

EFL LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF IDIOMS IN DAILY CONVERSATION

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Abstrak

Ada banyak peserta didik EFL berpikir bahwa idiom sangat sulit untuk di pahami baik dari berbicara dan menulis karena disebabkan oleh beberapa faktor yaitu : kurangnya kosakata baru, latar belakang budaya yang berbeda dan strategi yang sedang di hadapi oleh EFL. Secara umum idiom terlihat mudah di pelajari atau di pahami. Namun , ini bukan masalahnya. Sebuah idiom adalah kombinasi dari kata kata yang maknanya terintegrasi dan tidak dapat di tafsirkan secara langsung, tetapi dapat di tafsirkan bersama kalimat. Lazar (1996) menyatakan bahwa bahasa kiasan adalah area yang sering diabaikan dalam pengajaran kosakata. Studi ini mengacu pada persepsi peserta didik EFL tentang penggunaan idiom dalam penggunaan sehari-hari yang membuat pelajar sulit dalam memahami dan menggunakan idiom. Penelitian kuantitatif digunakan dalam proses pengumpulan data dan meminta peserta didik EFL untuk menjawab kuisionar untuk mengidentifikasi persepsi mereka terhadap penggunaan idiom dalam hal berbicara dalam kehidupan sehari-hari mereka. Subjek dipilih di antara 35 peserta didik EFL ESC di jurusan Bahasa Inggris dari Universitas Negeri Surabaya. Temuan penelitian ini diklasifikasikan menjadi dua istilah yaitu penggunaan idiom dengan cara dan kesulitan. Cara mengacu pada bagaimana peserta didik EFL mempersepsikan strategi mereka dalam memahami idiom dalam penggunaan sehari-hari. Sedangkan kesulitan mengacu pada bagaimana peserta didik EFL tentang penggunaan idiom dalam percakapan sehari-hari bahwa sebagian besar siswa tidak memiliki strategi, tidak pernah mempraktikkan idiom dalam berbicara dan mengalami kesulitan, mereka menganggap bahwa idiom tersebut sulit diterapkan dalam percakapan sehari-hari. Sementara itu, beberapa dari mereka memiliki strategi sendiri dalam mengatasi kesulitan dan menerapkan idiom dalam penggunaan sehari-hari. Strategi mereka adalah belajar melalui media sosial, puisi, novel, film dan terjemahan google. Peneliti menyarankan bahwa pelajar EFL perlu belajar tentang idiom secara mendalam mengenai pengaruh dan pentingnya penggunaan sehari-hari dalam percakapan.

Kata kunci: *Idioms, Pelajar, Persepsi, Strategi – Strategi*

Abstract

There are many EFL learners think that idioms are very difficult to understand both from speaking and writing because of several factors namely: the lack of new vocabularies, different cultural backgrounds and strategies which are being faced by EFL learners. In general, idioms seemed easy to learn or understand. However, this is not the case. An idiom is a combination of words whose meanings are integrated and cannot be interpreted directly, but can be interpreted together with sentences. Lazar (1996) states that figurative language is an area often neglected in the teaching of vocabulary. This study aimed to describe EFL learners' perceptions on idioms usage in daily use which makes learners difficult in understanding and using an idiom. Quantitative research was used in the process of collecting data and asking EFL learners to answer the questionnaires to identify their perception toward the use of idioms in terms of speaking in their daily life. The subject was chosen among 35 EFL learners of ESC in English department from State University of Surabaya. Findings of this research were classified into two terms those are the idioms usage in manner and hardship. Manner referred to how EFL learners perceived their strategy in comprehending idioms in daily usage. While hardship refers to how EFL learner's challenges in comprehending idiomatic expressions. Based on the result, EFL learners' perceptions of idioms in daily conversation that most of the students have no strategy, have never practiced idioms in speaking and have difficulty, they consider that the idioms are difficult to apply in daily conversation. Meanwhile, some of them have their own strategies in overcoming difficulties and applying idioms in daily use. Their strategies were learning through social media, poetry, novels, films and google translation. The researcher suggested that EFL learner need to learn about idioms deeply regarding to the influence and importance of the idioms daily usage in conversation.

