

Addressing idiom avoidance in culturally and linguistically diverse students
through biography-driven instruction

by

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B.A., Tomsk Teachers' Training University, 1999
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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This experimental study was designed to examine the effect of Biography-driven Instruction strategies on the linguistic phenomenon of idiom avoidance and a discretionary strategy of idiom use employed by Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students. The review of the literature on linguistic avoidance behavior revealed that this topic was not widely researched. Less so were the instructional ways to minimize language learners' discomfort with idioms. Raising awareness of idiom avoidance strategy in language learners was one of the main purposes of this study. This research and its experiment were meant to create a precedent study that would be followed by researchers and teaching professionals to examine, explore, and manage idiom avoidance phenomenon in language learning process.

The research question and the hypotheses were examined through the means of quantitative research design. The study was driven by the repeated-measures design. The same study participants have undergone all the conditions of experiment providing the data at multiple points of time. The study participants were English language learners of various cultural and linguistic background. Three targeted vocabulary strategies Foldables, Learn-Draw-Connect, and Vocabulary Quilt were designed to lead to a higher level of student engagement through social and academic collaborations among CLD students.

Idioms are a complex linguistic construct for English learners to master. Idiom avoidance might be a learners' strategy to cover up their discomfort with idioms by not taking risks of making mistakes and thus looking good in the eyes of other people. Biography-Driven Instruction (BDI) strategies were designed to help lower students' affective filter and alleviate their anxiety caused by learning new language constructs. The use of BDI strategies might lead to greater CLD students' interest in including idioms into their second language repertoire. That would help them gain idiomatic competence and higher language proficiency.

Through quantitative data collection and analysis, it has been discovered that there was no statistically significant effect of the BDI strategies on the frequency of idiom use by study participants. The findings of the study serve as an extension of the theoretical literature. This study might also render an additional support to the theory of idiom avoidance behavior inherent to language learners. The experiment in this study might also enhance understanding of the temporal nature of avoidance that was determined in the previous studies. Avoidance of difficult constructs such as idioms should and can be addressed in the best interests of the CLD students who need to develop language skills that would help them succeed both academically and socially.

Finally, this study raises awareness among teachers of avoidance as a cognitive strategy used by CLD students and of the instructional ways to minimize CLD students' discomfort with idioms. Through this study, language teachers might continue their search of effective ways to teach idioms such as BDI strategies that would help CLD students cope with their idiom phobia. Idiomatic competence is absolutely necessary for CLD students as it makes them more proficient English speakers who successfully integrate the host culture and contribute to the new society.

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my family members in both Russia and America. My mother Zinaida Zabolotnikova is my biggest supporter in my pursuit of a doctoral degree in education. She is a kindergarten teacher of more than thirty years inspiring me by her example of showing care and attention to her little students. I know that my mom is extremely proud of my success and commitment. I believe that my father Alexander is my guardian angel watching over me from heaven with a caring eye. He would be very surprised and impressed by my academic and professional career. I dedicate this work to him as well.

My family in America, my dear husband Randy Irish and my precious daughter Katya, have been by my side every step of the way. They are very proud of me as I follow my dreams and ambitions of becoming a better professional. I dedicate this dissertation to them with deep gratitude and appreciation of their greatest support. I couldn't have done it without love and compound help from my wonderful family on two continents!

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Statement of the Problem

International students greatly contribute to the diversity and internationalization of American classrooms, campuses, and communities. Some common terms that have been commonly used for this group of students are aliens, nonimmigrants, English Language Learners, English as a Second Language (ESL) students, foreigners, and internationals. All of them are legitimate terms used for international students in various settings. In this study, I choose to refer to the ESL students as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students (Herrera, Holmes, and Kavimandan, 2012) in acknowledgment of the assumption that CLD students' perceptions and needs might go much deeper than just language learning.

Throughout my teaching career, I have noticed some common patterns of English language usage by CLD students. For instance, I recall numerous incidents where learners of English, including myself, might be somewhat hesitant to use idiomatic expressions in their second language discourse. The linguistic phenomenon of idiom avoidance and a discretionary strategy of idiom use employed by CLD students became a focus of this research.

The purpose of this study was to examine if idiom production could be reinforced over time by the use of teaching strategies that lower students' anxiety level in order to increase their idiom production. This study was designed to answer the following Research Question (RQ) and to test the following hypotheses.

- RQ: Does the use of biography-driven instruction strategies impact frequency of idiom use by English learners in the course of the semester?
- Null Hypothesis (H_0): Teaching strategies of Biography-Driven Instruction method do not produce any statistically significant effect on the frequency of idiom use by language learners during the semester.

- Alternative Hypothesis (H_A): Biography-Driven Instruction teaching strategies exert a statistically significant effect on the frequency of idiom use by language learners during the semester.

The research question and the hypotheses as listed above are examined through the means of quantitative research design. The causality is inferred from the statistical significance of the contiguity of the treatment conditions, which are idiom-teaching strategies, as a cause of the effect on the outcomes of the experiment.

Significance of the Study

Rationale for the study. When language teachers, as well as their students, identify the strategies that are being used in the language learning process, they acquire efficient tools for language teaching and learning. For instance, avoidance as a cognitive strategy and a coping mechanism is described in the literature in educational psychology (e.g. El-Marzouk, 1998; Anderson, 2003) that I refer to in this study.

Educational significance of this work comes from the potential of using this project by language teachers for developing idiomatic competence in English language learners. If learners themselves recognize the instances when they might avoid difficult language constructs, they might be willing to pay more attention and meaningfully connect idioms to what they already know in order to retain and apply them appropriately. Both language teachers and learners would obtain more power in teaching and learning when they examine complex cognitive processes, such as avoidance coping behavior, as they discover how to use it for the benefit of learning.

In this study, one of the goals was to uncover some critical characteristics of the phenomenon as well as some expedient ideas underlying the modification of this linguistic behavior over time. The findings were expected to reveal the ways to influence language learners' linguistic behavior of idiom avoidance through the implementation of certain teaching

strategies. The term avoidance likewise was redefined in recognition of a variety of cognitive and communication strategies that English students might revert to, first by instinct and later with intent. This study was an attempt to offer a change in perception of the CLD students' avoidance behavior as the phenomenon explained by external factors to its interpretation as a discretionary strategy that is driven by learners' internal motives.

The purpose of this study was to examine if idiom production could be reinforced over time by the use of Biography-Driven Instruction (BDI) vocabulary teaching strategies. The BDI strategies prove to lower students' anxiety level (Herrera, 2015) so they might incite interest in CLD students to using idioms in all types of discourse in and outside the classroom.

This study was oriented at two intended audiences: (a) Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers; and (b) teachers in content areas who work with CLD students. The significance of the study is addressed in the section below at both theoretical and practical levels of contribution.

Theoretical implications of the study. The findings of this study might serve as an extension of the theoretical literature so that this study might render an additional support to the theory of idiom avoidance in language learners. The presence of avoidance as linguistic phenomenon in learners' behavior has been established by a number of linguists and educational psychologists (Schachter, 1974; Kleinmann, 1977; Grant, 2003; Phye, Schutz, & Pekrun, 2011). Avoidance has been described in the SLA literature as behavior where English learners would either reject a new language construct or use it only with extreme caution. This type of response impedes their language learning processes throughout mastering a second language. Numerous SLA researchers pointed out that idiom avoidance was due to the negative first language transfer and lexical complexity of the construct (Schachter, 1974; Yip & Mathews, 1991; Laufer &

Eliasson, 1993; Han, 1998). These factors are external in nature and they have been widely investigated while internal factors were not so much considered.

The findings in this research might shed light on the internal factors causing avoidance in language learners, such as anxiety, fear of making a mistake, low confidence. The results of this study then support and complement the studies of Irujo (1993), Mohammed (2015), and Hubert (2015) who discussed the psycholinguistic factors causing idiom avoidance in language learners.

This study might also enhance understanding of the temporal nature of avoidance that was determined in El-Marzouk who viewed avoidance of difficult language items as “a pro tempore compensational behavior” (1998, p.19). The repeated-measures design used in this study addressed the temporal nature of idiom avoidance as participants have undergone all the conditions of experiment, which were BDI-based strategies, by providing the data at multiple points of time.

The benefit of conducting the quantitative study was in the assumption that the explained differences would be due to the effect of the treatment conditions alone (Keppel, 1991, p. 334). This is how the statistically significant effect, if any, of the teaching strategies on CLD students’ idiom production was assumed to come from the treatments and not the differences in the participants. The findings in this research then can contribute to an array of quantitative studies conducted on idiom retention and production in language classrooms.

Lastly, this study supports SLA research on “multiple contextual exposures” influencing vocabulary retention capacity in language learners (McKeown & Curtis, 1987, p. 114).

According to Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan (2011), BDI strategies that were selected as treatment conditions in this study allow teachers to provide CLD students “with structured opportunities for practicing language through listening, speaking, reading, and writing” (p. 64).

During the implementation of all three proposed strategies, students engaged in a variety of

operations in writing, speaking, listening, and reading. Thus, the principle of multiple exposures to the target vocabulary, i.e. idioms, was consistently sustained during the experiment. The findings of this study might then be of interest to the SLA researchers who focus their research on vocabulary acquisition processes.

In sum, this study of idioms contributes to the SLA field by bringing to the forefront of the idiom-related research the influential role of internal psycholinguistic factors in addressing idiom avoidance. Secondly, this study has significance for the scholars who examine the temporal nature of idiom avoidance. Last but not least is the theoretical implication of this study for the research on second language vocabulary retention and production processes.

Pedagogical benefits. Pedagogical implications for this experimental research mostly come from the effect of the study results on educational practices and curricula in language teaching field. First, this study helps the teachers who work with the CLD students either teaching them the language only or other content areas to stay informed of the recent trends in research work and teaching practices. This study also contributes to the search of efficient idiom teaching practices by providing example of using BDI strategies in addressing idiom avoidance and preventing it from happening.

Secondly, this study contributes to enhancing the readiness of English teachers for CLD students' advocacy by endorsing certain accommodative practices in their classroom in order to promote CLD students' success in and out of classroom (Herrera & Murry, 2015). Avoidance of difficult constructs such as idioms should and can be addressed in the best interests of the CLD students who need to develop language skills that would be sufficient for them to succeed both academically and socially.

Thirdly, this study raises awareness among teachers of avoidance as a cognitive strategy used by CLD students and of the instructional ways to minimize CLD students' discomfort with

idioms. It appears that ESL teachers themselves have been experiencing some discomfort teaching idioms to their students. Tran (2012) reported that the idioms would still have a long way to go to the ESL classroom due to the complexity and a culture-bound nature of this linguistic concept. Liontas (2017) pinpointed a disturbing fact that many of language teachers might choose not to teach idioms explaining it by the difficulty of the construct. Pinnavaia (2000) specifically pointed out that it was the culture-bound nature of idioms that made them “unmanageable for learners” (p. 54). Similarly, Mardani and Moinzadeh (2011) described idioms as part of the vocabulary that might bring “the difficulties, dilemmas, embarrassments, and potholes” to language learners (p. 129). Idioms are then oftentimes referred to in the literature as problematic and challenging both for the students as their teachers. This study might dismantle the stigma attached to the idioms as a “stumbling block” (Cooper, 1999, p. 244) in learning and teaching a second language. This study might provide teachers with some guidelines and ideas for efficient idiom-related instruction.

Finally, this study hopefully helps promote the inclusion of idiom instruction into the English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum. Ali Zarei and Rahimi emphasized the idea that “language teachers should not relegate [idioms] a secondary state in the curriculum” (2014, p. 182). Idioms should find their well-deserved place in ESL curriculum even though this curriculum change might prove to be not an easy endeavor (Benesch, 1993). The inclusion of students’ idiomatic competence development into curriculum is essential in acknowledgement of the needs of international students who want to belong to the language community.

CLD students express need as well as interest in becoming active participants in social and cultural life of the English-speaking community (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). Idioms would be their way to integrate into the English-speaking culture. Provided idioms are being taught in an interesting and engaging way, students would “sit up and take special notice” (Bress,

2009, p. 6) for they know it is their ticket into the world of ‘real’ English. This study might encourage teachers to pass it on to their CLD students that learners should be actively interested in gaining awareness of the cognitive processes that idioms trigger. Studying another language should not feel like opening a can of worms. For language learners, learning idioms can be easier if exciting learning conditions are created as those that are described in this study.

In sum, the findings of this study deliver a significant pedagogical message to language teaching professionals as implications for further practice. First, it raises the awareness of teachers about idiom avoidance as a discretionary strategy that is inherent to CLD students. Secondly, through this study, language teachers might continue their search of effective idiom teaching strategies such as BDI that would help CLD students overcome their idiom phobia. Lastly, this study stresses the importance of including regular idiom-related instruction into the ESL curriculum of English language programs at American universities. Idiomatic competence is essential in the arsenal of CLD students as it makes them more proficient English speakers who successfully integrate the host culture and who can contribute to the society.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This literature review is an attempt to synthesize the key theories in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) field. Additionally, I look at the results of the studies that have specifically addressed the multifarious phenomenon of avoidance and reticence in ELLs using their target language discussed. I describe a number of resources in order to demonstrate how work in that area evolved, what studies made a difference, and what is yet to be explored.

Allegorically speaking, CLD students were initially viewed as if they were lemons that had to be turned into lemonade. From problematic “learners with English language deficiency” they were expected to become successful English-speaking citizens and to contribute to the U.S. society (Bilingual Education, 1977, p. 27). Idiom avoidance then might stem from students’ choice to revert to this coping mechanism which might serve as a safe haven from probable mistakes. With this in mind, I propose to refer to avoidance in English language learners as a discretionary strategy. I use the sources that provide evidence and substantiate the need for the introduction of this new concept that might paint a better picture of this linguistic phenomenon in CLD students.

Operationalization of the Construct: Zeroing in on Categories

It is truly a fascinating aspect of human communication that people might not always mean what they say. This type of behavior is reflected in idioms that exist in practically every language of the world. Idioms often reflect deep culturally-bound conceptual metaphors that underlie figurative meaning of the utterances. For example, if Russian people say to you that there is no truth in your legs, they invite you to sit down, or when English-speakers ask you not to spill the beans, they mean that they do not want you to tell anyone their secret. Idioms are so ubiquitous in languages that we might often not notice it when we use them due to their emotionally-charged content and intent.

Due to the complexity of this linguistic construct, idioms have been presenting a number of different challenges for SLA researchers, language teachers, and their learners. Idioms have been always quite difficult to define and operationalize for the purposes of research and practice. In SLA research, idioms were referred to as fixed expressions by Moon (1998), as multiword units by Grant (2003) as well as by Boers and Stengers (2008), and as chunks in O' Keffe et al. (2007). In language teaching, English language instructors need to explain to the learners what idioms are in order to help their students raise their L2 idiomatic competence and confidence in using idioms (Tran, 2012). Additionally, teachers need to have a better understanding and awareness of what kind of idioms are easier for the students to learn or acquire. Some SLA researchers have attempted to categorize and classify idioms by degree of idiomacity, syntactic and lexical behavior, as well as by themes and pragmatic functions.

Early idiom classification models. One of the earliest idiom classification models influenced by Transformational-Generative approach was offered by Fraser (1970) who introduced six levels of idiom frozenness' hierarchy. Level 0 idioms, according to Fraser, were considered to be completely frozen, undergoing no syntactic operations at all, for instance, build castles in the air (1970, as cited in Cutler, 1982, p. 317). Therefore, the sentence 'He built castles most outrageously in the air' would be grammatically incorrect and the idiom would be used inappropriately. While Cutler (1982) pointed out some limitations of Fraser's idiom classification, she saw some value in it as syntactic frozenness of some idioms could be explained by their age. The original meaning of such idioms became obscure with time and they became extremely sensitive to syntactic operations. This type of classification based on the

degree of syntactic frozenness might still be useful in the classrooms where explicit idiom instruction occurs.

