



THE ANALYSIS OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF IDIOM OF FOURTH SEMESTER STUDENTS AT POLITEKNIK TONGGAK EQUATOR

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ABSTRACT

Idioms play a significant role in daily informal communication by creating more creative interactions. Idioms are formed from combinations of words whose meanings are often guessed from the meaning of each word (Odell and McCarthy, 2010). However, the use of idioms is still quite rare in the environment of Politeknik Tonggak Equator, Pontianak. A lack of understanding of idioms can also lead to misunderstandings in the process of conveying information. This study aimed to delve deeper into the understanding of fourth-semester students in the 2023/2024 academic year regarding idioms and how they understand or analyze an idiom. This study involved 15 respondents from the fourth-semester students at Politeknik Tonggak Equator. A qualitative method was used in this study, with a descriptive method as the data presentation technique. In data collection, a written test consisting of 60 questions and a written interview with a total of eight questions were used. The data collection results showed that the average respondent had an almost excellent level of understanding and recognition, reaching up to 84.85 out of 100. The results of the written interviews showed that the respondents heavily relied on their vocabulary knowledge to interpret words or phrases in idioms and to interpret the overall sentence to understand the existing context. Additionally, the results also indicated that understanding the cultural context plays a role in comprehending an idiom.

Keywords: *english idioms, interpreting, understanding, context, culture.*

INTRODUCTION

English is a language that widely used in the world. As the part of international language, English has become an important language to be learned by people over the world. Using English make the obtaining-sharing information or ideas easier as the main purpose of communicating and broadcasting (Pratiwi, 2021). Furthermore, based on the data provided by Ethnologue in Annur (2021), English has been the most spoken Language with the number of speakers of 1,35 million surpassing Mandarin and Hindi Language.

English is a very rich language containing different linguistic features, including idiom. Krisandini (2021) described idiom as a fixed collection of words with a specific definition. Idiom is used to express some situation based on the context and the meaning. Liontas (2015) as cited in Nasir (2023) stated that possessing skills in using idiomatic expressions is essential for language learners or users to navigate everyday conversations effectively which can reflect communicative authenticity and social significance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term understanding can have different meanings to experts. According to Blaha (2022), understanding is a process depends on learning, interpreting, generalizing, and acting upon

information. These definitions emphasize that understanding is a condition where a person knows about some information and know how to act according as the information that has been collected. Understanding is needed to process information so that the information itself may clearly delivered to the audience. A good understanding can provide meaningful connection whether in personal relationship or in professional setting.

The definition of idiom is varied. Idioms are created from word combinations whose meaning is often difficult to guess from the meaning of each word (O'dell and McCarthy, 2010). Krisandini (2021) stated that an idiom is a fixed collection of words with a specific definition. Idiom is a word or phrase that has a unique meaning, and perhaps even a meaning unrelated to its literal interpretation (Kahhar,2020). It can be conclude that idiom is a group of words with different meanings that are used in some type of situation which not represent the current real situation. The difficulty in understanding idioms is that it cannot be translated using word by word technique but it has to be done contextually to get the real meaning or message (O'dell and McCarthy,2010). For example, idiom "piece of cake" means easy. This idiom cannot be translated using word-by-word technique. The other idiom "break a leg" does not really means hurt someone's leg. Otherwise, it could be described as a way to say good luck (Nasir,2023).

In this study, the author utilizes the theory presented by O'dell and McCarthy (2010) about six types or classifications of idioms which are Similes, Binomials, Euphemisms, Proverbs, Cliché, and Fixed statements.

a. Similes.

Similes are types of idioms which compare two things. This type of idiom always includes the word "as" or "like". The comparison became more powerful by the used of similes. For example:

- 1) As: my cousins are **as thin as rake**.
The meaning of the bolded idiom is extremely thin.
- 2) As: The baby's skin **as smooth as silk**.
The meaning of the bolded idiom is extremely smooth.
- 3) Like: He can **run like a wind**.
The meaning of the bolded idiom is extremely fast.
- 4) Like: He **drives like a maniac!**
The meaning of the bolded idiom is to drive extremely fast and badly.

b. Binomials.

Binomials are types of idioms which constructed by a conjunction (linking word) such as the word "and". The structured word in the idioms is fixed. For example, the words "black and white" are usually structured in the fixed position. People prefer to say "black and white" rather than "white and black". Binomials can be used in six situation which are:

- 1) Synonyms: Their work is often **neat and tidy**.
- 2) Opposites: Which one are you betting on? **Head or tails?**
- 3) The same word: They finished the race **neck and neck**. (equal)
- 4) Rhyming: The sofa in the hotel take a lot of **wear and tear**. (damaged through everyday use)
- 5) Alliterative: After the match, the player's legs were **black and blue**. (very bruised)
- 6) Joined by words other than *and*: He gained the horse's confidence **little by little**.

c. Proverbs.