Kata kunci: *Idioms, Pelajar, Persepsi, Strategi – Strategi*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a productive skill in which people are able to speak because of the adequacy of input such as vocabulary and having a well communicative skill. When people are speaking, vocabulary that is being used is simple, communicative, and interesting in order to create a good and amusing conversation. To make a better and more interesting communication, idiom should be included in the conversation. Idiom is the most interesting and creative vocabulary or expression that cannot be understood from the meaning of each word but it has different meaning of its own, for example: *Don't be a guy of curiosity kill the cat* or *don't be a guy of a chicken wing*. Mostly, people are trying to translate the word chunk by chunk. However, the word must be translated in whole words. The meaning of each idiomatic expression can be identified to which figurative meaning by looking at a whole text, and the level of meanings better to be mapped by a conventional way rather than arbitrary way. Princeton (cited in Ambrose, 1993) stated that idioms is a unique expression in English such as idioms, clichés and slang. The use of preposition belongs to idiomatic expressions. Idioms are the linier interaction which is happening between speaker/writer and hearer/reader, and the meaning of it cannot be defined literally Moon (1998). Because idiom influences communicative skill, it should be learned by learners.

However, learning idiom is not as rocket science as learning vocabulary that is usually used in daily conversation. Idioms are more complex because it has the meaning by its own. And it is different from daily vocabulary. Idioms are very complex so there are problems which are usually faced by EFL learners when they are learning idioms. First problem is the EFL learners are feel uncomfortable when using idioms everyday. Secondly, most of the teachers do not teach idioms so the EFL learners only use simple grammar and vocabulary. Thirdly, the teachers do not encourage EFL learners to practice using idioms with them. The EFL learners can be more understood than words of idiom which it can be useful for their productive skill. A study of idiomatic expressions. Cooper (cited in Utami, 2014) shows that language learners had a special language problem because the figurative meaning was unpredictable, for example: *"Hold your horses"* I am coming. In another study by Meryem (2010) stated that English learners who learned idioms find difficulties in guessing the appropriate meaning of idiomatic expressions.

Sasson (2007) had found that there were some steps of the new acquisitions of vocabulary. Firstly, the EFL learners were noticing many new words with the help of

more capable adults either the parents or teachers. Secondly, the step is the EFL learners recognizing the word with help of capable adult. Thirdly, the words were indentifying by their own. The last is the EFL learners either acknowledge new vocabularies or producing it.

Lazar (1996) stated that figurative languages was an area which often rejected in the teaching of vocabularies. In same thought, this study was conducted by researcher to investigate the difficulty which faced by EFL learners in comprehending English idiomatic.

According to Irujo (1986) Idiomatic expressions are "conventional expressions" that meanings cannot be established spontaneously and cannot be translated one by one. Because those are very different from ordinary figurative expression both parables and metaphores. An idiom is an expression consisting of two or more words. That often happens from proverbs and other expressions both oral and written. In other words, pupils cannot deduce the meaning of figurative language both written and from translation. As the essence of its meaning does not lead to the actual intended meaning.

Along the same thought, there are a lot of focus on learning of idioms after being recognized that idioms are always played in English learning Irujo (1986). Another study was devoted for explaining the process of study Kellerman (1983). The EFL learners are not only being helped in better communication, but also being helped in learning the culture and society of target language. Also, Erkilic (2008) stated that English is wealthy in idioms and learning them is the essence of the language. related to the use of idioms, Stight (1979) argued that the use of idioms in appropriate ways are the most important point in learning English language.

EFL's Perceptions in Idioms

There are common perceptions that the more idioms learners must know, the bigger problems got by the learners. The learners get stuck either in comprehending idioms or speaking using idioms as the lack of practice. Moreover, researcher claimed that they do not have the same culture as well as the native's culture, idioms are being hard to understand by EFL learners as the lack of the cultural background. According to Jiang (2000) stated that language is the gate of cultures, in the same sight it can be seen by people through cultures and languages. However, the view point of learning idioms, namely "combinatory possibilities", must be considered by EFL learners. According to Moon (2006), some linguistics call the term as "lexical phrases" or "lexical items", while others prefer the term "piece of words chunks" of language.

On the other side, both vocabulary and idiom are considered to be the most important part of language

(Carter & McCarthy, 1988). EFL students employ vocabulary-learning or idioms strategies to get along the unknown words they encounter. Thus, their perception in learning vocabularies and idioms by using dictionary make them feel confident (Gonzalez, 1999). Moreover, by using dictionary in learning vocabulary and idiom are one of the most common lexical way available in the form of book or electronic versions where EFL students use dictionary to acquire new vocabulary and idiom. According to Tseng (2009) cited in Sevik (2014), EFL students' perception that the dictionaries are trustworthy companions to second and foreign language learners because it guides them to cover up the meaning of unknown words while learning and comprehending idioms.