Classification by spectrum of idiomacity. Another type of idiom classification that was introduced was related to the spectrum of idiomacity and it appeared to be by far the most popular with researchers, educators, and translators. According to the degrees of idiomacity, idioms were defined as either transparent or opaque (Abel, 2003; Boers & Demecheleer, 2001; Boers & Stengers, 2008; Elkılıç, 2008; Gibbs, 1989; Moon, 1998; Nayak & Gibbs, 1990). The degree of idiom transparency thus plays a big role in the processes of idiom retention, production, and comprehension by language learners. For instance, a transparent idiom ‘lend me hand’ is much easier for language learner to understand, remember, and further use than an opaque idiom ‘to be wet behind the ears’. Therefore, in language classrooms, this classification may be more exploitable and comprehensive for both teachers and their students.

In their findings, Nayak & Gibbs (1990) emphasized the idea that “more transparent phrases are most easily tied to people's conceptual knowledge” (p. 329). They also made an assumption that “the use of many idioms was motivated by people’s conceptual knowledge” (Nayak & Gibbs, 1990, p. 317). For instance, English idioms referring to emotions such as anger, fear, joy, etc. would most probably be more relatable to ESL learners coming from diverse backgrounds than culturally-bound idioms which are opaque. To this end, Elkılıç (2008) gave an example of the idiom “to bury a hatchet”, which requires some cultural and historical awareness to understand and adopt (p. 31). Language teachers should thus draw their students’ attention first and foremost to the transparent idioms that students can easily understand due to their life experiences and their native language. However, learners with advance language proficiency might feel comfortable with opaque culturally-loaded idioms too.

Classification by idiom decomposability. Another type of classification related to syntactic behavior of idioms was used by Gibbs et al. (1989) who relied on the idiom decomposition hypothesis where the main criterion was idiom decomposability. Idiom decomposability was connected to the degree to which idiom lexical components influence the overall figurative meaning of idioms and their syntactic behavior. Relying on the degree of the effect of semantic decomposition on idiom syntactic behavior, Gibbs et al. (1989) defined three categories of idioms: (a) normally decomposable idioms, e.g. pop the question; (b) abnormally decomposable idioms, e.g. carry a torch; and (c) semantically nondecomposable idioms, e.g. chew the fat.

Importantly, in their study, Gibbs et al. (1998) discovered that people experienced less difficulty with decomposable idioms. For example, the idiom “button your lips” with the individual components having separate meanings could be substituted by “fasten your lips” without losing its meaning (Gibbs et al., 1998, p. 58). Therefore, decomposable idioms with lexical flexibility could be taught in English language classrooms before nondecomposable idioms where nonliteral meaning cannot be assumed from lexical components.

Meanwhile, Gibbs et al. suggested that the meaning of nondecomposable idioms that have no lexical flexibility, e.g. kick the bucket, “can be retrieved directly from the mental lexicon, just as the meaning of an individual word can be retrieved” (1998, p. 66). This assumption might lead language teachers to introducing nondecomposable idioms in the context where the clues would enhance idiom retention and connection to prior knowledge.

Current idiom classification models. All of the above-mentioned classifications provide an insight for language teachers into the nature of idioms and equip them with ideas how idioms can be taught more effectively. Reference materials that language learners have an easy access to while they are learning English idioms are English Idiom dictionaries. Leah (2014)

referred to the book by Seidl & McMordie (1997) where idioms were classified by the categories of formal, informal, verbal, idiomatic pairs as well as idioms used in special fields. The categories of idioms related to special themes such as emotions, state of mind, etc. appear to be useful and easy to adopt. Meanwhile, the categories of idioms containing keywords seem to be overwhelming as they should be supported by contextual clues. Another dictionary that Leah (2014) referred to was titled English idioms in use by McCarthy and O'Dell (2003). However, the idioms in this dictionary were organized strictly by their grammaticality, such as verb+object idioms, binominal idioms, prepositional phrase idioms, trinominal idioms, to name a few. This type of classification looks very complex and loaded with grammar terms. It deprives the learners of the context and emotional connectedness necessary for idiom comprehension, retention, and production.

An interesting pragmatic classification of idioms was introduced by Lattey (1986) and it was specifically oriented at language learners. Four categories from her classification model were as follows: (a) Interaction of Individuals; (b) Interaction/Interrelation of Individuals and the World; (c) Focus on the Individual; and (d) Focus on the World. Subcategories included positive, neutral, negative. This pragmatic classification model might be useful to language teachers; however, validity and usability of this type of idiom classification in language classrooms should be determined in practice.

Defining Avoidance in the SLA Field in the 1970s-1980s

Introduction of the term. In the 1970s, TESL professionals were looking for disciplinary foundations in psychology, sociology, and linguistics to inform their instructional practices in working with English learners in the classroom. One of the leading linguistic theories in the early 1970s was Contrastive Analysis. This theory was discussed and criticized by the linguists and teachers of the late 1960s-early 1970s for its focus on native language

interference rather than on facilitation (Crymes, 1978). The former meant negative linguistic transfer from the first language, whereas the latter implied positive transfer from one language to another.

In the 1970s, Nemser suggested that Contrastive Analysis should not only compare native and target languages, but also account for a learner approximative system, which is “the deviant linguistic system employed by the learner attempting to utilize the target language” that manifests itself in “immigrant speech” and “learner pidgin” (Nemser, 1971, p. 116). Thus, in spite of considering English learners’ needs and backgrounds, their language was still referred to as deviant and flawed.

In the mid-1970s, as an alternative theory to Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis was proposed by linguists as “a more direct route to an accurately predictive Contrastive Analysis” (Norris, 1970, p. 17). Contrastive Analysis tried to predict the areas of difficulty that learners encountered in second language acquisition. The proponents of Error Analysis claimed that many language learning errors occurred not due to learners’ native language interference but rather from their strategies in the classroom where the difficulties in the target language would show up as errors in production. For instance, Russian learners of English might answer a question “Haven’t you finished your project yet?” with a statement “Yes, I have not finished it yet.” due to the intent to express politeness by giving a seemingly positive reply. The explanation of this type of pragmatic error in English would root in a Russian tactic to show politeness in their language by using “yes” as a tool to ameliorate a negative impact of the answer. Thus, the error might not be a grammatical transfer from the first language but a manifestation of the cultural impact of the learner’s first culture on their linguistic behaviors. This anecdotal example and its explanation are based on my own English teaching experience and firsthand knowledge

of the Russian language and of its culture. It is a common pragmatic error due to cultural differences in English language production of Russian ESL learners.

Schachter (1974) conducted a study with students learning English at the American Language Institute in order to make predictions of probable areas of difficulty for the speakers of every group in producing relative clauses in English. Schachter discovered that the Chinese and Japanese learners of English might encounter more difficulty with relative clauses and therefore avoid them, an assumption predicted by the so-called a priori Contrastive Analysis approach that she promoted in her study.

Notably, Schachter was the first scholar to coin the term avoidance as a linguistic phenomenon to scholarly audiences at that time. Avoidance was therefore defined as behavior where English learners would transfer constructions that were similar to those in their native languages but “either reject a new construction or use it only with extreme caution” (Schachter, 1974, p. 212). Schachter determined in her study that Chinese and Japanese learners, for instance, might have produced fewer relative clauses in English trying to avoid them in order to make fewer errors (Schachter, 1974). As a newly discovered linguistic phenomenon, this type of avoidance behavior in English learners was disconcerting for both linguists and teachers due to its evasiveness, complex nature, and a seemingly needed repair.

In her later work, Schachter revisited the concept of productivity and non-productivity in language learners who she respectively labeled as “productive” and “non-productive” (Schachter, 1976, p. 37-38) in certain linguistic constructions. According to Schachter, investigations of this kind could not provide the teacher with answers to the questions that might arise as to how these phenomena could be best dealt with in the classroom “but they do provide the teacher with evidence as to what the problems of the learners are” (Schachter, 1976, p. 42). It

appeared that avoidance was viewed as a problem to be repaired, not at all as a strategy that students used to be effective in their speech production.

Expanding the definition of avoidance. In 1977, Kleinmann followed Schachter's lead in exploring Contrastive and Error Analyses pertinent to syntactic avoidance behavior occurring in ESL learners relevant to predictions of language difficulties. Similar to Schachter's findings, the results in Kleinmann's dissertation research strived to ascertain the predictability of ESL learners in avoiding the use of certain structures in their second language. Kleinmann went one step further by discussing the intersection of linguistic and psychological variables in determining learners' behavior where avoidance of structures appeared to be dependent on the affective state of the ESL learners (Kleinmann, 1977). In research of avoidance phenomenon, Kleinmann's work showed a lot more appreciation of English learners as individuals with feelings and perceptions.

What Kleinmann intended to explore in his study of 1977 was the notion of avoidance that presupposed choice. For that purpose, adapted versions of the Achievement Anxiety Test and Success-Failure Inventory were used along with language-elicitation tests. Therefore, Kleinmann's study confirmed that confidence was a variable that "would affect individual's choice to avoid or not to avoid" (Kleinmann, 1977, p. 102). Additionally, Kleinmann speculated on a plausible explanation of avoidance as a strategy of learners to cover up their discomfort with certain linguistic features in the presence of other people, especially if these people are "in position of authority, as a teacher is" (1977, p. 103). Kleinmann concluded that there was a need to examine other affective variables such as risk-taking as well as "a better profile of potential avoiders and nonavoiders" (Kleinmann, 1977, p. 106) as he referred to the English language learners following Schachter's terminology in her earlier work. By the end of the 1970s, Blum

and Levenston talked about the “true avoidance” (1978, p. 401) that accepted the choice of the learner of whether to use a challenging construction or circumvent it.

Interestingly enough, Blum & Levenston also brought attention to the fact that avoidance was displayed not only by language learners but by their teachers as well. ESL teachers adapted texts for language learners making materials easy for students to understand by omitting, replacing, or paraphrasing words and expressions that they anticipated learners would not know (Blum & Levenston, 1978). This type of lexical simplification (e.g. “flower” in place of “rose”) was referred to as communication strategy employed by teachers “to overcome learner’s lack of vocabulary” (Blum & Levenston, 1978, p. 403). English language learners would simplify their language in the similar fashion at early stages of their new language development.

Meanwhile, as Blum and Levenston pointed out, lexical simplification would not serve well to these learners in the future when they have more words to use but they would continue to overgeneralize. This is how their speech would be different from that of native speakers by displaying rather impoverished vocabulary and lack of variance in grammatical constructions.

Blum & Levenston also brought forth the strategies used by students and teachers for communication purposes. Avoidance phenomenon when learners paraphrase or use synonyms instead of difficult vocabulary items could thus be likewise considered a communication strategy.

In 1983, Gass and Selinker tried to develop the idea of avoidance further by exploring how English learners of diverse linguistic background dealt with difficult structures. Their findings showed that avoidance could be predicted by the properties of grammatical constructions rather than native language background (Gass & Selinker, 1983). Later, Dagut and Laufer (1985) used studies of Schachter, Kleinmann, and Gass as their reference point to gain a better understanding of avoidance as linguistic phenomenon in English learners. In their studies,

they found support in the contrastive view of learner's first language influencing their second language acquisition (Dagut & Laufer, 1985). A few studies of avoidance conducted in the 1980s did not provide any clear explanation why English learners made a choice to avoid certain language structures, which might have happened due to the influence of their first language, their cultural background, or some other factors.

In 1988, Babear tested the hypotheses of Schachter, Kleinmann, and Gass & Selinker pertaining to the linguistic phenomenon of avoidance in English language learners (Babear, 1988). His study confirmed the presence of avoidance behavior in second language learners of English. Babear discovered that avoidance might also be attributed to the "markedness of some linguistic structures" (Babear, 1988, p. 130), such as idioms, relative clauses, passive voice constructions, etc. Markedness, according to Babear, was defined as difficulty in use of English constructs due to the absence of those constructs in learners' first languages (Babear, 1988). Pedagogical implications for the linguistic studies thus included his suggestions to ESL teachers to pay attention to the language structures that might pose an increased difficulty for language learners speaking languages other than English.

Rethinking avoidance phenomenon. The main achievement of the transition from Contrastive to Error Analysis linguistic theory in the 1970s-1980s constituted a change in perspective where learners' errors in production (or avoidance of production) appeared in a new light. Researchers recognized that the first language was not the only – in fact, not even the most important - factor that could lead to errors. Towards the end of the 1980s, more attention was paid to the culture and first languages of English learners, as well as to the choices that they manifested in their use of the English language.

Linguists in the 1970s-1980s were referring to their human subjects in a neutral way, as "language learners" and "second language learners". Most of the discourse in the literature was

devoid of the judgment concerning the language proficiency or cultural background of students under investigation. Interestingly enough, some other terms that were used for language learners were “avoiders” and “nonavoiders” (Kleinmann, 1977) and “productive/non-productive” (Schachter, 1976), which showed that linguists were primarily interested in the linguistic phenomena rather than individual language learners’ strategies.

According to the thesaurus definition, the term avoider is synonymous to such descriptors as ‘shirker’, ‘slacker’, ‘escapist’, ‘deflectors’, etc. (Avoider, n.d.). The opposite of “avoider”, as used by the linguists, is “nonavoider” that bears a double-negative connotation embedded in the meaning of the word that might derive a positive statement. In linguistics, nonavoiders are then learners who obediently follow the directions and norms imposed by the language that they are studying. Nonavoiders per se do not seem to present any interest to the linguists. These people supposedly take restorative action and play by the rules. Avoidance and more so non-avoidance might also indicate the desire of language learners to blend into the English-speaking community by minimizing their mistakes in English and, as a result, to be an insider in the society rather than an outsider.

Appearance of the term avoidance in the second language acquisition field in the 1970s might have been induced by the fact that influential factors causing the linguistic phenomenon of avoidance in language learners were defined based on the first language interference. Since the 1980s, the field of language-related research and ESL teaching have started to feature the discussions of the acknowledgement of ESL students’ cultural and linguistic background. Therefore, definition of avoidance has undergone some changes too, as discussed below.

Discussing Avoidance in SLA field in the 1990s-2000s

Avoidance as a strategy. In the 1990s, scholars continued to use Schachter's studies on avoidance as a phenomenon. Meanwhile, more and more often, the reference to avoidance as a strategy appeared in SLA studies.

In their study of 1991, Yin and Mathews, referred to the findings of Schachter (1974) of the causes of relative clauses avoidance in Chinese learners of English. They concurred with Schachter that the use of relative clauses by language learners might be impeded by the negative first language (L1) transfer, by the difficulty of the target structure, as well as by the fear of making a mistake. The results of their quantitative studies showed that avoidance of relative clauses might be viewed as "a universal strategy which interlanguages, like other natural languages, adopt in response to [the] difficulty". Therefore, avoidance started to be identified as a strategy rather than an inexplicable phenomenon observed in language learners' behavior in and outside the classroom.

Later in 1993, Laufer and Eliasson tested Schachter's hypothesis on L1 influence on second language (L2) which results in avoidance in advanced language learners. While their findings confirmed the presence of avoidance phenomenon in L2 learning, they emphasized "the necessity of a cross-linguistic perspective in the study of avoidance" (Laufer & Eliasson, 1993, p. 46). It may indicate the beginning of the paradigmatic shift in viewing English learners as individuals with their own strategies and diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Irujo (1993) continued to investigate idiom avoidance in culturally and linguistically diverse students. She came to the conclusion that the subjects in her study knew many English idioms and "they did not avoid using them on a task where it was obvious to them that an idiom was expected" (p. 217). However, Irujo speculated that language learners might hesitate to use idioms in conversation. She suggested that because idioms were basically difficult to avoid in

real-life situations, language teachers should help their students avoid confusion, which might prevent them from using idioms per se.