Proverbs are brief statements that refer to something related to a situation that people have experienced. For example:

- 1) A: We all want to solve this problem, and i am sure we will find a solution.
B: Yes, **Where there's a will, there's a way**. (if we want to achieve something, we can)

2) A: What a day! My car broke down and had a flat tire also my wallet has been stolen this morning.

B : **It never rains but it pours.** (Problems always happen together)

d. Euphemisms

Euphemisms are type of idiom used to avoid saying words which may offend or be considered unpleasant. Euphemisms can be used in:

- 1) To talk about subjects which may upset or offend, such as death. For example, he was clearly **not long for this world**, yet despite his impending death, he never lost his sense of humor.
- 2) To avoid using direct words for body functions. For example, Andy wants to **spend a penny**. This means that Andy wants to go to the toilet (in UK public toilets used to charge a penny).
- 3) For humorous effect when telling anecdotes. For example, How embarrassing! The door opened and my neighbor saw me in **my birthday suit** (naked)
- 4) By the media or political institutions to tone down unpleasant situations. For example, He died in a **friendly fire** incident. (killed by his own side, not by the enemy)

e. Clichés

Clichés is a comment that often used in certain common, everyday situations, it is a comment that most people are familiar with and is therefore not original. Slogans and newspaper headlines frequently contain clichés, and they are also commonly used in casual conversation. For example:

- 1) **Look on the bright side.** This idiom means to look something good in a bad situation.
- 2) It is not over **until the fat lady sings.** This idiom means that you cannot be sure what will happen until the very end of something.
- 3) **Ignorance is a bliss.** This idiom simply means that sometimes you may be happier when you do not know all the things and only know a few facts of a situation.

f. Fixed Statements

Fixed statements are idioms which commonly found in everyday conversations. For example:

- 1) **So far, so good.** Means things are going well till this point.
- 2) **Take it easy!** Means to calm down or relax.
- 3) **Get your skates on!** Means to hurry up.
- 4) **Give me a break!** Means to stop criticizing me
- 5) **I'll believe it when I see it.** Means that I am doubtful that it will happen.
- 6) **Break the ice.** Means to start a conversation or social interaction in a situation where there may be tension, awkwardness, or formality

There are a lot of idioms in English language with various function in different situation. Each of idioms may be useful in communication. By using theory grounded by Odell and McCarthy (2010), there are six function of idiom.

- 1) To emphasis a fact or expressions. For example, the singer's second album **sank like a stone.** (failed completely)
- 2) To agree with a previous speaker. For example,
A: Did you notice how Sindi started listening when you said her name?
B: Yes, that certainly made her **prick her ears up.** (start listening carefully)
- 3) To comment on people. For example, did you hear Jack has been invited for dinner with the prime minister? He is certainly **gone up in the world!** (gained better social position)
- 4) To comment on situation. For example, the new finance minister wants to **knock the economy into shape.** (take action to get something into a good position)

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- 5) To make an anecdote more interesting. For example, it was just one disaster after another today, a sort of **domino effect**. (when something usually bad thing happens and causes a series of other things to do)
- 6) To catch the reader's eye. Idioms, particularly those with strong images are often used in headlines, advertising slogans and the names of small businesses. The writer may play with the idiom or make a pun (a joke involving a play on words) in order to create a special effect. For example, a. a **debt of dishonor** instead of the usual **debt of honor**. (a debt that you owe someone for moral rather than financial reasons).

METHODOLOGY

Sugiyono (2013) defined research method is basically a scientific way to obtain data with specific objectives and purposes. Sugiyono (2013) stated that qualitative method is a research method used to investigate natural conditions of objects where the researcher acts as the key instrument and employs data collection techniques through triangulation. Considering the explanation of methods of research, qualitative method has been used for this study to obtain the information about how are the understanding of idioms by the fourth semester students in Politeknik Tonggak Equator. The writer used descriptive methods in this study as the technique of data collecting which are by using test and interview. The test was in form of written test, held to gather information about how far the students understand the meaning of idiom and how to apply it in conversation while written interview was held to gather a deeper information based from the result displayed by the test. The answers from the interview were analyzed in the findings. This approach, help the writer to provide detailed insights into the meanings of the idiom within the understanding of the students. The collected data were described by using narrative sentence.

The study was conducted in Politeknik Tonggak Equator located in Jl. Fatimah No.1-2 Pontianak 78243, West Kalimantan. The subject of this study was 15 students from the fourth semester students of academic year 2023/2024. The main object of this study is the students' understanding about idioms. This consist of the meaning of idiom and how does the subject see or interpret about idiom.

In conducting this study, the primary data were collected from the result of the written test and written interview given by the writer to the subject of research. The written test consists of 60 questions while the written interview consists of eight questions. All of the question from the written test was taken from a book entitled "English Idioms in Advanced Used" by Odell and McCarthy. There were different purposes of the tests. The written test served as an indicator and initial data for the written interview so that the writer can delve deeper about the students' understanding. Sugiyono (2013) state that secondary data are sources that do not directly provide data to the writer, such as through documents. To complete this study, the writer used and collected the data through literatures such as book, journal, articles, reports, scholarly, e-book, and dictionaries.

