EXAMINING EFL LEARNERS' NOTIONS OF LEARNING ENGLISH IDIOMS

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Fatma KİMSESİZ 🆔

fatmakimsesiz@ahievran.edu.tr

Kırşehir Ahi Evran Üniversitesi
Eğitim Fakültesi
İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümü

ABSTRACT

Idioms function as single units in semantically and syntactically restricted word sequences. Considered among deceptive transparent words, idioms in an L2 can be challenging to learn and retain due to a variety of reasons, such as their figurative nature of usage, inadequacy in understanding their sense that stems from their literal meaning, discourse features, and cultural background. This study aimed to investigate EFL learners' notions of learning English idioms. A total of eighty EFL learners with Turkish L1 background participated in the study. Based on a mixed method design, a 27-item questionnaire was applied and statistical analysis for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative responses were utilized in the study. The results showed that learning idioms is regarded as a crucial part of understanding the figurative language in English. To accomplish this, it was appointed that learners needed a variety of activities supported by contextual and authentic use of language. The results also showed that the congruence of idioms across two languages, the visual aids, specific learning strategies may help them retain idioms in English. The study also offers related implications to eliminate challenges in learning idiomatic phrases in an L2.

Keywords: English, figurative language, idioms, Turkish.

İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğrenenlerin İngilizce Deyim Öğrenme Algılarının İncelenmesi

ÖZ

Deyimler, anlamsal ve sözdizimsel olarak kısıtlanmış kelime dizilerinde tek birimler olarak işlev görür. Yanıltıcı şeffaf kelimeler arasında kabul edilen deyimler, yanıltıcı olan ifadeler arasında yer alan deyimler, mecazi kullanım doğası, gerçek anlamlarından kaynaklanan anlamlarının anlaşılmasındaki yetersizlik, söylem özellikleri ve kültürel geçmiş gibi çeşitli nedenlerle ikinci dilde (L2) öğrenilmesi ve hatırda tutulması zor olabilir. Bu çalışma, İngilizce deyim öğrenimine ilişkin olarak İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin görüşlerini araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Çalışmaya anadili Türkçe olan toplam seksen İngilizce öğrencisi katılmıştır. Karma yöntem desenine dayalı olarak, çalışmada 27 maddelik bir anket uygulanmış; nicel veriler için istatistiksel analiz, nitel veriler için ise tematik analiz kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, deyim öğrenmenin İngilizce mecazi dili anlamanın önemli bir parçası olarak görüldüğünü ortaya koymuştur. Bunu başarmak için öğrencilerin bağlamsal ve otantik dil kullanımıyla desteklenen çeşitli etkinliklere ihtiyaçları duyduğu belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca, iki dil arasında deyimsel örtüşme, görsel destekler ve belirli öğrenme stratejilerinin, İngilizce deyimleri akılda tutmalarına yardımcı olabileceği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Çalışma, ikinci dilde deyimsel ifadelerin öğreniminde karşılaşılan zorlukların giderilmesine yönelik ilgili çıkarımlar da sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce, mecazi dil, deyimler, Türkçe.

INTRODUCTION

Idioms instruction has been an integral part of language teaching and learning for the comprehension of the figurative language and the cultural aspects in a target language (Apridayani et al., 2023). As idiomatic expressions frequently emerge in both spoken and written discourse in daily language (Miller, 2020), their level of comprehension influences the process of language mastery (Cooper, 1999). The definitions of idioms commonly emphasize the inextricable hallmark that does not permit the variations of words in an idiom (Baker, 1992). Alexander (1987) defined them as "multi-word units which have to be learned as a whole, along with associated sociolinguistic, cultural and pragmatics rules of use" (p. 178). According to Baker (1992), idioms are "frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form" (p. 63). Crystal (1991) identified an idiom as "a term used in grammar and lexicology to refer to a sequence of words which are semantically or syntactically restricted so that they function as a single unit" (p. 170). Semantically, the meaning of an idiom exerts more than the meaning of the individual words in the idiom, yet syntactically, the usual variability of these words is not permitted in other contexts (Crystal, 1991). According to the definition provided by Liu (2017), idioms are multiword expressions that are invaried or variance restricted in structure and often non- or semi-literal in meaning (p.14). As addressed by Simpson and Mendis (2003), the word idiom is echoed with the "entertaining, engaging, casual, charming, colorful, and memorable" forms of language which sound satisfactory grounds for learning idioms in a target language (p.419).