Irujo posited in her work that idiom avoidance could not be categorized as a communication strategy as, for communication purposes, English learners could always substitute an idiom by a literal equivalent (1993). So, avoidance was defined as a strategy that involved some processes and intentions other than those used for communication purposes.

Expanding on the multimodality of avoidance. Like Irujo in 1993, El-Marzouk (1998) took a different approach in addressing avoidance phenomenon that had been identified by Schachter and Kleinmann in the 1970s. This scholar insisted on the necessity to explore this phenomenon qualitatively in order to excavate the psychological reasons underlying this behavior in language learners.

El-Marzouk drew the attention of scholarly audiences to the supposition that avoidance behavior had been previously treated by linguists as negative. Meanwhile, El-Marzouk asserted that this type of behavior would be absolutely natural as a psychological response contingent on the cognition of the “aversive stimulus” (1998), i.e. a difficult/painful entity in the language that is being studied. He underlined the assumption that, in second language acquisition, avoidance might be viewed differently, when “nonoccurrence can only be taken as temporary” (El-Marzouk, 1998, p. 15).

Importantly, El-Marzouk referred to avoidance in the context of L2 learning as a phenomenon that is “a potential property of the mind which brings about enduring changes in the mechanisms of linguistic behavior” (1998, p.19). Avoidance thus, according to El-Marzouk, was to be viewed as “a pro tempore compensational behaviour” (1998, p.19), where the learners tried to prevent from happening a negative contingency between what he/she ought to do and the aversive situation expectedly created by the avoided L2 structure.

Pertinent to this study of avoidance is the cautionary note made by El-Marzouk that avoidance phenomenon should not be confused with “escape phenomenon” (Grant & Evans, 1994, p. 132), which can precede but not follow avoidance behavior. This supposition confirms the idea that avoidance is juxtaposed to escapism where language learners, especially at the early stage of speech emergence, may try to escape from using the difficult constructs altogether when they get overwhelmed. Avoidance, on the other hand, is another defense mechanism, which implies choice of using or not using a challenging construction or an item in your speech in a second or foreign language (El-Marzouk, 1998).

Works of Schachter and Kleinmann, first avoidance scholars, also inspired Han to explore the causes of avoidance in 1998. She confirmed the presence of avoidance in language learners and she also pinpointed that learners while encountering several options for a particular grammar pattern or item in L2, might have been taking a decision to avoid some of these options in their own speech production. In 2000, Laufer conducted a similar study pertinent to the causes of idiom avoidance in English language learners and it was based on the initial assumption of difference or similarity between L1 and L2 idioms. She found out that lexical avoidance was “related to the degrees of L1-L2 similarity” (p. 195).

Laufer also confirmed that English learners were using an array of strategies to determine if the idiom was to be avoided or not. Laufer claimed that learners “may decide to use one form rather than another with which they feel safer (grammatical or lexical), in order to express the intended meaning” (2000, p. 186). Therefore, Laufer regarded avoidance as “an indicator of difficulty of the avoided form, not of its ignorance” (2000, p.186). Hence, her definition of avoidance implied some knowledge of the target feature and “a choice to replace it with an alternative which is perceived as less difficult and less error prone” (Laufer, 2000, p. 186). This definition of avoidance showed a change in perception of avoidance phenomenon from the

phenomenon of negative transfer towards avoidance as a purposeful strategy employed by language learners to achieve success in production.

Liao and Fukuya (2004) controlled their study of avoidance of phrasal verbs in Chinese learners of English for their proficiency level. They established a statistically significant effect of L1-L2 differences decreasing as learners reach a higher level of English proficiency. Liao & Fukuya then claimed a developmental manifestation of interlanguage from avoidance to nonavoidance (2004, p. 212). These findings might lead to the assumption that avoidance strategy might be overused by English learners at a lower level of language proficiency and as they gain more knowledge of the options available to them, they can take an informed decision of whether to avoid or not to avoid certain structures in their speech.

The approach to avoidance as a strategy used by the students in the learning process, was also taken by Vázquez (2005). The study findings confirmed that avoidance was a fundamental learning strategy, which adolescents and adults tried to reduce whereas children appeared to revert to this strategy more often. This result could be skewed by the variable of second language proficiency since it was one of the main considerations in this study.

Meanwhile, in 2012, Ghabanchi and Goudarzi contested the assumption of proficiency influencing avoidance in their study of Iranian learners of English. They established the presence of avoidance phenomenon in their participants in regard to using phrasal verbs, but they did not find any statistically significant difference in phrasal verb avoidance in intermediate and advanced level students.

Later, three other factors that influenced learners' decision to revert to avoidance strategy were explored by Mohammed (2015). He confirmed that the causes that induced avoidance were (a) the difficulty of English syntax; (b) low acquisition of English lexical items; and (c) some other internal factors such as anxiety. The latter factor that was described by Mohammed as

anxiety, shame, and low-confidence was the feelings that the participants expressed as influential in them seeking resort in avoidance strategy.

In 2015, Hubert partially concurred with Mohammed on the assumption that avoidance behavior was caused by anxiety. He pointed out that results with the learners of Spanish revealed that language learners reverted “the conscious avoidance of difficult grammar” which was “due to the lack of control over the form” (p. 154). These findings showed two important points in defining avoidance that are avoidance is a conscious choice, and lack of control over forms incites discomfort and anxiety. Therefore, the following subsection provides a review some of the recent and current studies of avoidance from psychological point of view in order to create connections between SLA sources and inquiries in the field of psychology.

Avoidance behavior from the psychological point of view. Turner, Midgley, Meyer, Gheen, Anderman, Kang, and Patrick (2002) regarded avoidance strategies, as reported by the students used in the classroom, as a multidimensional phenomenon: (1) “aimed at withdrawing effort”, (2) “resisting novelty”, and (3) “avoiding seeking academic help” (p. 88). In regards to education, Turner et al (2002) emphasize the importance of teachers amending their teaching practices so that avoidance strategies would ameliorate students’ use of avoidance strategies, which will produce a positive effect on student performance.

Anderson (2003) in his review of the literature on psychology of information processing and psychology of behavior suggested the presence of the connection between decision avoidance and negative emotions, which “may be associated with the anticipatory emotions of fear, anxiety, and despair’ (p. 157). Therefore, the decision-making process and avoidance of making choices in language learners as they operate a second language might be induced by all the negative feelings that they experience. Anderson likewise pointed out by referring to research findings that negative emotion might be “generated by prior choices” (2003, p. 158) and can thus

increase decision avoidance, which is detrimental for language learners' performance in their second or foreign language.

Psychologists in their studies continued to explore avoidance strategies in correlation with emotional state of human subjects. The use of cognitive avoidance strategies from the point of behavior research, according to Gosselin et al (2007), proved to show relevance to level of worry in adolescents and adults. Participants with a high level of worry were found to use more avoidance strategies, as compared to study subjects with a moderate level of concern. Language learners definitely tend to exhibit great distress and unease dealing in speech production in the second or foreign language. Therefore, a study by Gosselin et al (2007) is applicable to avoidance strategy that language learners employ throughout the course of language study.

Later on, in 2008, Shell and Husman in their study involving college students highlighted the fact that students reverted to the "performance avoidance" strategy with the purpose of "not appearing incompetent or stupid" (p. 457), which confirmed a previously established connection between avoidance strategy and fear of embarrassment.

In their study of emotion in education, Phye, Schutz, and Pekrun (2011) defined avoidance as an emotion-focused and ego-defensive strategy. They described avoidance strategy as an "attempt to regulate negative emotional reactions to the stressor" (p.40), the latter in the case of language acquisition would be difficult linguistic constructs. Phye, Schutz, & Pekrun also referred to the "avoidance temperament" as "a general neurobiological sensitivity to negative/undesirable (i.e., punishment) stimuli (present or imagined)" (2011, p. 59). In language learning, the punishment could be interpreted as an error and the undesirable stimuli could come in the form of linguistically demanding structures.

The literature review above provided a thorough overview of the theories, ideas, as well as both scholarly and scientific inquiries into the linguistic and psychological phenomenon of

avoidance. Most of the times, this phenomenon was referred to as a strategy of students and language learners in particular to take decisions as well as to make choices of the options available in the language that they are studying. Definitions of avoidance offered by both SLA professionals and research psychologists were conceptually connected. Therefore, the chronological analysis of the literature led me to delineate a multifaceted linguistic phenomenon of avoidance in language learners as their discretionary strategy presupposing choice of language constructs to produce in their speech.

Avoidance as a Phenomenon and a Strategy

Causes defining avoidance. The review of the literature showed the paradigmatic shift in the ways avoidance phenomenon has been perceived over the last forty-one years, since 1974 through 2015. The change occurred in the nature of factors influencing avoidance in language learners, from external to internal. Figure 1 below shows the probable causes of avoidance established through the studies of avoidance phenomenon over the years. This analysis is based

on the literature review of the sources focusing on avoidance since the time the term has been introduced by Schachter in 1974 till it was examined in 2015.

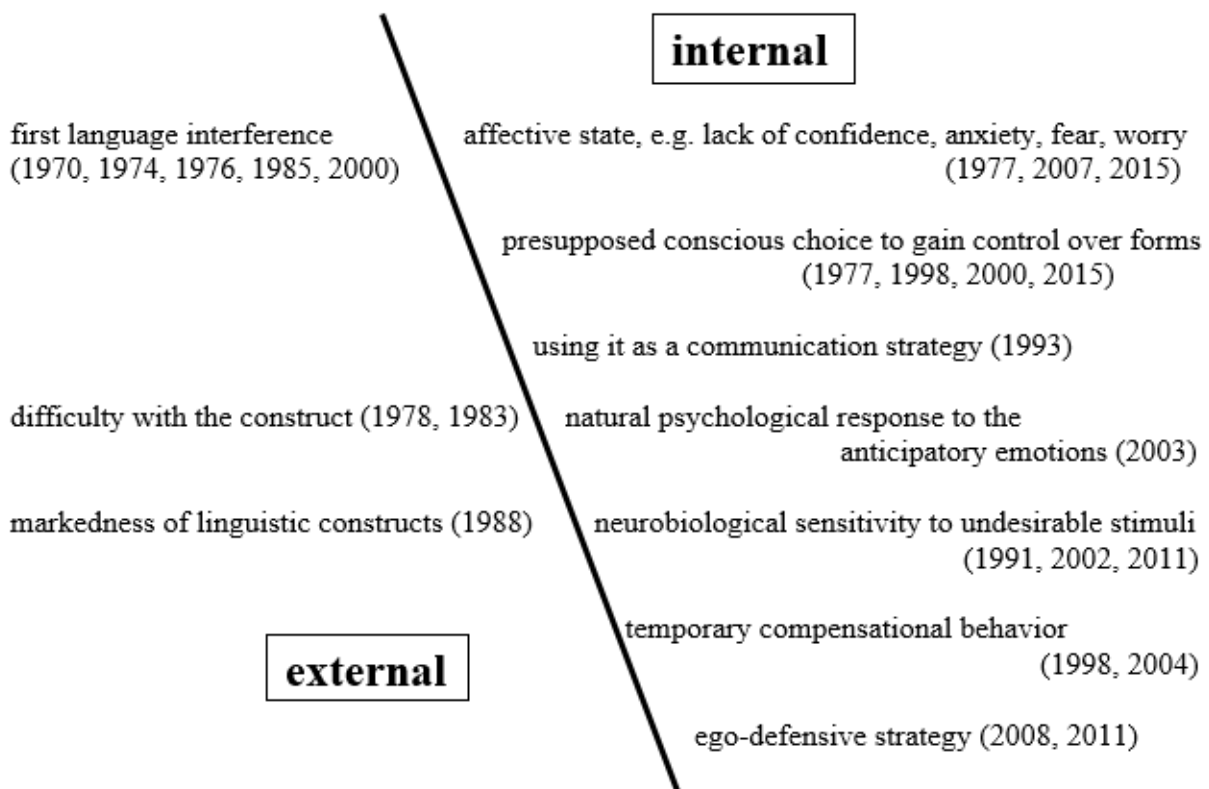


Figure 1. The change in the perception of avoidance

The Figure 1 shows that the change in discerning avoidance behavior occurred from explaining it by external predictors, such as L1 interference and difficulty of the construct, to the internal motives of learners, such as a conscious choice, a strategy, and a psychological response to the foreseen or present stimuli. In second language acquisition research, this shift is a change of the focus from explaining the avoidance behavior by the objective outside factors to recognizing the subjective factors that come from the language learners themselves. It leads to the assumption that, from awareness of the probable external causes of avoidance phenomenon, scholars and language professional acknowledge the possibility that language learners use avoidance as a discretionary strategy that presupposes conscious choice of linguistic forms.

Virtually speaking, a linguistic phenomenon may not be controlled or manipulated by definition as it is “a fact, occurrence, or circumstance observed” (Phenomenon, n.d.) in students’ linguistic behavior. Meanwhile, a strategy is defined as “a plan, method, or series of maneuvers or stratagems for obtaining a specific goal or result” (Strategy, n.d.). This definition implies that a strategy might be controlled and manipulated towards goals shared by the interested parties, i.e. teachers and their students. It is illustrated in the Figure 2 below which aspects of avoidance as a phenomenon cannot be handled easily and which traits inherent to avoidance as a strategy might be managed in the classroom.

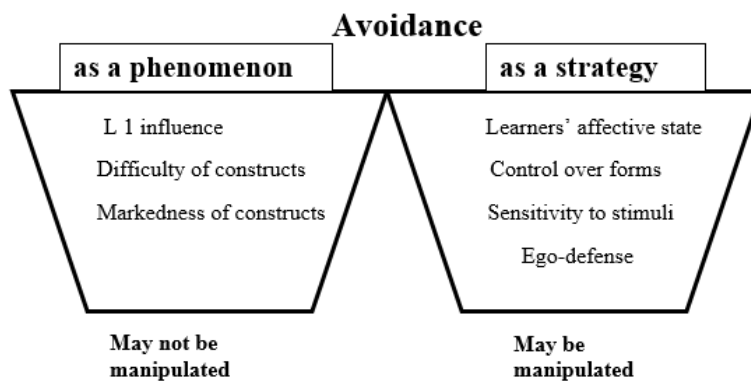


Figure 2. Openness to manipulation of avoidance as a phenomenon and a strategy

The factors that make avoidance as linguistic phenomenon impossible to be manipulate in the classroom are (a) L1 influence; (b) difficulty of construct; and (c) markedness of the construct. These out-of-control factors causing linguistic avoidance were established in the literature by Schachter (1974), Babear (1988), Laufer & Eliasson (1993), and Laufer (2000). The afore-mentioned causes of avoidance occur regardless of the use of teaching strategies used in the classroom. However, the factors affecting the use of avoidance as a cognitive strategy can be changed by language instructors. For instance, learner’s affective state can be influenced through the use of BDI vocabulary strategies as described in Herrera (2015) as they lower learners’ affective filter that is their anxiety level. According to Hubert (2015) the feeling of lack of

control over forms of idioms might increase CLD students' discomfort with using idioms in their discourse. While idioms are defined as fixed expressions (Moon,1998), language teachers can select decomposable and transparent idioms for their students that would allow some lexical flexibility (Gibbs et al, 1989; Nayak & Gibbs,1990). With this in mind, teachers can alleviate students' fear of using such challenging constructs as idioms. Last but not least, avoidance is also a strategy that language learners use due to their psychological sensitivity to negative stimuli that might trigger their ego-defense mechanism (Phye, Schutz, & Pekrun, 2011). The use of such risky language constructs as idioms therefore may pose threat to academic success or intrapersonal skills of language learners. In the classroom, language teachers can assuage such fears and anxiety caused by idioms through the use of teaching strategies with i+TPSI grouping configurations that create safe learning environment for the students (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011). The literature thus supports the assumption that idiom avoidance can be mitigated and controlled through certain teaching practices.