Another case of perception of leaning idioms and vocabulary portrait that there are many cases have found. Tran (2013) explored the competence of idioms for EFL learners and their perception about idiomatics of English in learning in the context in Vietnam portrayed that participants have less competency in expressing idiomatic language expression. It also reveals that the paradox between EFL students' visions, not only in using and comprehending idioms, but also in learning and their perspectives in idiomatic expressions. Interestingly, EFL students need to be exposed vividly to various idioms that are not only from English speaking countries, but also from countries which adapt English as a second language. Gahorei & Tabatabaei (2013) examined the perceptions of Iranian pupils towards learning idiomatic expression of English and exploring the impact of using different methods to teach them.

The result portrayed that the subject was being exposed through learning methods such as video clips are performing well and have a positive attitude toward learning idioms in the same case, Tadayon & Ketabi (2014) determined that study on the attitudes and ways of students in Iran in learning English idioms. The study portrayed that Iranian students have a positive enthusiastic and certain ways. The other study revealed that the perception of leaning and teaching idioms through the conceptual metaphors. According to Lakoff (1980), the concept of metaphor has a close relationship among two semantic things at the level of thinking. The essence of metaphore is to understand and experiance things in this way (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.5).

To apply the concept of metaphor, students need to grab some knowledge such as metaphores, parables, and personifications. Literary knowledge needs to be obtained through certain classes and methods. For instance, the competence of applying expressions in translation are two similar programmes in two different studies. This form was carried out by Cakir (2011) on English students in

Turkey and by Samani and Hashemian (2012) about English students from English learning. The theories of metaphorical concepts by Lakoff and Johson in 1980 were behind an idea in two programs where the idea of unity implied in one thing was similar to a parable. The pupils are taught that metaphores are a unique means of expression in human language, both written and oral forms. A course can provide idea such as figures of speech to those who can help them understanding idioms. According to Adkins (1968), either predicting or guessing meaning iso one of the context exercises related to figurative expressions allowing students to expand their imagination to comprehend and learn new unfamiliar idioms. The pupils who are enrolled in classes are advised to obtained literary science in the study of Cakir (2011) and Samani and Hashemian (2012) who do not take idiom class lessons.

Alongside of that, Feng (2007) conducted an experiment dealing with English language students in Taiwan, students in Taiwan considered the use of metaphors and metonyms in increasing idioms understanding. To measure both the posttest and pretest results of the same group. It has been portrayed by Feng that the best scores have improved due to some types of metaphores were taught to students while the period of the study.

The "underlying science" of idioms seems to have a good impact and increase students's understanding of unfamiliar idioms. Feng considered that the level of participant's English fluency is a point of view of understanding idioms, in addition to the target's cultural background (as quoted in chuang, 2013, p.64). Chuang also perceived the understanding of idioms that is influenced by several aspects including the knowledge of metaphorocal theory, the lack of student skills. He stated that some researchers such as (Gibbs, 1992; Hamblin & Gibbs, 1999) revealed that metaphores can facilitate the understanding of idioms that based on metaphorical theories suggested by Lakoff and Johnson in the 1980s.

Along the same vein, the other perception that the EFL learners revealed that the importance of idioms, the hardship of idioms to ESL students and considering idioms as belongs to the curricula in ELT. From another perceptions, EFL leaners believed that they could not dealing with the connection among cultures and idioms. This connection portrayed piece of the hardship issues that students' experience figuring idioms. Despite the diversity of the cultural background and the difference teaching and learning experiences and variaties of age of EFL learners portrayed the perception among the EFL learners. It was considered by EFL learners whether ELT had a connection among cultures and idioms

METHOD

Dealing with the research questions, the quantitative research has been used as the research design, it would be used to answer the research questions. The research design was chosen since the research was administered to measure the EFL learners' perceptions on idioms usage in daily conversation at ESC level 5. For the sake of linking the clear results of measuring perceptions of EFL learners it allows foreign language researchers to overcome the lack of validity in measuring the perception of foreign language understanding learning (Horwitz et al., 1986).

In the same vein, there were 13 questions in the questionnaire. First, the 10 of the questions aimed to ask the EFL learners about statements and contain Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Very often and Always. The last, 3 of them regarding the personal opinions of EFL that related to their methods and strategies.

This research was conducted in group of ESC (English Speaking Community) level 5 in English department State University of Surabaya due to the ESC programme always be held in English Department every year located in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia where the researcher resides. Conducting this research in UNESA eases the researcher to gather information from the subjects.

The EFL students of English major were selected from English department State University Of Surabaya. However, the number of the subject were 35 EFL learners of ESC level 5 which contain 5 groups of English speaking community learners, the reason why the researcher chose them because it could make easier for the researcher to gather a lot of sources and informations from them.