After the data has been collected, the step of data analysis as follows.

a. Data reduction

Sugiyono (2013) state that data reduction means summarizing, selecting essential elements, focusing on important aspects, and identifying themes and patterns. In the written test, the writer focused on the example of English idioms with their reliable meanings and synchronize it with the answer from the subjects. For the written interview answer, the writer focused on the relatable answer from the subject.

b. Data Display

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In qualitative research, data display can be done in the form of brief descriptions, charts, relationships between categories, flowcharts, and similar formats (Sugiyono, 2013). In this study, the data gathered are displayed in form of table and explained by using narrative sentence.

c. Conclusion/verification

In qualitative research, conclusions are new findings that were previously unknown. These findings can include descriptions or depictions of an object that were previously unclear or vague, causal or interactive relationships, hypotheses, or theories (Sugiyono, 2013). In this study, the writer made a conclusions based on the data that had been collected from the respondents through written test and written interview.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to Biro Administrasi Kepegawaian, Karir dan Informasi (2022) respondent is a person that providing a feedback or answer to the instruments of research whether it is in a questionnaire or interview while informant is a person commonly an expert that provide deeper information to the researcher without providing feedback to the instruments. This research involved 15 students from fourth-semester students in Politeknik Tonggak Equator as the subject and respondent. All of the respondents had been asked to fill personal information which are contains name, gender, and age.

After collecting data from the respondents, the writer then analyzed the final results of the number of correct answers. Questions number 35 and number 45 had the fewest correct answers, with only a total of 8 respondents successfully answering these questions correctly. On these two questions, respondents were confused by the meaning of the sentences and meaning of the idiom that leading many of them to choose the wrong idiom to complete the questions. Then followed by question number 27 regarding the meaning of the idiom “get your skates on,” where only nine respondents managed to answer this question correctly. Six other respondents thought that the idiom was an invitation to go somewhere because if interpreted at a glance just by looking at the vocabulary, it indeed gives the impression that the phrase is an invitation to go somewhere since the phrase contains the word "get" meaning in Indonesia “*ambil*” and "your skates" meaning in Indonesia as “*sepatu roda milikmu*”. Beside of the most incorrect answer, the writer has summarized the results of the test into the following table by using the Politeknik Tonggak Equator Standard assessments.

Based on the collected data, the writer calculates the score by dividing the total number of correct answers with the total number of questions and then multiplying the result by 100. The average result of the test taken from the fifteen students from fourth semester in Politeknik Tonggak Equator is 84.85 which is nearly excellent. This indicates that 15 respondents could interpret or even familiar with the idiom given in the test. Respondent A reached the highest score by answered 58 question correctly with the total point is 96.6 while respondent NW became the respondent who answered the fewest correct questions by answered 40 questions correctly with total point 66.6 which are more than sufficient. Unfortunately, there were no respondents that answered correctly all of the question in written test.

In interpreting the idiom, the writer found that the respondents were very depended on vocabulary knowledge. Even though the respondents knew that not all of the idiom had the same meaning as the original sentence, interpreting each word still became the most important step to interpret the context of the idiom. Having good cultural knowledge is also important since there were some of English idioms had similar meanings to Indonesian idiom. If the respondents encounter idioms they have never heard before, they will search for the meaning on the internet or directly ask the person they are talking to. This is a common response, considering that in today's

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era, the internet has become a necessity and provides instant answers to what we want to know. Apart from that answer, there is still one respondent who said they would look up the meaning of the idiom in a dictionary.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data from the findings, the writer drew a conclusion addressing the research problems which are the students' understanding in idiom and the way they interpret it. From the findings, the accumulated standard point of 15 respondents from fourth semester students of Politeknik Tonggak Equator in understanding idiom reached the number 84.85 which is categorized as nearly excellent according to the Politeknik Tonggak Equator standard assessments. This result was taken from the analysis of the written test which contains 60 questions. This indicates that 15 respondents could interpret or even familiar with the idiom given in the test and have a good understanding about idioms. Having good cultural knowledge is also important since there were some of English idioms had similar meanings to Indonesian idiom. For example, idiom "where there is a will, there is a way" had a similar meaning with Indonesian idiom "*dimana ada masalah pasti ada jalan keluar*".

This study provides some suggestions that might be necessary to address current issues. For the readers, it is expected that the understanding of idioms can be further improved, considering that idioms are also an important aspect of informal speech. It can be achieved by enhancing vocabulary knowledge. This has been proven to have a significant impact through the results of tests and interviews conducted. Moreover, idioms are widely used in literary works, requiring a basic understanding when reading novels or other books containing idioms.

For future researcher, it is recommended to delve deeper into data collection techniques. Observing and conducting face-to-face interviews is crucial for gathering more comprehensive data compared to relying solely on written forms. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter and can uncover insights that may be missed through written responses. Additionally, personal interactions can help build rapport with participants which may lead to more honest and detailed answers. By enhancing data collection methods, future research can achieve greater accuracy and depth in its findings.

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