The Figure 2 shown above is based on the literature and it demonstrates that the avoidance taken as a cognitive strategy allows for the possibility to manage idiom avoidance by language teachers in the classroom. It is then left to the teachers to decide which approach to avoidance they would be willing to adopt in order to help their students succeed in their pursuit of second language mastery. If they consider idiom avoidance in their students as an uncontrollable linguistic phenomenon, language teachers might neglect teaching idioms explicitly (Maisa & Karunakaran, 2013). Teachers' choice thus might inform their teaching practices geared to serve the needs of their CLD students.

Teaching idioms. By observing the presence of linguistic avoidance phenomenon in their students, some language teachers might willingly or unwillingly decide not to address this issue and leave it to the time to resolve. However, when language teachers

choose to favor approach to avoidance as strategy, they know that they can modify their instruction to reduce the possibility of their students reverting to avoidance strategy.

Another important point that has been made in by SLA scholars through their research is that avoidance as a strategy might be of temporal character so that it can be manipulated through effective teaching strategies and techniques. Empowered by the idea of the ability to channel this discretionary strategy, which may only be a temporary mechanism used by the learners, language teachers can employ an arsenal of teaching strategies to minimize or altogether prevent the probability of avoidance behavior in their students.

First, the use of avoidance strategy can be substantiated by the CLD students' affective state, where they might feel anxious, worried, or afraid to use difficult linguistic constructions, such as idioms, relative clauses, and phrasal verbs. In this case, when the teacher is using strategies that lower students' effective filter, the term coined by Krashen in 1982 (as cited in Herrera, & Murry, 2015, p. 17), there is a possibility of preventing avoidance strategy from use in educated ways. Vocabulary quilt is an example of vocabulary teaching strategy where CLD students acquire vocabulary "in highly supportive, low-stress settings" (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011, p. 78) where students get actively engage with their peers towards a successful task completion. I believe that, in this kind of context-embedded and cognitively demanding environment, there is no space left for worry and anxiety.

CLD students might also be afraid of getting a poor grade for the assignment. It might also induce them to revert to the avoidance strategy when they would anticipate negative emotions and in order to prevent unpleasant experiences, they would avoid using a difficult, i.e. potentially dangerous item, in their speech production. Teachers might alleviate students' fears by assessing their knowledge going "beyond a grade and the grading system" (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2013, p. 274). Through enhancing students' authentic learning experiences and providing

“opportunities for student practice, and ongoing process-focused assessments”, an effective teacher can display his or her willingness to help the students in their learning processes. Therefore, students would not perceive their mistakes as threats and grades as punishment for they may see great value in teacher’s support and encouragement. Again, there is no need for the students to worry or be afraid when they know that their teacher can help them being interested in his/her students’ further learning of the difficult constructs in the second language.

As mentioned above, avoidance strategy is also an ego-defense mechanism, which is triggered by students’ fear of losing face in the eyes of their peers. To address this psychological response, a teacher might consider using grouping configurations to build the sense of community and reinforce atmosphere of sharing and trust in language classroom. For instance, i+TPSI configuration principle stands for the sequence of Individual work-Total group-Pair work-Small group-Individual groupings (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011). This way, by going back and forth between intimidating and low-risk conditions, teacher reinforces student interactions and understanding of the content. As different grouping configurations keep students active, they might not want to assume a passive position of avoiding difficult items in the task.

According to Ortega (2009) “interest in avoidance has subsided over the years” (p.41). The purpose of this study is to draw attention of the audiences to this unjustly forgotten phenomenon in language learners’ linguistic behavior. It is essential to raise awareness of language teachers of avoidance both as a linguistic phenomenon and a discretionary strategy of the CLD students. Understanding of such covert strategies employed by language learners informs instructional practices of those teachers who want to serve their students effectively and commendably.

Rationale for using the BDI-based strategies. The rationale for the choice of the format of the treatments is provided below. All three Biography-driven Instruction strategies that

were chosen for effective idiom-related instruction were based on theoretical advances in cognition, affective psychology, and instruction in learning vocabulary. Biography-driven instruction is a culturally responsive teaching philosophy and a method that incorporates research-based findings of how brain works as well as what cognitive processes are involved as CLD students acquire knowledge and skills (Herrera, 2015). BDI strategies are based on three phases of teaching and learning, that are activation, connection, and affirmation of students' learnings throughout the entire lesson. BDI-based vocabulary teaching strategies were then the most appropriate treatment conditions for this experimental study to test the effect, or the lack of it, of using these strategies for teaching idioms.

Frequency of exposures to targeted vocabulary. According to Herrera, Holmes, and Kavimandan (2011), BDI strategies allow language teachers to provide students “with structured opportunities for practicing language through listening, speaking, reading, and writing” (p. 64). Since idioms are a complex vocabulary construct, it is essential for language teachers to ensure that students get “multiple contextual exposures” (McKeown & Curtis, 1987, p.114) to increase idiom retention. During the implementation of all three strategies, students will engage in a variety of operations in writing, speaking, listening, and reading. For instance, students would have to write idioms, read them used appropriately in the sentences, hear them pronounced by the teacher and partners, and use these idioms in oral idiom-related discussion with their peers. Therefore, students will be exposed to the targeted vocabulary, i.e. idioms several times, which increases the likelihood that learners will “understand and remember the meanings of new words and use them more frequently” (Butler, Urrutia, Buenger, Gonzalez, Hunt, & Eisenhart, 2010, p. 4). Through high frequency of exposure to the target idioms, the BDI strategies will facilitate not only comprehension and retention of idioms but also their further use in different settings that CLD students might encounter.

The variety of ways that BDI strategies offer to the students to engage with idioms, such as listening, thinking, talking, writing, reviewing, establish the connections in students' brain. According to Doyle and Zakrajsek (2013), the stronger these connections are, the higher the possibility that new learning will become a permanent memory. Establishing and maintaining these connections are "like blazing a trail", which is termed "long-term potentiation" at the level of neurons (Doyle & Zakrajsek, 2013, p. 6). What was once new to students, becomes routine and will be available to them whenever you need it. So, by means of establishing meaningful connections for idioms in students' brain, BDI strategies acknowledge neuroscience research findings on how brain learns.

Cognitive and general linguistic skills development. Since idioms are abundant in both social and academic settings, CLD students need to develop consummate skills with idioms in order to be successful in their everyday interactions in and out of classroom. Learning and producing idioms in L2 is strongly correlated with the development of cognitive and general linguistic skills in target language (Guduru, 2012). The language ability needed for casual conversation is referred to in Herrera & Murry (2015) as Basic Interpersonal Communication skills (BICS), the term coined by Cummins (1980). In BDI strategies, just like in informal situations, CLD students "grasp at least the general sense of idioms" relying on "rich linguistic and non-linguistic contexts" (Cacciari & Levorato, 1989, p. 390). BDI strategies then provide the experiences for the CLD students to elicit the meaning of idioms from the situations and language surrounding idioms.

Importantly, BDI strategies promote the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in the target language (Cummins, 1980). Idioms are considered to be an integral part of CALP (Guduru, 2012, p.484) as they frequently occur in academic context and involve high-level comprehension skills. These skills greatly contribute to CLD students'

language proficiency development and thus ensure their academic success. When language teachers as well as their students identify the strategies that are being used by learners in processing the language, they all acquire important tools for effective teaching and learning of the second language.

BDI-based strategies have then been selected for this study as they promote support for the CLD students in “their exploration of academic content” since these students need reassurance that “it is safe to forge ahead in their journey of learning” (Herrera & Murry, 2015, p. 67). Promoting CALP development through teaching idioms is important for contributing to teachers’ advocacy for CLD students’ academic success.

BDI strategies are designed to tackle idioms, which are “a stumbling block” in second language acquisition, as Cooper (1999, p. 244) called them. Idioms might make second language learners feel uncomfortable and occasionally at a loss in their conversations with native speakers (Cooper, 1999). In the classroom, students need rigorous idiom training, such as provided through BDI strategies, to prepare them for the different types of discourse.

Idiomatic and sociolinguistic competence development. Comprehension and active use of idioms can make language learners fluent speakers whose speech is emotionally filled and native-like. Ali Zarei & Rahimi discussed the idea that figurative competence in a foreign language could be considered to be a sign of communicative competence (2014). Notably, not only language teachers but CLD students themselves might be well aware of the power of idiomatic language, which makes them better speakers in the target language (De Caro, 2009). CLD students might know from their experiences in the first language that idioms are important for successful communication both in social and academic settings. Without idioms, CLD students’ language is impoverished for it shows “a bookish, stilted, and unimaginative tone” (Cooper, 1999, p. 258). Provided idioms are being taught in an interesting and engaging way,

students would “sit up and take special notice” (Bress, 2009, p. 6) for they know it is their ticket into the world of ‘real’ English.

Figurative competence is oftentimes referred to as idiomatic competence. Idiomatic competence was defined in Liontas (2015) as “the ability to understand and use idioms appropriately and accurately in a variety of sociocultural contexts, in a manner similar to that of native speakers, and with the least amount of mental effort” (p. 623). This is a comprehensive explanation of the competence which ELLs need to acquire, and ESL teachers should nurture in their classrooms. CLD students who display idiomatic competence are thus proficient at idiom comprehension in different social and academic settings, moreover, they do not avoid using idioms in their own speech, oral or written. Their language is not void of the color and emotion in expressing their intent and opinions. This way, CLD students are on the same page with native speakers who use idioms casually and effortlessly.

In his study, Liontas (2015) likewise made a reference to the process of “idiomatization” to the target culture (p. 627). The degree of learners getting idiomatized determines how well they achieve native-like idiom-related norms and practices over time of their second language acquisition. This process of mastering different ethnolinguistic community might take long years due to the dynamic nature and complexity of idioms. Therefore, ESL teachers should be able to accommodate the needs of their CLD students and create conditions that would carry the students through this arduous process.

Development of native-like idiomatic competence requires memorization and immersion into a large set of culturally-bound patterns. This is why is it not always easy for the CLD students who might struggle learning idioms that do not have equivalents in their first language. Explicit idiom instruction thus helps both students and their teachers to bite the bullet while addressing idioms.

In order to become successful communicators in English, CLD students have to reach a certain level of language proficiency as well as to acquire sociolinguistic competence through curricular and extracurricular exposure to the host culture. The above-mentioned sociolinguistic competence refers to the ESL students' ability to adjust their speech to fit the situation according with the cultural patterns and perceptions set in the host society (Mizne, 1997). One of the essential elements of this competence entails "knowledge on actual speech use of idiomatic expressions and slang" (Mizne, 1997, p. 4). Hence, idiomatic competence is an inseparable constituent of sociocultural competence of CLD students who want to function efficiently in the host society.

As Footé (2010) pointed out, students who are "incapable of communicatively functioning in the English vernacular" might experience academic and social disadvantages, which impede their acculturation process (p. 15). Such linguistic deficiency adversely affects students' success in and out of classrooms and might greatly inhibit their learning of culturally-bound L2 constructs, such as idioms and other figurative language. With that being said, ESL curriculum that does not address development of idiomatic competency in CLD students may result in instruction that is deficient in culturally-responsive teaching component.

BDI strategies have been selected for this study as treatment conditions since they are oriented at "[building] new learning skills and [providing] instructional supports that are essential for CLD students' engagement, motivation, comprehension, and retention" (Herrera & Murry, 2015, p. 11). All these factors play an influential role in facilitating students' learning of such complex language constructs as idioms. Pinnavaia (2000) precisely specified that it was the culture-bound nature of idioms that made them "unmanageable for learners" (p. 54). By using BDI strategies as treatment conditions in this study, I propose that idioms are manageable for the CLD students to master. BDI strategies account for students' acculturation experiences and level

of acculturation, which comprise sociocultural dimension of the CLD student biography (Herrera & Murry, 2015). This is why these teaching strategies appear to be appropriate for the goals of this study that aims to enhance idiom instruction in ESL classrooms and include it into the curriculum.

Use and power of visualization. The BDI strategies, which were selected to be treatment conditions in this study meant to encourage the students to show non-linguistic representation of the ideas. Through creating images and formation of mental visual images for target idioms, participants could make predictions, show their understanding of the given idioms, and share the associations that they got with their peers. Through connecting idioms to what they already knew, CLD students were expected to develop not surface but “meaningful knowledge” of idioms that implies that idioms make sense to the learner (Caine & Caine, 1991, p. 16). As Caine and Caine (1991) indicated, one of the remarkable qualities of the human brain was that it worked as a “pattern detector” (p. 16). That is the quality that educators should use by providing students with experiences that would show the patterns. Images that students draw “represent their thought processes and personal connections” (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011, p. 13). It indicates to the teacher that students’ brain is engaged in “active processing” (Caine, & Caine, 1991, p. 17) of idioms as students make their predictions and activate prior knowledge of the concepts. BDI strategies create these conditions by accommodating creativity and open-endedness in strategy implementation.

Cross (1999) likewise talked about the importance of making learning active by creating opportunities for the learners “[to] construct their own understanding through the mental activity of making connections in their own schemata” (p. 9). The power of visualization, that BDI strategies employ, exert stimulation of senses making CLD students “elaborate upon their connections through a balance of illustrations and words” (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan,

2011, p. 48). Appelt (1985) in her study with adult ESL learners reported that that using picture books evoked a great emotional response and elicited “a very large amount of language” (p. 69). Therefore, I assume that if CLD students create images themselves and share their ‘artwork’ with their peers, they would be even more emotionally invested and involved cognitively.

As Dragaš and Čurković-Denona (2012) asserted, “the idioms should be represented in colorful and funny pictures to move the learners’ cognitive processing and improve it by acquiring new information through visualization” (p. 27). Therefore, visualization exerts great power over the activation, connection, and affirmation of students’ learning. BDI strategies account for this influence.

The literature review above included a comprehensive amount of studies that looked into the multi-faceted phenomenon of linguistic avoidance in language learners. Since the study was focused on idiom avoidance, different idiom classifications were explored in the SLA literature to provide an insight into the lexical and grammatical nature of idioms that might contribute to idiom avoidance in language learners. This literature review also showed chronologically how the term of avoidance was introduced and developed over time. The paradigmatic shift in the ways avoidance phenomenon has been perceived and evolved over years was important to consider by the language teachers who look for the way to help their students overcome this tendency. The last subsection of the literature review included the description of the rationale for using BDI-based strategies in overcoming idiom avoidance in CLD students. It linked the reviewed literature to the chosen research method used in the experiment for this study.

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

This chapter deals with the research methodology of the study on the afore-mentioned linguistic phenomenon of idiom avoidance in English language learners. The choice of the research design, variables, setting, population, sample size, and data-collection instruments is based on the previous review of the scholarly literature pertinent to the examination of avoidance as a psycho-linguistic phenomenon and a cognitive discretionary strategy in language learners.

Method

Research question and hypotheses. The purpose of this study was to examine if idiom production could be reinforced over time by the use of teaching strategies that lower students' anxiety level in order to increase their idiom production. This study was designed to answer the following Research Question (RQ) and to test the following hypotheses.

- RQ: Does the use of biography-driven instruction strategies impact frequency of idiom use by English learners in the course of the semester?
- Null Hypothesis (H_0): Teaching strategies of Biography-Driven Instruction method do not produce any statistically significant effect on the frequency of idiom use by language learners during the semester.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H_A): Biography-Driven Instruction teaching strategies exert a statistically significant effect on the frequency of idiom use by language learners during the semester.

The research question and the hypotheses as listed above were examined through the means of quantitative research design. The causality was inferred from the statistical significance of the contiguity of the treatment conditions, which were idiom-teaching strategies, as a cause of the effect on the outcomes of the experiment.