The instrument which was used to get the data in this research were questionnaires. In this research, the questionnaire asked participants to answer some questions in English of learning idiomatics and the role idiomatics play in learning for learners. Meanwhile, for the sake of specifying questionnaires, the researcher gave and spread the questionnaires on the spot directly to EFL learners. There are about thirteen questions, ten of them were about statements which could be answered by EFL Never, Rarely, Sometime, Very often and Always those statements represent the EFL perceptions both in manner and hardship and three questions were about "personal opinion about idioms". The responses were chosen carefully for answering the questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to 35 EFL learners and the data were collected, arranged and analyzed to portrait acceptable conclusions.

The first aim was to find out how their various learning experiences, second the researcher asked the learners about their perceptions and perspectives on

idiomatics and their strategies of learning idiomatic in English; traditionally or modern conceptual metaphor strategy.

To collect the data, all the 35 EFL learners of English enrolled in Speaking Community at State University of Surabaya were asked to complete the questionnaires, the reason why the researcher took 35 EFL learners because by taking 35 learners it was easy for the researcher for sorting the questionnaires. The subjects were asked to portrait how often they use and hear English idioms. Students give researcher a way to see nonverbal expressions, decide who interacts with whom, understand how students communicate with their partners and check how much time they spend on various activities.

In the same vein, the reason the researcher only took the questionnaires because by using questionnaires the responses were able to answer the questions needed by the researcher. Thus, it is also very easy for the subject to be examined. The researcher will explain the result of the research about the questionnaires which have given to the EFL learners about the perceptions on the use of idioms in daily conversation.

RESULT AND DATA ANALYSIS

Back to the research question of the study that questioning EFL learners' perceptions level on comprehending and using idioms. Researcher has found that the level of EFL perception's in regards of English idioms classified as manner and hardship. Manner refers to how EFL learners perceived their strategy in comprehending idioms in daily usage. While hardship refers to how EFL learner's challenges in comprehending idiomatic expressions. The findings of this study have actually met researcher's expectation about EFL learners' perception on idiom usage in daily conversation. In advance, according to the result, samples of the study mostly select "sometimes" statement on each alternative item of the questionnaire. Thus, researcher considers that the recent samples of the study have lack of vocabulary and local culture interference. Saleh & Zakaria (2013) claimed that culture background and vocabulary size recognition can be determined as two of fundamental factors that influence EFL learners' idiomatic comprehension.

The analysis of EFL perception of idioms yielded in average level on each alternative of the questionnaire. Among 35 samples in this study, most of them selected "sometimes" statement of questionnaire alternative. Specifically, the questionnaire consist of 5 alternatives which is ranging from never (1); rarely (2); sometimes (3); very often (4); always (5).

According to the questionnaire, researcher found two categories which consist of "manners" and "hardships"

underlying fundamental problems of EFL perceptions on idiom usage in daily conversations. More specifically, the variable of “manners” depicted by the question number 1,2,4 and 5. Meanwhile, the rest number of questionnaire represents “hardship” variable. Figuring this issue, the researcher provided the result of the questionnaire computations, as follow:

There are two categories which are being faced by L2 learners, manners and hardships.

Manners

1. Using idioms while speaking in ESC
2. Liking to use Idioms on my social media statues
3. 4.Prefering to consult my dictionary if I don't understand the meaning of idioms
4. Learning Idioms from poetry

Hardships

1. .Do not get any difficulty using idioms in speaking
2. I do understand if someone uses idioms while speaking
3. It is hard for me to understand idioms through a music poetry
4. It is easy for me to understand idioms in lyrics of western music
5. It is easy for me to understand the natives while they speak using idioms
6. It is easy for me to understand long conversations which contain idioms in movies without using subtitles.

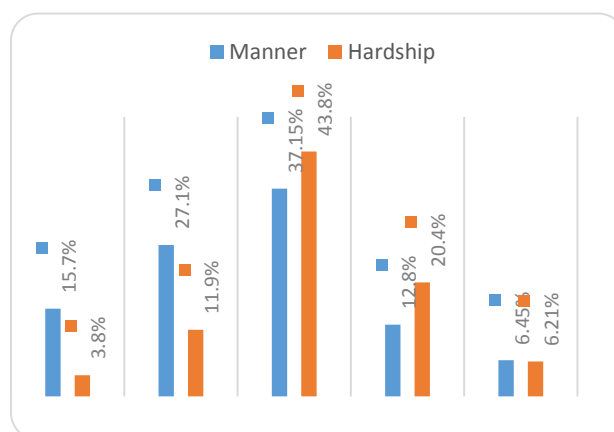
For both manners and hardship the L2 learners tend to choose “Sometimes” than other variables, Never, Rarely, Very often and Always. For the manners they did not know the way how to express the idioms in daily use. Thus, for the hardships they tended to choose “Sometimes”due to they felt doubt and covered up the weaknesses in understanding and using idioms in daily life.

