real context or in daily life situations and it also reveals that participants know that an idiom is a phrase which means something different from the meaning of the separate words that the idiom consists of. It also became clear that the form in which an idiom is compounded (academic English), does not prevent that the idiom can be understood or used.

As we can see some of the results reveal that idioms are important for teachers and students, but the necessary information about the topic sometimes is not provided as it should be due to preference towards academic English inclination in the curriculum.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This investigation demonstrates how students manage to learn the proper meanings that an idiom conveys, and most of the 2009 LEI students do it through technology. Regarding techniques and activities that students carry out or use to understand the idiom, they answered that technology is still what they use more, but they also use dictionaries and establish communication with native speakers of English in order to explore the meanings of idioms. In other words, they initially explore the meanings of idioms with technology and later test these meanings in authentic communicative situations, often with native speakers. Other students test these hypotheses using dictionaries, books and other kinds of exercises, while an equal amount of students do not do any activity at all in order to make sure they are achieving appropriate idiom use during their learning process. Finally, taking into account whether students are provided with the necessary information about the topic in the target language, they answered 'rarely'. Most of target languages curriculums cling to academic English, which is why sometimes students are not provided with adequate information about idioms.

### **5.4 limitations**

When we applied the instrument for this research for the first time, we used open questions which participants found very tedious and boring, so we had to change it into multiple choice questions. When we delivered the first version of the questionnaires to some 2009 LEI students, we realized participants took much more time than what they took when answering the multiple choice version. Some

of them stopped answering the first version of the instrument if they took more time than what they expected. We added the most common answers attained from those who responded to the first version of the instrument.

### **5.5 Further research**

The current study would be well complemented by applying tests to participants which would show if students are able to find the meaning of an idiom by the context. It would also be interesting to discover how accurately they were able to assign the meanings of idioms through contextual clues in a text. Furthermore, it would be worth investigating how often participants look up the meaning of an idiom when hearing it in real communication in English. Our questionnaires might include representations of fluent real informal communication in English which involve idioms. Carefully analyzing it, researchers will find whether context is useful for attaining the meaning of an idiom for this group of students.

### **5.6 Pedagogical implications**

This research is related to Academic and conversational English. It also remarks that most of the curriculums of target Languages cling to academic English. It also reveals the importance of Conversational English (which involves idioms), when establishing communication with speakers of English and that sometimes students are not provided with idioms to face spontaneous situations and fluent communication in English.

This research is important because it suggests that conversational English should be taken into account equally as Academic English in the curriculums of the target languages to provide more tools to face any kind of exposure to the language.

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## APENDIX A

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Purpose: To identify the different aspects 2009 LEI students face when learning and understanding the meaning of an idiom without teacher's help.

Subjects: 2009 LEI students advanced

**Instruction:** Please answer all of the questions. There is no right or wrong answer; it is just your opinion. All responses will be kept strictly confidential.

### PRACTICE

1. - How often are idioms taught in your target language?
  
2. - Are idioms important for teachers when teaching a second language?
  
3. - How do you manage to learn and understand the meaning of an idiom without teacher's help (techniques and activities)?
  
4. - How do you make sure you are achieving your learning process when investigating idioms?
  
5. - What techniques or activities would you use to understand the meaning of this idiom: I met him after a long time, but he gave me **the cold shoulder**?

## THEORY

Complete the following fill in the gap questions:

1.-Idioms are so important to accomplish \_\_\_\_\_

- a) English in the target language
- b) Communication in a real context or in daily life situations.
- c) Academic English
- d) Conversational English

2.-\_\_\_\_\_ refers to the common and familiar language that is used in daily-life, ordinary situations.

- a) Conversational English
- b) Academic English
- c) Idioms
- d) Phrasal verbs

3. – Mark if the sentence is true or false

An idiom is a phrase which means something different from the meanings of the separate words that are part of it.

- a) True
- b) False
- c) I do not know

4. – Relate each idiom to the form it belongs to.

Verb +object/complement (and/or adverbial)

Prepositional phrase

Compound

Simile (as + adjective+ as or like+ noun)

Binominal (word+ and+ word)

Trinomial (word +word + and + word)

In the blink of an eye

Kill two birds with one stone

Cool, calm and collected

Rough and ready

As dry as a bone

A bone of contention

## APENDIX B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Purpose: To identify the different aspects 2009 LEI students face when learning and understanding the meaning of an idiom without teacher's help.

Subjects: 2009 LEI students advanced

**Instruction:** Please answer all of the questions. There is no right or wrong answer; it is just your opinion. All responses will be kept strictly confidential.

### PRACTICE

1. - How often are idioms taught in your target language?

a) always    b) frequently    c) rarely    d) never

2. - Are idioms important for teachers when teaching a second language?

a) very important    b) important    c) not important    d) I do not know

3. - How do you manage to learn and understand the meaning of an idiom without teacher's help (techniques and activities)?

a) using dictionaries    b) through technology

c) establishing communication with native English speakets    d) other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. - How do you make sure you are achieving your learning process when investigating idioms?

a) I do nothing to make sure

b) I realize when I use idioms in fluent real communication in English

c) I test myself using questionnaires, books or some kind of exercises

d) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. - What techniques or activities would you use to understand the meaning of this idiom: I met him after a long time, but he gave me **the cold shoulder**?

a) dictionaries      b) technology

c) communication with native English speakers      d) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## THEORY

Complete the following fill in the gap questions:

1.-Idioms are so important to accomplish \_\_\_\_\_

- e) English in the target language
- f) Communication in a real context or in daily life situations.
- g) Academic English
- h) Conversational English

2.- \_\_\_\_\_ refers to the common and familiar language that is used in daily-life, ordinary situations.

- e) Conversational English
- f) Academic English
- g) Idioms
- h) Phrasal verbs

3. – Mark if the sentence is true or false

An idiom is a phrase which means something different from the meanings of the separate words that are part of it.

- a) True
- b) False

c) I do not know

4. – Relate each idiom to the form it belongs to.

Verb +object/complement (and/or adverbial)

Prepositional phrase

Compound

Simile (as + adjective+ as or like+ noun)

Binominal (word+ and+ word)

Trinominal (word +word + and + word)

In the blink of an eye

Kill two birds with one stone

Cool, calm and collected

Rough and ready

As dry as a bone

A bone of contention