This section addresses the limitations that might have arisen with the chosen research methodology of the study focused on the afore-mentioned linguistic phenomenon of idiom avoidance in English language learners. The choice of the research design, variables, setting, population, sample size, and data-collection instruments were based on the previous review of the scholarly literature pertinent to the examination of avoidance as a psycholinguistic phenomenon in language learners.

As Price and Murnan (2004) contended, it is extremely important for researchers “to acknowledge the limitations of their study design and instrument” (p. 67) in order to ensure the reliability of the study for further use by consumers of research. If this study will be used or repeated by other researchers, they need to be alert to potential pitfalls and be able to identify ways to how such limitations could be overcome in the future. Challenges of the study most probably came from methodological risks that therefore need to be addressed in the process of honing the research design for the study.

Research design. This study was driven by the repeated-measures design in which “different treatment conditions utilized the same organisms and so the resulting data are related” (Field, 2013, p. 883). In this research study of avoidance phenomenon, the same study participants, who were English language learners of various cultural and linguistic background, have undergone all the conditions of experiment providing the data at multiple points of time. Rationale for the choice of this research design and its appropriateness for this study lied in the nature of within-subjects design, which inferred relationship between scores obtained from different experimental conditions because these data came from the same entities (Keppel, 1991).

One of the important advantages of using this type of within-subjects design was the control of variability, i.e. individual differences between participants in a group of language learners, which typically comprised a relatively small size. This benefit appeared to ensure that

the explained differences will be due to the effect of the treatment conditions alone (Keppel, 1991, p. 334). This is how the effect, if any, of the teaching strategies on idiom usage frequency was assumed to come from the treatments and not the differences in the participants.

This study used a posttest only design, which is simple and straightforward. This type of design could be done with one group, i.e. there is no comparison group, so it fit the study. The same participants received three treatments at different points of time and were tested after every treatment. Figure 3 below shows this type of true experimental design referred to as a posttest-only single group design (“The Single Group Case,” 2006).

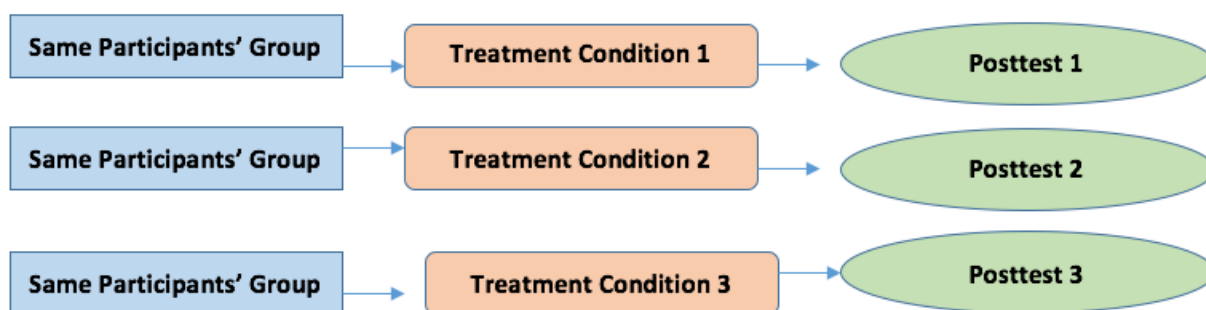


Figure 3. Single group design proposed for the study

Single group design is likewise referred to by Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2006) as single-subject research design and it is considered to be “a type of a true experimental design” (p. 200). The particularity of this design is that the sample size consists of one participant or several participants treated as one group. In the study, the linguistic behavior of using idioms in a group of participants was measured three times at the post treatment phase of the study.

In the posttest-only repeated-measures design, I gave the participants three treatments at different points of time and, after every treatment, provided them with a writing prompt in form of a vignette for the written posttest. I chose not to give participants a baseline measure for their idiom use, because I had a reason to believe that the study participants, i.e. CLD students could display a certain degree of idiom avoidance as it was established in the previous studies with

international students (Cooper, 1999; Auld, 2001; Mahmood, 2002; Kainulainen, 2006; De Caro, 2009; Maisa & Karunakaran, 2013). There was no necessity in pretesting the study participants if they were expected to use very few, if any, idioms in their written discourse.

Variables. The dependent variable in this experiment was the frequency of idiom use by learners of English as a Second Language (ESL). This variable was selected due to the ongoing interest of scholars studying idiom acquisition and production processes in ESL learners. A number of second language acquisition scholars (Irujo, 1993; Pinnavaia, 2002; Grant, 2003; De Caro, 2009; Tran, 2012; Maisa & Karunakaran, 2013) speculated that language learners might hesitate to use idioms in their oral and written discourse. Idiom avoidance in ESL students was described by Irujo (1986) as “idiomphobia” (as cited in Grant, 2003, p. 164) that supposedly prevented language learners from being successful communicators in the second language and its culture. The frequency of idiom use by learners of English is also important to examine for the purposes of possible repair.

The independent variable, that was three different vocabulary-teaching strategies, were chosen as means to positively affect the use of idioms by ESL students by decreasing the level of their idiom avoidance behavior. Irujo (1993) suggested that because idioms are difficult to avoid in real-life situations, language teachers should help their students overcome idiomphobia in order to reach advanced level of second language proficiency.

Biography-Driven Instruction (BDI) strategies (Herrera, 2015) take into account students’ affective filter, i.e. their anxiety level. These culturally responsive teaching practices aim to lower students’ affective filter in order to facilitate their engagement and language production (Herrera, 2015). Therefore, expectedly, BDI-based teaching strategies were thought to influence students’ use of idioms, which could reflect a reduction in instances where students reverted to the idiom avoidance strategy.

Adolescent and adult students might be quite sensitive to “stereotype threat” (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011, p. 3) that might make them appear to be poor representatives of their original cultures in the host culture. CLD students may erroneously think that every mistake they make in the second language and its cultural context casts a shadow over the whole culture that they represent. BDI strategies address this psychological response by providing “a positive social climate and a positive self-perception regarding their intellectual ability and aspirations” (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011, p. 3). Teaching idioms thus should include strategies that help CLD students tread water learning idioms that are accepted in a new culture versus sink-or-swim approach that generates stress resulting in avoidance.

Importantly, EL-Marzouk (1998) asserted that, in second language acquisition, avoidance might be viewed differently, when “nonoccurrence can only be taken as temporary” (p. 15). Avoidance was thus to be viewed as “a pro tempore compensational behavior” (El-Marzouk, 1998, p. 19) that may be alleviated through manipulation of the idiom teaching strategies or tasks offered to the language learners to complete. This was then another reason why repeated measures design fit my research interest in observing the probable changes in students’ performance of using idioms that might result from successive experience with BDI-based idiom learning tasks designed for this experiment.

After an outcome variable and a predictor in this study were identified, it was likewise important to account for the confounding variables that might correlate with both dependent and independent variable (Pourhoseingholi, Baghestani, & Vahedi, 2012). The recognition of the confounding variables in this study was likewise based on the literature review and included the following factors and namely language proficiency level (Liao & Fukuya, 2004), gender (Ayed, 2008) and anxiety (Hubert, 2015). The adjustments were made in the study design so that the effects of the confounders were to be controlled in order to remove their effects from the results.

The methods of eliminating or minimizing influence of these extraneous variables, which pose threat to the internal validity, is described below, in the data collection subsection.

Setting and research population. In this study, quantitative data was collected at the English Language Program of the Western University. In this study, this program was referred to as the ELP. The responsibility for the study was assumed by the researcher in accordance with the Institutional Review Board regulations for the behavioral research involving humans. Data collection was conducted during three fifty-minute classes of the ELP intermediate reading course throughout the course of the semester, which lasted fourteen weeks. The time between three treatment conditions was four weeks. In the classroom, every participant was seated individually and in small groups depending on the assigned task.

The target population for this study comprised English language learners, referred to in this study as CLD students, the term used by Herrera (2015) in recognition of their varying backgrounds. The larger population characteristics for the purposes of this study would include CLD students with intermediate English language proficiency studying in English Language Programs at American universities.

The participants in this study were CLD students with intermediate language proficiency. It has been established in ESL research that idioms should be introduced to the students at all levels more regularly and systematically (Liontas, 2002). CLD students need to become familiar with expressive figurative language in order to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in the language that they study (Cummins, 1980). This goal might be achieved by means of “culturally, academically, cognitively, and linguistically rich instruction” (Herrera & Murry, 2015, p. 56). This philosophy is promoted by the BDI strategies that have been used in this study as treatment conditions.

Sample size. According to Mackey and Gass (2011), “a sample must be representative of the population in order for the results to be generalizable” (p. 124). Therefore, eligibility criteria for the sample population in this study were as follows. All participants were international students with native languages other than English and they displayed intermediate English language proficiency.

A group of ten students aged 18-20 was selected by the English Language Program administration from the pool of students who were placed in the intermediate English language proficiency group. The convenience sampling method was then applied due to the ease of access and availability. The sample size appeared to be too small to make the findings of this study generalizable. However, this sample was representative of a larger population of CLD students as the participants mirrored the characteristics of the population (Gobo, 2004). Gobo pointed out that “the concept of generalizability now introduced is based on the idea of social representativeness, which goes beyond the limits of statistical representativeness” (2004, p. 453). The aim of this study was to examine the relations between the variables. So, its findings might still be considered generalizable to the large population of English language learners.

This group comprised seven participants from China, two participants from Saudi Arabia, and one participant from Russia. Repeated-measures design met the needs of this study with a small size of the sample, such as language learning group where a standard number of students would typically range from ten to fifteen students. Students’ level of English was determined through the English Placement Test administered by the ELP in the beginning of the semester when data collection was scheduled.

The same participants have undergone all treatments at different points of time, i.e. three times during the semester. Participants were allowed to remain anonymous which might have allowed them to express themselves more freely during the experimental conditions and data

collection, without fear of identification or retaliation from their teachers, the program, or the university.

Data collection techniques. The data collection included the following stipulations.

Control for confounding variables. The following methods were used to minimize the effect of confounding variables on the outcome variable. First, for control of the confounding variable of language proficiency before the study, the participants took the institutional English Placement Test. It was expected that all of identified subjects would most likely display advanced level of the English language mastery. Secondly, for the control of gender influence, random assignment was applied through random grouping. Randomization might have excluded any links between exposure and a confounder of gender (Pourhoseingholi, Baghestani, & Vahedi, 2012). The possible impact of the confounding variable of anxiety was reduced by using treatments, BDI teaching strategies that were informal in nature, not graded, and proven to produce low anxiety in CLD students (Herrera, 2015). All these methods might have reduced the possibility of confounding the results by selecting the subjects who are comparable with respect to known and unknown extraneous variables.

Procedures. During the first meeting with the study participants, they received information about the purpose and the procedures of the study. A few CLD students cautiously asked questions to clarify the benefits and the risks associated with the study. It evoked more discussion of the definition and nature of idioms. Students seemed to be relieved when they learned that the activities were not graded. Some students wanted to know how many times they would be involved in the study. They were informed that the time between treatment conditions would be four weeks. Therefore, the probability of carryover effect, when effect of previous treatment might carry over to the next treatment, would be decreased. After agreeing to

participate in the study through informed consent, students were engaged into the first treatment (see Appendix A for the Informed Consent form used in this study).

Three treatment conditions in this experimental study, i.e. BDI idiom teaching strategies, were Foldables, Learn-Draw-Connect, and Vocabulary Quilt (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011). Content of the tasks, i.e. idioms, was selected based on the criteria of high frequency of occurrence in daily discourse of native English speakers, degree of transparency and decomposability (see Appendix B for the list of idioms used in BDI-based treatments).

Every treatment that was a BDI strategy was reinforced with the use of additional textual and visual stimuli. These stimuli included worksheets and Power Point slides (see Appendix C for handouts used in the treatments). After every treatment during the same class session, informal reflective writing task was administered in order to assess students' idiom usage as effect of every treatment condition. The writing prompts for these posttests were informal and provided visual or textual prompts related to real-life situations, e.g. a comic strip, a picture, and a story (see Appendix D for posttests used in this study). One writing prompt was offered per a treatment.

The authenticity of the stimuli that accompanied the writing prompt might have helped reduce students' anxiety level during the experiment which controlled for the extraneous variable of anxiety that might inhibit idiom usage. The frequency of used idioms in submitted reflections were computed to collect the data for establishing effect (or the lack of it) of BDI strategies on idiom usage in CLD students. All idioms that the students used in their writing samples for the posttest were counted. The idioms that the participants used in their written posttests came from the prompts. They did not use any other idioms that they knew prior to the treatments.

The use of avoidance strategy could be substantiated by the CLD students' affective state, where they might feel anxious, worried, or afraid to use difficult linguistic constructions such as

idioms. In this case, when the teacher was using strategies that lower students' affective filter, the term coined by Krashen in 1982 (as cited in Herrera & Murry, 2015, p. 17), there was a possibility to prevent learners from reverting to avoidance strategy. This is why BDI strategies were used as treatment conditions that could reduce CLD students' anxiety and unease in learning new vocabulary items, i.e. idioms, in a target language.

Treatment conditions. In previous studies that employed teaching interventions for research, the teaching strategies were conversely referred to as experimental, intervening treatments or treatment conditions (Maxwell, 1980; Schachter & Gass, 1996; Minke, 1997). In this study, I likewise used these terms interchangeably.

After agreeing to participate in the study through informed consent, participants were assigned their first treatment task. During each treatment, participants were randomly assigned to different groups for the cooperative BDI activities.

Three treatment conditions in this experimental study, i.e. BDI idiom teaching strategies, were Foldables, Learn-Draw-Connect, and Vocabulary Quilt (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011). The artifacts of participants' work during the treatments included the Foldables, Learn-Draw-Connect worksheets, and a Vocabulary Quilt sample (see Appendix E for the artifacts of participants' work).

Content selection. Content used in the treatments, i.e. idioms, was based on the following selection criteria: (a) high frequency of occurrence in daily as well as in academic discourse; (b) idiom decompositionality; and (c) degrees of idiom transparency.

Eighteen idioms were selected from the list of common normally decomposable idioms presented in Gibbs, Nayak, Bolton and Keppel (1989, p. 67) and from the website Largest Idioms Dictionary (2019) online. Decomposable idioms possess lexical flexibility which means that nonliteral meaning can be assumed from the lexical components of the idiom. Normally

decomposable idioms were then supposedly easy for the students to retain and further use in their written and oral discourse (Gibbs et al., 1998). Decomposable idioms also meet the criteria of frequency and transparency. The idioms were purposefully selected for every treatment and the criteria for idiom selection were kept consistent throughout all three treatment conditions (see Appendix B for the list of idioms used in BDI-based treatments).

Procedures for the treatments. The following procedures were used for every treatment condition of the experiment.

The Foldables strategy. For assembling their Foldables, colored paper, a stapler, markers, pens were used. Participants were assigned to write six idioms on the flaps of the foldable. Next, students created a three-column grid on each flap naming them (a) My prediction, (B) Examples of use in the sentence, (c) My definition. These column headers were adapted from the description of a three-column grid in Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, (2011, p. 65). The second column header is modified from ‘What I learned/Examples of the word’ to ‘Examples of use in the sentence’ in order to provide the students with the opportunity to place the idiom into the context and connect this idiom with the probable life situation.

Participants were first asked to make predictions of the meanings of the idioms driven by the curiosity incited by the task. Participants were offered sample sentences where idioms were used in the context (See Appendix C for the handouts used in the treatments). It was important to make students excited about this challenge to actively engage them into the exploratory project (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011, p. 65). It might activate students’ prior knowledge of figurative language based on the similar concepts in their first language and culture.