For direct questions there are three questions about their personal opinions, which are as follows:

1. Do you have other strategy (s) in learning Idioms?
Please, explain your answer
2. What strategies do you use in learning Idioms?
3. Do you check in to Google if you don't understand Idioms?

Based on their personal opinions about the understanding and using of idioms most of them did not have a strategy, some just by consulting and seeing the translation as an alternative choice. On the contrary,in small of them could understand some idioms without consulting the dictionary and google transtlate.

Chart 1.Percentage Of EFL Idioms Perception based on the first variable (Manner & Hardship)



More specifically, the analysis of the EFL perceptions on idioms usage in daily conversation yielded the “Manner” for Never 15.7%, Rarely 27.1%, Sometimes 37.15%, Very often 12.8% and always 6.45%. For the hardship yielded for Never 3.8%, rarely 11.9%, Sometimes 43.8%, Very Often 20.4% and Always 6.21%

There were some similarities findings which related to this study. More specifically, the questionnaire used in this study consist of two variables that likely interfere EFL learners’s idioms perception, these are classified as manner and hardship..The question (Q) number 1, 2, 4, 5 belongs to manner. The Q1 related to “using idiom while speaking”, the Q2 related to “using idiom on social media”, the Q4 is “to consult the dictionary if do not know idioms”, and the last Q5 “learning idiom from poetry”. Meanwhile, the hardship is worded by the following question. The Q3 “don’t get difficulty using idioms”; Q6 “don’t understand if someone uses idiom”; Q7 “it’s hard to understand idiom through poetrical music; Q8” easy to understand idiom in lyric”; Q9” easy to understand native speaks using idiom”; Q10” easy for me to understand idiom in movie”.

In the same vein, the answers of manner which has been chosing by EFL leaners of 37.15% pointed out that EFL students loved to choose “Sometimes” which means “EFL learners were indecisive using idiom while speaking”and “always consult to dictionary” while they were in ESC club of speaking, for the hardship of 43.8% it portrayed that EFL students were indecisive which means they cover up the weakness that they did not truly understand due to the lack of vocabulary.

The percentage of manner “always” 6.45% depicts that some EFL learners who truly have problems in methods of comprehend idioms since idiomatic expressions are not rocket sciences to interpret because of the minimum size of vocabularies. Even if they recognized the literal meaning of it. Interestingly, the percentage of hardship “always” 6.21% revealed that the lack of vocabulary likely affect them in understanding

idiomatic expression. Compared to Saleh et al. (2013) showed that most students responded regarding the difficulty that idioms were not taught by teachers in the class

From the point of view of EFL learners' perceptions of idioms usage in daily conversation, it can be concluded that most of the students have no strategy, have never practiced idioms in speaking and have difficulty. As the result, they consider that the idioms are difficult to apply in daily conversation. Meanwhile, some of them have their own strategies in overcoming difficulties and applying idioms in daily use. The strategies they do are by learning through social media, poetry, novels, films and google translation.

In terms of idioms difficulties, the introduction of idiomatic expressions in classroom and their figurative language are being the factors, such as the teacher have to be able to introduce the basic introduction of idiomatic and apply it in daily usage. Additionally, either the lack of cultural background or the low frequent of vocabulary were the factors that influenced the EFL learners in understanding the idioms.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research showed that most of EFL learners at UNESA which grouped in ESC level 5 underestimate the English idiomatic expressions. They tended to underestimate the importance of idiomatic expressions usage in daily conversation. As the result, almost half of the current samples were found that EFL learners do not have any particular habit in using idiomatic expressions for daily conversation. For instance, they inclined picking up "Sometimes" as the alternatives answer. Researcher stated that the phenomenon caused by the lack of self-autonomous learning about idiomatic expressions among ESC level 5 member. Their lack of self-autonomous learning about idiomatic expressions triggered students to answer questionnaires less honest and less objective.

Suggestion

Related to the conclusion, it suggested what EFL learners' can get from their perceptions on idioms, they should be able to explore idiomatic expressions deeply, vividly in comprehending idioms and do not underestimate idiomatic expressions in daily usage. Thus, there are many EFL learners who are reluctant to open up their mind in evaluating themselves in comprehending idiomatic. So, they cover up their weaknesses either in comprehending or interpreting idiomatic expression.

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