Several researchers addressed the importance of idioms in a second/foreign language (L2) in terms of competence in using the formulaic language (Simpson & Mendis, 2003) and the authentic language (Vasiljevic, 2015), in improving communication (Ta'amneh, 2021), enhancing vocabulary (Cooper, 1999), and practicing cultural knowledge to understand the gist in a conversation (Nguyen et al., 2022). On the other hand, idioms instruction may bring out some challenges both for learners and teachers in an L2 (Asri & Rochmawati, 2017; Vasiljevic, 2015). These challenges result from several features that can be attributed to the idiosyncratic nature of idioms. Furthermore, lacking appropriate knowledge of idioms may cause misunderstandings (Cooper, 1999) and failure in communication (Rizq, 2015). It is remarkable to underline that lacking the awareness of the sense carried by the figurative meaning of the idiomatic expressions, the lexical items, and the cultural inference that lies behind each idiom or expression in a certain context may also cause communication barrier (Charteris-Black, 2002; Rizq, 2015; Strakšiene, 2009; Ta'amneh, 2021; Vasiljevic, 2015). Based on these premises, it is worthwhile to consider the importance of teaching and learning idioms in a foreign language to bolster learners with advanced usage of the figurative language for fluent communication and for inferable conversational interaction in a native language context (Cooper, 1999; Gibbs, 2011). Although prior research examined various instructional strategies for teaching idioms (Aydın, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2022; Sambursky, 2020; Vasiljevic, 2015), relatively little attention has been devoted to learners' perceptions on learning English idioms (Liontas, 2002; Türker, 2019). Exploring learners' perspectives can unveil cognitive and cultural barriers and help bridge the gap between instructional intent and actual learning outcomes (Apridayani et al., 2023). Furthermore, understanding learners' notions can provide insights into how idioms are internalized, processed, and retained in the classroom environment (Liontas, 2002; Türker, 2019). Based on these premises, the present study aims to explore Turkish learners' perceptions regarding English idioms, particularly the significance they attach to idiom learning and their perspectives on learning English idioms in instructional settings. Reviewing the importance of idioms in enhancing cultural and communicative competence in an L2, this study will contribute to the field by examining notions of Turkish EFL learners about learning English idioms.

Hence, this study was directed to seek answers to the research questions below:

1- What are learners' notions of

a.   the classroom implementation for learning idioms

b.   the use of visuals for idioms instruction

c.   the contribution of idioms in daily language

2- What is learners' evaluation of the importance of learning idioms in English and what are the reasons behind their evaluation?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In L2 learning, idioms instruction is an embedded area that covers vocabulary learning, cultural background of the expressions, and communication space (Türker, 2019). One of the key benefits of learning idiomatic expressions is that it is considered as an essential technique for improving communication (Ta'amneh, 2021). Simpson and Mendis (2003) noted that learners' competence in understanding and using formulaic language covering idioms is a sign of their native-like fluency in an L2. As addressed by Cooper (1999), idioms provide learners with particular vocabulary to help them understand the target language effectively. Vasiljevic (2015) emphasized that idioms with a high frequency are most likely to be retained in authentic language usage. Yet, this situation may even cause problems, as people are liable to focus on meaning rather than form. Hence, inferring an idiom correctly eradicates the communication breakdown, disregarding the exact wording of the phrase (Vasiljevic, 2015). In addition, as directed by Nguyen et al. (2022), studying idioms canenable students for cultural practices.