At the Connection phase, participants were randomly divided into three groups with three or four participants per a group. They were instructed to exchange ideas related to the predictions of the meanings of the idioms with their group mates. In their small groups, participants also

discussed ideas for the column labelled as Examples of use in the sentence. In the Connecting phase of their work with Foldables, students were stimulated to move beyond being “word callers” (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011, p. 67) toward acquiring idiomatic proficiency in their language production.

In order to solidify the students’ understanding of the idioms, they were offered a visual stimulus in a form of a comic strip that I referred to in this study as a vignette to individually write about the situation as they view it (Appendix A). Study participants were not explicitly told to use idioms since the objective of the posttest was to see if the participants would be inspired to use idioms that they knew. After students finished their writing, the writing worksheets were collected to identify frequency of idiom use after the treatment.

Learn-Draw-Connect strategy. This BDI-based strategy was adapted from the strategy named Listen Sketch Label (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011). This strategy emphasizes the power of visualization, which is forming a mental image associated with the target idiom and making a graphic representation of it.

The materials that the participants received included Learn-Draw-Connect template and pens or pencils. All participants split into two small groups of three and one group of four participants in order to complete the strategy. This time, they were not divided randomly by the researcher, but according to their preferences in hope that they would work well together in a group of their choice. At the activation phase, the students heard a set of six idioms that they had to record into the template in the column that is labelled as Learn. The idioms were shown on the slides of a Power Point Presentation and each idiom was illustrated with an image. After the exposure to the idiom, the participants were asked to draw a picture that came to their mind as they heard an idiom. Participants were allotted sufficient time to think and draw an image

associated with the idiom in the column labelled as Draw. After the participants finished activating their initial understanding of the idioms, they shared their pictures with their partners.

At the connection phase, participants had to make simple sentence with the target idioms. Participants were offered to participate in a competition between groups to confirm or disconfirm their understanding of the idioms. The element of competition might have some visceral attraction for learners (Resnick, 2011) as it adds a spark to the group work and makes participants revisit the idioms again through reading the definitions on the posters.

Researcher served as a presenter yet giving encouragement and formative feedback as necessary. Formative feedback involved interaction between participants and strategy facilitator that was intended to modify the learner's thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning (Shute, 2008). The goal of the strategy Learn-Draw-Connect was to incite students' situational interest to target idioms which would hopefully evolve into personal interest that might lead to idiom adoption by the participants (Tarabrina, 2012). Formative feedback served as a cognitive support mechanism (Shute, 2008, p. 13) provided by the instructor using this strategy for vocabulary instruction.

To affirm their understanding of the target idioms, participants were asked to create their own sentences using the idioms in context and record them in the last column of the template, which was labelled as Connect. It was emphasized to the participants at the very beginning of the strategy implementation that the focus was to be placed "on the process of the strategy rather than on the end product" (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011, p. 51). It was important for reducing students' anxiety and fear of making mistakes as they completed the tasks.

The use of the visual stimuli in the form of the Power Point Presentation and the element of a competitive game was substantiated by the intent of the researcher to create fun environment during strategy implementation and lower the participants' affective filter. Chen, Darst, and

Pangrazi (2001) examined and defined the sources of situational interest in class and among them were “instant enjoyment that derived from novelty, exploration intention and attention demand of an activity” (p. 395). All those affective factors, if triggered by the teacher, might lead to emergence, maintenance, and further transformation of situational interest into personal interest and motivation of learners (Tarabrina, 2012). It was observed that images and competition worked well during this treatment because participants looked relaxed and interested.

In order to check the use of idioms by the study participants, they were offered a vignette and a writing prompt (see Appendix D for the posttests offered to participants after treatments). After students finished their writing, the writing samples were collected for the purpose of the study, which was to identify frequency of idiom use after the treatment.

Vocabulary Quilt strategy. Vocabulary quilt, which was selected as the second treatment condition for this study, was another teaching strategy where CLD students acquired vocabulary “in highly supportive, low-stress settings” (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011, p. 78). During this strategy implementation, students got actively engaged with their peers towards a successful task completion. In this kind of cognitively and emotionally charged environment, there was no space left for worry and anxiety so new learning took place.

For this activity, participants were divided into small groups. Each group participant received a Vocabulary Quilt template with six boxes where they could write and illustrate six target idioms. They were assigned to write or draw their associations with every target idiom. At the activation phase, participants had to rely on their prior experiences and their native language to find connections with target idioms. Once participants finished writing/drawing their individual idiom associates, they were instructed to share about their choice of idiom associates with their group mates. Since curiosity to novelty and explorative behavior are inseparable,

according to Berlyne (1966), English idioms might start to appear interesting to the students as not bewildering or threatening.

At the Connection phase, participants discussed the idioms under consideration and talked about similar idioms in their native language. The facilitator provided scaffolding during the strategy implementation, i.e. gave “elaborated feedback that guides the learner in the right direction” (Shute, 2008, p. 10). Facilitator gave students prompts, hints, and cues that showed to the students if they were on the right track. Shute compared scaffolding to training wheels that would enable learners “to do more advanced activities and to engage in more advanced thinking and problem solving than they could without such help” (2008, p. 13). According to the psychological theories in Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000), scaffolded feedback would motivate the learners’ interest to the task and somewhat reduce frustration caused by a risk-taking situation. Therefore, at the Connection phase, facilitator created the conditions for the participants to overcome possible inhibitions to idioms forming a mental model of target idioms that would be accessible in an appropriate context.

To affirm their newly-acquired knowledge of idioms, students were instructed to work in small groups on creating their Vocabulary Quilts. After they finished assembling their vocabulary quilts, they shared them with other groups and discussed the differences or similarities. It might have given them a comforting feeling of completion and reassurance that their thoughts and understanding were relatable in a total group format.

The writing prompt that was offered had a story for the stimulus of their ideas about their use of idioms and problems that might potentially arise.

Posttreatment testing. After every treatment, informal reflective writing task were administered in order to assess students’ idiom use as effect of every treatment condition. The writing prompts for these journals were informal supported by visual stimuli related to real-life

situations, e.g. a comic strip, video clip, a photo. Atzmüller and Steiner (2010) described vignettes as a valid complement to experimental design. They asserted that vignettes could be presented to the participants “in quite different forms, for instance, as text vignettes in keyword, dialog, or narrative style, or as cartoons, pictures, audio, or video vignettes” (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010, p. 129). In this proposed study, three different forms of vignettes served as stimuli for the participants to write an impromptu reflection on the vignette after every treatment.

The goal of using vignettes as writing prompts was to elicit natural emotionally-filled narrative from the participants to see if they would be willing to use any idioms in their written discourse after every treatment. Any idioms were accounted for regardless of whether they have appeared in the treatment conditions or not.

One vignette was offered per a treatment. Authenticity of the stimuli was supposed to help reduce students’ anxiety level during the experiment, which controlled for the extraneous variable of anxiety that might inhibit idiom usage. The frequency of idiom usage in submitted journals was computed to collect the data for establishing effect (or the lack of it) of BDI strategies on idiom production in CLD students. Figure 4 below shows an example of a vignette in the form of a short comic strip.



Figure 4. Break a leg [Online image]. (2011). Retrieved from <http://igetitcomics.com/comic/break-a-leg/>

Vignette technique, which is used for eliciting written discourse from the participants, was supposed to uncover, confirm or disconfirm CLD students' willingness to use idioms in and out of the classroom. Participants were asked to describe in rich detail the experiences of other people as reflected in vignettes as well as their own thoughts or life experiences.

It was explained to the participants prior to writing that their written reflections would not be graded by their teacher since it was done solely for purposes of experiment. CLD students might be afraid of getting a poor grade for the assignment. It might also induce them to revert to the avoidance strategy when they would anticipate negative emotions and in order to prevent unpleasant experiences, they would avoid using a difficult, i.e. potentially dangerous item, in their speech production.

Teachers might alleviate students' fears by assessing their knowledge going "beyond a grade and the grading system" (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2013, p. 274). Through enhancing students' authentic learning experiences and providing "opportunities for student practice, and

ongoing process-focused assessments” (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2013, p. 274), an effective teacher can display his or her willingness to help the students in their learning processes.

Therefore, participants would not perceive their mistakes as threats and their grades as punishment for they may see comfort in writing for pleasure. Again, there is no need for the students to worry or be afraid when they know that their teacher is interested in his/her students’ further learning of the difficult constructs in the second language.

Study Limitations

It is essential for the researcher to be aware of possible shortcomings, conditions or influences that might place restrictions on the study methodology and the results of the study. Labaree (2013) provided a comprehensive definition for the probable limitations of the study as characteristics of design or methodology that may impact the interpretation of the findings from the proposed research. In order to check the study for these limitations, researcher should take a systematic approach to identifying the obstacles. According to Price and Murnan (2004), two main categories of limitations in research studies are (a) “threats to the internal validity”; and (b) “threats to the external validity”. The former deals with accuracy and the means of measuring the dependent variable, i.e. instruments (Fink, 2003). Meanwhile, the latter is related to the generalizability of the anticipated or obtained findings or “applicability in other situations” with other people, in other settings and time (Ferguson, 2004, p. 18). So, I intended to consider the limitations in my research by using these two categories of threats to the study validity while providing ways to cope with the probable constraints.

Threats to internal validity. According to Heale and Twycross reliability in quantitative research “relates to the consistency of a measure” (2015, p. 66). In quantitative studies, rigor is determined through an evaluation of the validity and reliability of the tools or instrument utilized in the study. This research study included evidence of how all these factors

have been addressed. This helps the reading audiences assess the validity and reliability of this study in order to and decide whether or not the findings can be applied in their area of research and practice.

Establishing internal validity of the study is especially important in the field of education where consumers of the research might “[cast] doubt on any conclusion that might be made with respect to theory and practice” (Purpura, Brown, & Schoonen, 2015). The goal in this study was to establish enough validity for the study findings so that its anticipated findings might have implications for further research and pedagogy. Internal validity of this study has been checked through looking at the appropriateness of the selected design, control over the effects that it might have induced, and effectiveness of the chosen instruments.

Appropriateness of design. Repeated measures design has been selected as practical and appropriate for this study that involved a group of language learners and use of several teaching strategies. The same subjects were compared under several different treatments, as described in Stevens (2012). It affirmed my assumption that this design fit my purposes.

Repeated measures is also a natural design to use when performance trends occur over time (Minke, 1997; Stevens, 2012). In the study of idiom avoidance, I viewed this linguistic phenomenon as temporary that can be deployed over time. El-Marzouk (1998) asserted that, in second language acquisition, avoidance of language constructs, e.g. idiom-related “nonoccurrence can only be taken as temporary” (p. 15). Avoidance thus, was viewed as “a pro tempore compensational behavior” (El-Marzouk, 1998, p. 19) that could be alleviated through the manipulation of the idiom teaching strategies and tasks offered to the language learners to complete. This was then another reason why repeated measures design fit my research interest in observing the probable changes in students’ performance of using idioms. Increased use of

idioms, which would stand for decrease in idiom avoidance, could thus result from successive experience with BDI-based idiom learning tasks designed for this experiment.

Another advantage of using this design was that fewer subjects were required for the study as they were being used recurrently. For this study, a group of ten students was drawn from the pool of students who were placed in upper-level English language proficiency. The English Placement Test before data collection displayed students' level of English. Repeated-measures design met the needs of this study with a small size of the sample in a language learning group where a standard number of students typically would range from ten to fifteen students.

Using the data obtained from the same subjects also leads to the reduction of error variance (Wells, 1998; Stevens, 2012). It has significance for the accuracy of statistical analysis. So, in this study, the variance due to subjects did not contribute to error variance term, thereby making the statistical data more sensitive and more powerful. It confirmed the choice of the design and affirmed internal validity due to the choice of the design.

Another consideration for the research validity has been pointed out in Wells (1998) as a carryover or practice effect. This effect is produced as “subjects may change systematically during the course of multiple testing” (Lewis 1993 cited in Wells, 1998, p.7). In this study, these changes might relate to the participants' language development and their attitude to learning language, which might be difficult to determine. Wells (1998) indicated that practice effects could be both positive, when subjects show improvement, or negative, when boredom sets in due to successive treatments. In my study, to address the latter condition, I chose to use three hands-on BDI-based strategies that were different in content and implementation for they employed various visual and textual stimuli.

For language learners, the variety in instructional activities incited more situational interest in the classroom (Tarabrina, 2012). As Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan (2011) pointed

out, BDI strategies incite CLD students' curiosity and engagement keeping them on the assigned task. During the implementation of all three strategies, study participants were involved in a variety of operations in writing, speaking, listening, and reading. Participants had to write idioms, read them used appropriately in the sentences, hear them pronounced by the teacher and partners, and use these idioms in oral idiom-related discussion with their peers. Therefore, negative practice effect of the treatments was minimized by the treatment conditions chosen for the study.

According to Girden (1992), increasing the time between treatments can likewise minimize carryover effects. The same participants have undergone all treatments at different points of time, i.e. three times during the semester, the sample size of ten participants will allow systematic counterbalancing to control practice effect (Keppel, 1991, p. 335). The time between treatment conditions was four weeks. Therefore, the probability of carryover effect, when effect of previous treatment might carry over to the next treatment, was decreased (Wells, 1998). Every treatment out of three BDI strategies in this study was administered to all ten participants.

Counterbalancing would allow me to control the possibility of carryover effect if I could conduct it. Wells (1998) explained the carryover effect by giving an example from the experiment that involved teaching vocabulary by using two instructional methods. In that situation, the knowledge of some or all words, which subjects acquired in their first experimental condition, was carried into their second experimental exposure. It would thus result in skewing the analysis and the results by inflating estimated intervention effects. Meanwhile, in education, we do not wish for the effect of the preceding treatment, which is a teaching strategy in this study, to dissipate completely (Keppel, 1991). In this research study, it is the quantity not the quality of idioms was accounted for. Therefore, if participants used idioms that they had learned

in previous treatments or from some other sources, it was still recognized as absence of idiom avoidance behavior.

Girden (1992) also noted that latency effects might occur in the study that uses Repeated Measures design. Latency effect is difficult to control for it involves a delayed effect of treatment that is not evident until a second treatment is introduced. In second language contexts, the time taken to learn new vocabulary items and students' anxiety might lead to latency in production (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Latency in using newly learned idioms might also be attributed to the complexity of this construct and the cognitive processes involved in the learning. To alleviate students' anxiety and facilitate learning of new idioms, BDI strategies will provide "multiple contextual exposures" (McKeown & Curtis, 1987, p.114) to the targeted vocabulary under low-stress conditions. Through high frequency of exposure to the idioms, the BDI strategies facilitated not only comprehension and retention of idioms but also their further use in different settings that CLD students might encounter.

Yet another constraint to obtaining valid results of my study related to English idioms might have been the unfamiliarity of the participants with BDI strategies that were used as treatment conditions. It was possible that the unfamiliar format of a teaching strategy may weaken students' confidence and hence indirectly lower their performance ("Explore potential strategies", n.d.). To minimize students' inhibitions to new teaching strategies, all treatment conditions included hands-on activities that "provided students with a support system" (Herrera & Murry, 2015, p. 265) through active interaction with a facilitator and the peers.

Additionally, BDI strategies that were used were based on the principles of tapping into students' experiences and making connections to the targeted vocabulary (Herrera & Murry, 2015). BDI strategies that I used in this study were similar to Mind Mapping Strategy that would be commonly used in other classes that participants take. So, the format of experimental

treatments was oriented at creating the environment that would be conducive to helping participants apply and acquire necessary knowledge under experimental conditions.

Again, BDI strategies appeared to be the most appropriate for using as treatment conditions in this study for they might reduce CLD students' anxiety and unease in learning new vocabulary items in a target language. These culturally-responsive teaching practices aim to lower students' defense mechanisms in order to facilitate their engagement and language production. Therefore, BDI teaching strategies might positively influence students' use of idioms, which would reflect a reduction in instances where students might revert to the idiom avoidance strategy.

Control for confounding variables. The following methods were used to minimize the effect of confounding variables on the outcome variable. First, for control of the confounding variable of language proficiency, before the study, the participants had taken the institutional English Placement Test. It was then expected that all of identified subjects would most likely display advanced level of the English language mastery.

Secondly, for the control of gender influence, random assignment was applied through grouping. Randomization might exclude any links between exposure and a confounder of gender (Pourhoseingholi, Baghestani, & Vahedi, 2012). The possible impact of the confounding variable of anxiety was reduced by using treatments, BDI teaching methods, which were informal in nature, not graded, and proven to produce low anxiety in CLD students. All these methods might reduce the possibility of confounding the results by generating groups that were comparable with respect to known and unknown extraneous variables.

Threats to external validity. External validity is frequently associated with the term generalizability, often being used interchangeably with it. Ferguson (2004) defined generalizability as applicability of the study findings "to populations, settings, or times that were

not represented in the sample” (p. 17). Culturally and linguistically diverse students, identified as study participants, are “a group of individuals whose culture or language differs from that of the dominant group” (Herrera & Murry, 2015, p. 5) where dominant language representatives are native English-speakers.

According to Mackey and Gass (2011), “a sample must be representative of the population in order for the results to be generalizable” (p. 124). Therefore, the eligibility criteria for the sample population in this study was that all participants were international students with native languages other than English and who displayed intermediate-level English language proficiency.

Merely addressing sample selection does not ensure external validity. Construct validity likewise relates to the generalizability of findings in the proposed study (Ferguson, 2004). Establishing construct validity of the study was applied through operational definitions and explanation of their relevance to the study goals. Ferguson (2004) stressed the importance of clarity in operationalization of the constructs and theoretical propositions before designing and conducting the study. Rigor in the literature review was supposed to ensure solid support of construct validity in my study, which was related to the linguistic phenomenon of idiom avoidance and teaching strategies to address this cognitive strategy displayed by CLD students in and out of the classroom. Understanding some of the covert strategies in learning idioms employed by language learners might inform instructional practices of those teachers who want to serve their students effectively and commendably.

Final thoughts on study limitations. Repeated Measures design offers certain advantages to this study, such as allowing a small sample size, displaying higher statistical power, reducing error term, and capturing effect size with a few participants (“Repeated Measures Design,” n.d.). Meanwhile, there were likewise certain limitations and pitfalls that

were likely to be present in this educational experiment. First, practice effect is characteristic of the studies involving human subjects who may show improvement during the course of the experiment due to the repeated exposures to the similar tasks. However, according to Keppel (1991), when “performance has reached an asymptote, additional practice on the task does not produce any further improvement”. So, in this study, where performance in idiom production was examined, it was implied that it would require a lot of learning, I assumed that a general practice effect would be minimal and not influence the study results.

Secondly, the chosen sample size of ten participants was adequate to collect necessary data in repeated-measures design to control practice effect (Keppel, 1991, p. 335). Every treatment out of three BDI strategies in this study, was administered equal number of times for all ten participants. Unfortunately, the classes at the English Language Program did not allow for the total group to be broken down into smaller groups that would be assigned different tasks. In this study, neither complete nor incomplete counterbalancing was feasible.

Thirdly, the carry-over effect could produce a detrimental effect on the study outcome. In this experiment, this issue was somewhat alleviated by the provision of sufficient time, i.e. four weeks, between treatments. On the other hand, in education, we do not wish for the effect of the preceding treatment, which is a teaching strategy in this study, to dissipate completely. In this research study, it is the quantity not the quality of idioms was accounted for. Therefore, if participants kept using idioms that they had learned in previous treatments, it was still recognized as absence of idiom avoidance behavior.

Lastly, halo effect could intervene with the validity and reliability of the collected data, which might lead to erroneous conclusions from the data analysis. Halo effect refers to the students’ subjective attitude towards the researcher who is also their teacher (Riazi, 2016). Participants might want to please the teacher by performing the task for the instructor “rather

than attending to specific questions about the teaching and learning activities” (Riazi, 2016, p. 131). In other words, participants in this particular study might have produced idioms intentionally since they might have assumed that this was what the teacher or researcher expected them to do. Meanwhile, the purpose of this study was to examine if students could overcome idiophobia and start using idioms in their written discourse naturally, driven by their knowledge and internal motivation. To minimize halo effect, the researcher who conducted the study was not these students’ teacher.

Using repeated-measures experimental design implied a careful choice of the variables for the model that was based on the literature review, recognition of the confounding variables, and their control as part of study procedures. Repeated-measures design, just as any kind of experimental design, is strong when it entails data integrity and a proper statistical treatment of these data. Validity, reliability, and generalizability of this study were critical for the findings to make a contribution to the field of second language acquisition and language teaching.

Chapter 4 - Findings

In analyzing the quantitative data, the intention was to examine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the treatments which were BDI vocabulary teaching strategies and frequency of idiom use in a group of English language learners over the semester. If the group of participants showed significant use of idioms after three treatments of BDI strategies, it would justify the effectiveness of using BDI teaching strategies in helping CLD students overcome L2 idiom avoidance. Frequency of idiom use was a dependent variable in this experiment whereas BDI strategies were independent variable that could affect the dependent variable in a chosen population sample.

The data was collected through the writing samples that study participants had to provide in answer to the prompts. The intention was to examine if the participants would use any idioms at all in their writing right after they had been exposed to idiom-related BDI teaching strategies.

The study had three treatments over the course of the semester. The treatments were included into the intermediate-level reading class that the study participants took as part of their studies in the English Language Program. The consent to participate in the study was given by twelve students. So, the initial sample size was twelve participants. Since two participants were absent during the second treatment, their data for the first treatment were excluded from the analysis and the data elicited during the third treatment were likewise not included. Therefore, the final sample size in this study included ten participants with attrition rate of 16 percent.

The data was collected through the use of writing samples that participants produced immediately after every treatment. The intention was to examine if the participants would be willing to use any idioms in their writing after they have worked with idioms in BDI strategies. The frequency of idiom use would testify to the participants' effort to overcome idiom avoidance that is inherent to second language learners.

Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for analyzing the collected data quantitatively by means of statistical software SPSS version 2019. SPSS repeated measures ANOVA tested if the means of three metric variables were all equal in the population sample. Repeated measures ANOVA involved three outcome variables, all measured on one group of participants. The within-subjects factor was what distinguished these three variables which were BDI vocabulary teaching strategies. Table 1 below shows the Descriptive Statistics table.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics

| | Mean | Standard Deviation | N |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|----------|
| FirstTreatment (The Foldables) | .5000 | .84984 | 10 |
| SecondTreatment (Learn-Draw-Connect) | .3000 | .48305 | 10 |
| ThirdTreatment (Vocabulary Quilt) | .2000 | .63246 | 10 |

The assumption of sphericity was considered because it determined “the homogeneity of variances within treatment conditions and the homogeneity of correlations between pairs of treatment conditions” (Keppel, 1991, p. 378). Table 2 below displays that Mauchly’s test statistic is non-significant ($p > .05$), which shows that equal variances are assumed.

Table 2.

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity

| Within Subjects Effect | Mauchly's W | Approx. Chi-Square | df | Sig. |
|------------------------|-------------|--------------------|----|------|
| BDIstrategies | .765 | 2.139 | 2 | .343 |

A violation of sphericity affects the accuracy of F-ratio, which is of critical importance in establishing statistical significance of the study (Field, 2013). In this study, Mauchly' Test of Sphericity was not violated with the significance value of .343 that is larger than the critical value of .05. Equal variances were thus assumed. Sphericity allowed me to assume that the relationship between experimental conditions was roughly equal. Table 3 below retrieved from the SPSS output showed the main result of ANOVA.

Table 3.

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|--|-------------------------|----|-------------|------|------|---------------------|
| BDIstrategies Sphericity assumed | .467 | 2 | .233 | .512 | .608 | .054 |

Obtained significance determined statistical significance of the results within a statistical hypothesis test. In this study, the results failed to reject the Null Hypothesis which was that teaching strategies of Biography-Driven Instruction method did not produce any statistically significant effect on the frequency of idiom use by language learners during the semester. In other words, experimental data showed low occurrence of a given phenomenon, which was idiom usage frequency, due to the treatments which were BDI teaching strategies.

Effect size in SPSS was expressed in η_p^2 (Partial Eta Squared). This part of the statistical analysis of the Repeated Measures ANOVA output is likewise displayed in Table 3 above. Effect size is a measure of the relative size of the effect of an intervention and there is a need to report it even if the null hypothesis proved to be true. In this study, the effect size in Partial Eta Squared .054 was quite small. The metrics of effect size provided complementary information about the magnitude of the observed effect or relationship between variables (Maher, Markey, & Ebert-May, 2013). Small effect size was informative of the effect of BDI teaching strategies used as treatment conditions in the experiment.

Last but not least, confidence intervals provided information of certainty about the results that were obtained which also lead to inferences about the population that was sampled in the study. By using confidence intervals, we could determine what was the plausible range of the true proportion in the population. Table 4 below shows confidence intervals in this study.

Table 4.

Estimates and Confidence Intervals

| BDIstrategies | Mean | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---------------|------|------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| 1 | .500 | .269 | -.108 | 1.108 |
| 2 | .300 | .153 | -.046 | .646 |
| 3 | .200 | .200 | -.252 | .652 |

This is a 95% confidence interval, which means that there is “95% probability that this interval contains the true proportion” (Littler, 2018). In other words, if we were to collect 10 samples from the population the true proportion would fall within this interval approximately 9 out of 10 times. According to Confidence Intervals (2003), “it is usual practice to create confidence intervals at the 95% level which means 95% of the time our confidence intervals

should contain the true value found in the population.” In this study, it might mean that there is high level of confidence that the study with other participants representing the larger population of CLD students might have shown the same or similar results.

The results of this study presented above indicated clearly that this research experiment failed to reject the null hypothesis and the chosen BDI strategies did not produce any statistically significant effect on the frequency of idiom use by the study participants. The discussion of the findings of this study are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 - Analysis and Synthesis

The afore-mentioned BDI strategies were designed specifically to meet the needs of the CLD students to overcome their idiom avoidance and gain higher language proficiency. Through the quantitative data collection and analysis, there has not been discovered any statistically significant impact of the BDI strategies on the frequency of idiom use by study participants.

Even though the findings of this study experiment proved to be statistically insignificant, it gives food for thought and reflection on idiom-teaching practices. This section provides an insight into the probable reasons of study insignificance and what should be taken into consideration by SLA researchers and language teachers for further research.

The subsequent sections of this chapter detail the: (a) discussion of the conclusions drawn from the study; (b) recommendations for further research; and (c) final thoughts on the study.

Discussion of the Conclusions

The purpose of this experimental study was to examine the effect of using selected Biography-driven Instruction strategies on the frequency of idiom use of language learners who have to overcome tendency to avoid English idioms in order to become proficient speakers in their second language.

This study was based on the second language acquisition phenomenon and a strategy of idiom avoidance in language learners established in studies in SLA field (Schachter, 1974; Kleinmann, 1977; Blum & Levenston, 1978; Dagut & Laufer, 1985, and other scholars). This study incorporated targeted vocabulary teaching strategies that have been grounded in the characteristics of effective vocabulary instruction of Biography-driven instruction model (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2011). Three targeted vocabulary strategies, namely Foldables, Learn-Draw-Connect, and a Vocabulary Quilt, were designed to lead to a higher level of student engagement through social and academic collaborations among CLD students.

As idioms are a complex linguistic construct for English learners to master, there is a plausible explanation of avoidance as a strategy of learners to cover up their discomfort, make less mistakes, and thus save their face in the presence of other people (Kleinmann, 1977; El-Marzouk, 1998; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993; Laufer, 2000). BDI strategies lower students' affective filter and alleviate their anxiety with learning new language construct which in turn might lead to enhancing learners' interest to including idioms into their second language repertoire.

In this study, idiom avoidance pattern was confirmed across the whole group of participants who were culturally and linguistically diverse English learners. The cultural background of the study participants was not a moderator variable in this study, and it was not taken into close consideration. However, the cultural characteristics of the study participants might have played their role in the study of idiom use by the second language learners. This group of participants comprised seven students from China, two participants from Saudi Arabia, and one participant from Russia. The previous studies of idiom avoidance looked at one or two cultural groups of participants consistently. For instance, Schachter (1974) who coined the term of idiom avoidance worked with the Chinese and Japanese learners of English. Kleinmann (1977) investigated idiom avoidance phenomenon in two groups of ESL learners—native speakers of Arabic and native speakers of Spanish and Portuguese. Dagut & Laufer (1985) found that Hebrew learners of English avoided phrasal verbs that are sometimes categorized in ESL literature similarly as idioms.

In this study, the predominant cultural population was Chinese participants. A study with equal groups of cultural representatives who speak different first languages could have yielded different results. While this could have been beneficial for research purposes, in a real-world classroom, teachers have little or no control over their students' placement especially based on the criterion of cultural background.

Another important influential factor in this study was English language proficiency of the participants. Students' level of English was determined through the English Placement Test administered by the ELP in the beginning of the semester when data collection was scheduled. According to the literature review in this study, language proficiency is an important extraneous factor to consider in the experiment related to the avoidance behavior of L2 learners. For example, Vázquez (2005) conducted a study where the variable of second language proficiency level was one of the main considerations. However, in 2012, Ghabanchi & Goudarzi contested the assumption of proficiency influencing avoidance in their study of Iranian learners of English. They established the presence of avoidance phenomenon in their participants both at intermediate and advanced level of language proficiency. This is why the participants in this study were chosen to be CLD students at intermediate level of language proficiency. However, with the participants who would have more experience and more confidence in using their second language, the results of this study might have been different.

Idiom use is part of CALP, i.e. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, which English language learners develop after they master general English (Guduru, 2012). The participants used in this study were placed by the English Program test into the intermediate level of English proficiency. Their oral and written English skills were basic and their language lacked complexity in structure and vocabulary. If English learners with the upper-level of proficiency were used as participants of the study, the findings could have shown more confidence in the study participants to take risks using such complex constructs like idioms.

The degree of situational interest created by the use of idiom-related BDI strategies was likewise essential for stimulating idiom use in the participants. Trautwein, Lüdtke, Marsh, Köller, and Baumert (2006) pointed out the importance of "situational interest, which is defined as transitory, context dependent enjoyment triggered by environmental factors" for student

motivation (p. 803). Participants' motivation was high during the first treatment as there was novelty in the BDI strategy that was used as treatment condition and the target linguistic construct, i.e. English idioms. Meanwhile, during the second and third treatment, participants showed much less interest to the strategy implementation and the reflective writing. It showed in the behavior of the study participants and the writing samples that they submitted after the second and third treatment. It is also highly possible that other external factors influenced the dynamics of participants' work in the experiment. For instance, the third treatment was conducted by the end of the semester and the participants were concerned about their scores for the ELP test that they had just taken. Had the anxiety level been lower, the participants would probably be more willing to learn new idioms and show their knowledge of idioms in their written production.

Last but not least, study participants were unfamiliar with BDI strategies that were used as treatments in this study. Unfortunately, the participants did not show much enthusiasm in working collaboratively on the strategy product when they were supposed to share their opinions on the matter. When BDI strategies are used in instruction regularly, working together in the strategy implementation is efficient and enjoyable. Participants' reactions to the use of these strategies were affected by their bewilderment at the steps they had to take completing the tasks. Provided that the students know how grouping configurations work in the implementation of the strategy, they would respond positively to the content of the activity and get more engaged in the process.

The discussion of the results of this study reveals the intersection of linguistic and psychological variables in determining participant behavior in a second language pertaining to the structures that which are typically avoided, i.e. idioms. Idioms are likely to be produced depending on the affective state of the second language learner. Therefore, many of the learner

experiences should be accounted for during planning and implementation of idiom-related teaching strategies. The section below includes some recommendations for further research and instruction of second language idioms to English language learners.