Based on the connection between the retention of information and the establishment of links between the lexical items, Vasiljevic (2015) suggested that idioms need to be introduced in sets and presented as "systematic linguistic realizations of specific conceptual metaphors" to promote learning (p. 7). As described by Vasiljevic (2015), the well-known principles of the retrieval of information from the long-term memory such as noticing, encoding, storage and retrieval sustains the learning of idiomatic phrases. Firstly, learners should be provided with multiple encounters with the target phrase to endorse their saliency and facilitate the apprehension of the metaphorical sense behind the idioms (Nation, 2011; Vasiljevic, 2015). Secondly, learners should be exposed to appropriate learning tasks and activities to direct their attention to the usage of figurative expressions (Vasiljevic, 2015). After noticing, the idioms should be transcoded into the memory for storage and later retrieval. Once effectively integrated into instruction, these stages can facilitate the retentions of idiomatic expressions and help learners internalize the figurative meanings of idioms. In this sense, teachers are responsible to provide suitable tasks and activities to accomplish these levels and consolidate learners' knowledge on particular issues. Asl (2013) suggested that context has a positive impact on teaching English idioms and the positive long-term effect of idioms affect retention in L2 teaching. Gibbs (2011) declared that when encountered in isolation, it can be hard to understand the metaphorical meaning of the idioms, yet in a realistic discourse context, it will be easier to understand the figurative speech.

There may be some distinctions in the way idioms are learnt in a native language and a foreign language. Sambursky (2020) sketched that learning idioms may be problematic not for native speakers but for non-native speakers as they have limited or no opportunity to experience the real context of idioms. As interpreted by Vasiljevic (2015), learners acquire idioms through exposure and repetitive encounters with idiomatic expressions and this helps them internalize the metaphorical sense of the idioms in their native language. However, in an L2, the processing of idioms in daily language usage may decelerate due to a number of factors. Primarily, learners may not be aware of the figurative usage of the phrases (Vasiljevic, 2015). Next, even if they are conscious of the figurative usage of idioms, they may lack vocabulary and linguistic knowledge to decode the meaning of the figurative idioms. Besides, lacking vocabulary may hinder learners to recognize the syntactic meanings of the idioms (Vasiljevic, 2015). As stated by Charteris-Black (2002), understanding the grammatical and lexical elements of idioms may not be sufficient to comprehend their figurative meaning. It is strained for most learners to comprehend the meaning of idioms since their literal meaning may not always be associated with its literary meaning (Strakšiene, 2009; Ta'amneh, 2021). Furthermore, when idioms share a cultural background, it may also become more stringent for the learners when they encounter metaphorical themes in idioms that are not represented in their culture (Boers & Demecheleer, 2001; Vasiljevic, 2015). Although L2 learners can find it challenging to understand the figurative expressions in the target language, they will encounter idioms in different forms of both spoken and written discourse (Cooper, 1999).

As highlighted by Nguyen et al (2022), when EFL learners are exposed to idioms and their meanings, they familiarize themselves with the English culture. Simpson and Mendis (2003) suggested the presentation of idioms in authentic contexts instead of fictitious ones that appear in course books or introduced by teachers. As described by Simpson and Mendis (2003), "Idioms can be taught from a discourse perspective rather than as isolated lexical items with attention not only on their immediate context but also to their sociopragmatic and interactional features" (p. 438). Nguyen et al. (2022) discusses that although idioms instruction is refrained in language teaching, learning of idioms with their appropriate usage is highly

significant for academic language, in everyday usage particularly for students at the higher education level. Translation of the idioms may also be problematic due to the fact that idioms can be perceived differently in distinct contexts of language usage (Nguyen et al. 2022). Liontas (2002) found that L2 learners were eager to learn idioms as a part of their language and culture training, their performances can be predicted by the tasks that they engage, and they feel that learning idioms are important. Hence, he suggested a more regular and systematic introduction of idioms, ignoring what approaches they follow for idiomatic learning.