Recommendations for Further Research and Idiom Instruction

The topic of idiom avoidance in language learners is certainly interesting and it needs more attention of the SLA researchers as well as of language teaching professionals. While there are studies on establishing avoidance as a linguistic and psychological strategy, there is not enough research on the instructional ways to help language learners overcome their tendency to avoid difficult constructs such as idioms. This study was an attempt to examine the effect of effective vocabulary instruction strategies such as BDI-based strategies on the frequency of idiom use by CLD students. The following section includes recommendations for further research on the frequency of idioms use by CLD students and idiom-teaching practice.

The treatments in this study that were BDI strategies might have elicited more informative writing samples if participants perceived it as part of the class that they got participation points for. It looked like participants did not apply due diligence in completing the tasks in the experiment. If they were acquainted with BDI teaching strategies, they might have shown higher interest in learning from the BDI instruction as part of the lesson. For future research, it might be necessary to make sure that treatments include activities familiar to the participants. Then, the results would better reflect their cognitive and emotional engagement.

As a teaching practice, it would be reasonable to reward students for rigor in completing assigned tasks. As Lynch and Hennessy (2017) pointed out, the grading of student learning has become part of their culture and tradition of academics. CLD students are used to getting points or grades for the language-related tasks that they complete in their home countries.

Another way to trigger situational interest to the strategy in CLD students would be to keep explaining learning goals of the activity. In a research experiment, it might be essential to consistently remind the participants what learning benefits they gain from the experiment. They would be more motivated to work if they knew what goals they were working towards. Thus, it is essential to clearly articulate goals for the experiment and the treatment conditions.

In the instruction of CLD students, before beginning of a strategy implementation, an instructor might write on the board the skills, knowledge, and perspectives students will gain that day (with appropriate effort). Articulating learning goals is important for a variety of reasons. It plays a key role in motivation by showing students the specific value they will derive from a particular task or a strategy.

Finally, another far-reaching recommendation for future research of idiom use frequency in English language learners would include conducting a study of the participants' biographies. i.e. their cultural background, academic experiences, and learning styles. It would help the researcher choose treatments and content that would be meaningful to the study participants. It is a good practice in teaching ESL students to select strategies and vocabulary that would meet the needs and interests of the learners. Idiom use is a purposeful act and the participants should feel that certain environmental conditions are created for them in the course of the experimental study or a regular English lesson.

The above-mentioned recommendations are based on the factors of idiom production that might have deserved more attention in this study experiment. For CLD students, learning to use L2 idioms confidently is a continuous process that should be supported by classroom environment and ecology that are conducive to developing idiomatic competence and self-reliance in language learners.

Final Thoughts on the Study

In previous studies, idiom avoidance as a linguistic phenomenon and a cognitive strategy has been established to exist in linguistic behavior of language learners. This study has confirmed these findings since, according to the findings, idiom use frequency proved to be low in a group of CLD learners in English language program at an American university. However, this study improved on previous studies of the same topic by connecting idiom avoidance theory and teaching practice. The experiment in this study aimed to examine the effect of Biography-driven instruction strategies on English idiom use frequency of ESL learners. The research experiment used specific BDI-based teaching strategies to examine their effect on idiom use where high idiom use would mean positive effect on idiom avoidance that is inherent to language learners.

This study failed to reject null hypothesis and BDI strategies did not produce any statistically significant effect on idiom use. Meanwhile, these results do not prove anything. Findings confirmed the null hypothesis underpinning the study. However, it helps the reading audiences understand the problem of idiom avoidance from within, to break it into pieces, and to view the research problem from various research and practice perspectives. Negative results of this study offer the target audiences the opportunity to continue research on idiom avoidance of language learners and experiment using different vocabulary teaching strategies until an appropriate method is discovered.

It is note-worthy that one teaching strategy that might help a group of learners overcome their tendency to avoid L2 idioms would not necessary work in the similar fashion with a different group of learners. There is an array of factors of linguistic, cultural, and psychological factors that affect CLD students' behavior in their second language. Some of these numerous factors have been highlighted in this study and there might be many more to uncover further on.

Raising awareness of idiom avoidance strategy in language learners was one of the main purposes of this study. This study was conducted with a strong belief that there was no magic formula for success in research and teaching. This research and its experiment were meant to create a precedent study that would be followed by researchers and teaching professionals in examining and exploring the avoidance phenomenon in language learning process. It is very important for all the professionals to try and keep trying in order to find a solution for a certain problem which in this study was idiom avoidance phenomenon in language learning and teaching. Our main teaching objective remains to help our students overcome their inhibitions on a long and demanding journey of becoming proficient users of other languages.

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Appendix A - Informed Consent

PROJECT TITLE:

Addressing idiom avoidance in culturally and linguistically diverse students through biography-driven instruction

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE: 12/05/2018 **PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE:** 12/05/2020 **LENGTH OF STUDY:** 12 months

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Socorro G. Herrera

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Irina Tarabrina

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: Socorro Herrera, 785-5323833, sococo@ksu.edu

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION: Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PROJECT SPONSOR: This project is not funded or contracted by any entity.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The findings in this research might shed light on the internal factors causing idiom avoidance in language learners, such as anxiety, fear of making a mistake, low confidence. The results of this study may then support and complement the studies of the scholars who discussed the psycholinguistic factors causing idiom avoidance in language learners.

This study might also enhance understanding of the temporal nature of avoidance. It will hopefully contribute to the principles of efficient idiom teaching practice by providing evidence of effectiveness of certain teaching strategies in addressing idiom avoidance and preventing it from happening. This study likewise aims to raise awareness among teachers of avoidance as a cognitive strategy observed in CLD students and of the instructional ways to minimize CLD students' discomfort with idioms.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

The same study participants will undergo all the conditions of experiment providing the data at multiple points of time. There will be three treatments that include three effective vocabulary teaching strategies. After every treatment, the participants will be asked to provide a written response to a prompt that describes a real-life situation.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

The treatments, which are idiom teaching strategies, might evoke a negative emotional reaction due to unfamiliar format and challenging content.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:

This study will be beneficial to the culturally and linguistically diverse students who usually express need as well as interest in becoming active participants in social and cultural life of the English-speaking community (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). Idioms learned through the participation in the study would be their way to integrate into the English-speaking culture. For language learners, learning idioms can be easy provided exciting conditions are created

in the classroom as those that are described in this study.
.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

1. Use study codes on data documents instead of recording identifying information.
2. Set up password protection to computerized records.
3. Securely store printed/hand-written data documents within locked location(s).
4. Properly dispose, destroy, or delete study data / documents.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS? Yes No

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:

PARENT/GUARDIAN APPROVAL SIGNATURE: Date:

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant).

PARTICIPANT NAME:

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE: Date:

WITNESS TO SIGNATURE: (PROJECT STAFF) Date:

Appendix B - List of Idioms for BDI strategies

First Treatment

Lose one's grip
Rock the boat
Wash your hands of it
Pull out of your hat
Miss the boat
Walk on air

Second Treatment

Butterflies in my stomach
Every cloud has a silver lining
Finding a needle in a haystack
Fish out of water
Bite off more than you can chew
Can't judge a book by its cover

Third Treatment

Don't put all your eggs in one basket
Pull yourself together
Stick your nose into something
Tip of the iceberg
Hit the nail on the head
Kill two birds with one stone

Appendix C - Handouts for the Treatments

First Treatment Handout

Lose one's grip

Used in a sentence: Ted wasn't running things the way he used to, and his boss thought he might be **losing his grip**.

Rock the boat

Used in a sentence: Don't **rock the boat** by demanding special treatment from your instructors.

Wash your hands of something

Used in a sentence: That job did no good to me. I **washed my hands** of it few months back and joined another one.

Pull a rabbit out of your hat

Used in a sentence: The story was getting complicated, but in the end the author **pulled a rabbit out of the hat** and it all fell into place and made sense.

Miss the boat

Used in a sentence: If you don't pay attention in class, you'll **miss the boat** and do badly in your exams.

Walk on air

Used in a sentence: I am so happy in my new job that I feel like I am **walking on air**.

Source: theidioms.com

Second Treatment Power Point Slides

Idiom 1



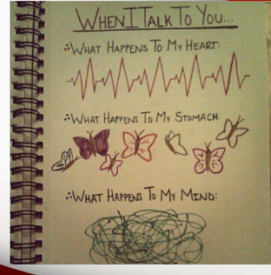
Butterflies in my stomach



fppt.com

WHEN I TALK TO YOU...

- WHAT HAPPENS TO MY HEART
- WHAT HAPPENS TO MY STOMACH
- WHAT HAPPENS TO MY MIND



fppt.com

Idiom 2

Every cloud has a silver lining



fppt.com





fppt.com



fppt.com

Idiom 4



feel like a fish out of water



fppt.com

Idiom 3

Finding a needle in a haystack



fppt.com

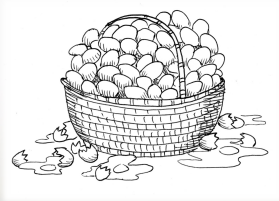


fppt.com

Third Treatment Power Point Slides

Idiom 1

Don't put all your eggs in one basket.



Retrieved from <http://www.grammar.zone/dont-put-all-your-eggs-in-one-basket/> (April 2, 2019)

fppt.com

Idiom 2

pull yourself together



Retrieved from <http://www.feelingoodies.com/pull-yourself-together-man-t-shirt-white-ink-p3546.aspx/> (April 2, 2019)

fppt.com

Idiom 3

stick your nose into something

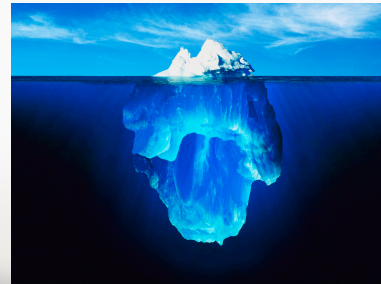


Retrieved from <https://www.yourpethealth.org/nasal-mites-dogs/> (April 2, 2019)

fppt.com

Idiom 4

tip of the iceberg



Retrieved from <https://pastorenieblog.org/2014/11/10/the-tip-of-the-iceberg/> (April 2, 2019)

fppt.com

Idiom 5

hit the nail on the head



Retrieved from <http://myenglishguide.com/idiom-hit-nail-head/> (April 2, 2019)

fppt.com

Idiom 6

kill two birds with one stone



Retrieved from <https://friendystock.com/product/old-man-attempting-to-kill-two-birds-with-one-stone/> (April 2, 2019)

fppt.com

Appendix D - Posttests for Data Elicitation

Posttest 1



Break a leg [Online image]. (2011). Retrieved from <http://igetitcomics.com/comic/break-a-leg/>

Writing prompt

Please describe in two pages what the situation is and why it might happen to international students. If you have an instance that happened in your own life or life of your friends or acquaintances, please share. Express your opinion on the subject.

Posttest 2



Vignette 2. I'm all tied up right now [Online image]. (2018). Retrieved from <https://brijan.com/shop/language-skills/don-t-take-it-so-literally/>

Writing prompt

Please describe in two pages the thoughts that go through your mind as you see this picture. Express your opinion and describe your feelings when people use English phrases that can not be taken literally. What about your native language? Why do you think people use idioms as they speak?

Posttest 3

Vignette 3. Teachers' Tales. Ceballos (2001-2018). Retrieved from <http://www.esl-lounge.com/tales.php>

"When I was an ESL student myself, struggling, like most English language learners, with phrasal verbs. Today I teach ESL, and I always share this anecdote with my students. I had recently started working as a waiter. At some point, on campus, while still in ESL, an American acquaintance approached me and asked me if I worked out. To me this seemed like an odd question to ask, but since I worked at an indoor restaurant, I replied that I did not work out. I worked in.

The other student, trying hard to control his laughter, proceeded to ask again if I worked out, and now, getting a bit annoyed, I again replied that I did not work out. I worked IN. I worked at an "indoor" restaurant, not outdoors. Finally, the student explained to me that working out meant exercising. I had only been in the United States approximately three months, so this was a very embarrassing experience particularly for someone like me who was always a perfectionist and had minimal tolerance for mistakes when I communicated with others. Today, sharing this anecdote with my ESL students, I can look back and laugh with my students!"

Robert Ceballos, Spain

Writing prompt

Please read the story by Robert Ceballos. Please express your opinion on this incident. Why do you think this teacher shared this story? Can this experience be useful to his students and everybody who reads this story and how? If not, please explain why.


Appendix E - Artifacts of Participants' Work

First Treatment Foldables Sample

| My prediction | Example in a sentence | My definition |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| 1) To lose a good shape (lose one's grip) | 1) He lost 5 matches in a row because he's losing his grip | 1) To lose a skill |
| 2) Do not worry about something (hide the boat) | 2) Don't rock the boat, you will pass the exam easily | 2) Don't make a trouble |
| 3) To stop doing something (wash your hands) | 3) I hate math, so after every class I'm washing hands of it | 3) To forget about someone |
| 4) Make something clear (pull a rabbit out of) | 4) I didn't understand this theme but my teacher pulled a rabbit from the hat | 4) Made something clear |
| 5) Miss your chance (miss the boat) | | |
| 6) To have a great feeling (walk on air) | | |

17/06/2019 13:51

First Treatment Writing Sample



Break a leg [Online image]. (2011). Retrieved from <http://igeltcomics.com/comic/break-a-leg/>

Writing prompt











Please describe in two pages what the situation is and why it might happen to international students. If you have an instance that happened in your own life or life of your friends or acquaintances, please share. Express your opinion on the subject.

To **break a leg** means to wish somebody a good luck. On the picture, the guy didn't understand the sense of the phrase and he thought that his friend is really gonna break his leg, so he is afraid of this. However, his friend realized that he has the wrong meaning in his mind and explained that it means to wish good luck.


I've never had something like that in my life and I don't think that my friends did too.

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Second Treatment Learn-Draw- Connect Sample

| Learn-Draw-Connect | | |
|---|--|---|
| Learn  | Draw  | Connect  |
| pull the rabbit out of the hat |  | They pulled the rabbit out of the hat by raising more funds and saved the situation. |
| Butterflies in my stomach |  | I have butterflies in my stomach when I get my grade report |
| Every cloud has a silver lining |  | Even you have a bad day, every cloud has a silver lining. |
| Finding a needle in a haystack |  | This problem is like finding a needle in a haystack. |
| Feel like a fish out of water |  | I feel like a fish out of water. |
| Bite off more than you can chew. |  | Take it easy. do not bite off more than you can chew. |
| can't judge a book by its cover |  | You can't judge a book by its cover, she is not actually a nice girl. |

Second Treatment Writing Sample



I'm all tied up right now.

Vignette 2. I'm all tied up right now [Online image]. (2018). Retrieved from <https://brijan.com/shop/language-skills/don-t-take-it-so-literally/>

Writing prompt

Please describe in two pages the thoughts that go through your mind as you see this picture. Express your opinion and describe your feelings when people use English phrases that can not be taken literally. What about your native language? Why do you think people use idioms as they speak?

I guess, to be **tied up** means to be very busy, when you don't have time to do something. For example, there is not time to spend it with somebody or do something which is not in your plans. People use it because it is interesting to hear and it makes their speech sound more beautiful. In my country people use idioms a lot because sometimes there is not a word to describe a particular situation.

Third Treatment Vocabulary Quilt



Third Treatment Writing Sample

This is a really funny story and (5)
also so true because it is
really difficult to memorize English
phrasal verbs and use them. The
story can be helpful for English
learners to avoid embarrassing situations
like the author's one. Moreover,
some students who didn't know
what "work out" mean will know
and use it now. I would not like
to be in the same situation
as the author was.

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