Recent research underlines the importance of explicit instruction, contextual support, and memory-related processes to maintain an effective process for learning and retention of English idioms in L2 classrooms. The studies that focused on teaching L2 idioms yielded promising results in terms of visuals (Aydın, 2017), translation scores from the source language to the target language and the reverse (Elkılıç, 2008), the impact of culture (Rizq, 2015), and the challenges in learning idioms (Nguyen et al., 2022) used in the process of teaching idioms. Some more recent studies highlight the use of technology in teaching L2 idioms including tools such as YouTube videos (Vongpumivitch et al., 2023), computer-assisted language learning (CALL) systems (Cucchiarini et al., 2023), and even the use of mobile assisted language learning (MALL) applications for learning idioms and idiomatic expressions in a specific target language (Wu et al., 2023). What is reflected through these studies is that instruction of L2 idioms covers multifaceted approach that combines explicit instruction, cultural and contextual integration, and technology-enhanced tools.

In a quantitative study, Elkılıç (2008) examined the translation performance of 71 learners of English in three distinct categories of English idioms: transparent, opaque/common, and opaque/uncommon. The results revealed that learners' understanding level of transparent and opaque/common idioms was higher than their level in opaque/uncommon idioms. According to the findings, no significant difference was reported to exist between intermediate and advanced learners in comprehending the idioms in all categories. Yet, the study reported a significant difference between the subjects to all groups of idioms for the answers from Turkish to English and English to Turkish. In a qualitative study in which 10 ESL teachers reflected their perceptions through eight survey questions, Rizq (2015) found out that although teachers thought that learners find it hard to learn idioms, they valued great importance on idioms in EFL instruction. Moreover, they reflected that idioms and culture are closely related.

Aydın (2017) conducted an experimental study in 3 groups of 152 EFL learners enrolled in an English Language Teaching Department. The participants' L1 background was Turkish. In the course of the study, they were given the most frequently used 50 idioms. Learners were tested in three groups of strategies as "context out" in which the target idioms were introduced explicitly, "context in", in which idioms were introduced with their definitions and their context in sentences, and finally, "the mental imaging technique" in which idioms were presented both visually and verbally. The results demonstrated that among these techniques, mental imagery technique proved to be the most effective. Hence, it was concluded that literal and figurative aspects of the selected idioms enhanced learning and recalling of idioms. Another notable finding was that the results supported Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1986), which posits that combining verbal and non-verbal information enhances memory and supports language acquisition. This principle also applies to idiom learning, as pairing idioms with visual imagery has been shown to enhance retention (Boers et al., 2008). Based on this, multimodal input—particularly visual stimuli—can significantly facilitate idiom learning. In a more recent study, Nguyen et al. (2022) investigated the challenges and strategies in learning English idioms used by 150 Vietnamese undergraduate EFL learners enrolled in an English-medium instruction program employing a mixed method design. Data were collected through an online survey and interviews with the learners. The findings revealed that most of the students have difficulty learning and noticing idioms resulting from inadequate knowledge of cultural background and the context of usage, lack of opportunity for authentic usage, and limited knowledge from translation courses. These results did not indicate any significant difference between the low and high proficiency learners in experiencing these problems. Among the strategies used by the learners, guessing the meaning of the idiomatic phrases, learning idioms through keywords, using a variety of sources proved to be the most frequently used strategies in learning idioms. Similar to the results of this study, Apridayani et al. (2023) found that EFL learners at a Thai University faced challenges such as limited cultural knowledge and difficulty understanding idioms out of context. Hence, participants reported using memorization strategies to overcome the challenges they faced in learning English idioms. From the perspective of these studies, the role of cultural competence, contextual exposure, and using strategies for learning is once again emphasized for the effective acquisition of idiomatic expressions in an L2.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study is based on a mixed-method design that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research (Dörnyei, 2007). The quantitative process involves a questionnaire with 27 items and the qualitative process engages the analysis of an open-ended question in the questionnaire.

Participants

The participants were 80 EFL learners (F=53; M=27) with native-Turkish language background. The participants were all A2 level English learners. Their level was identified after they completed A1 English level and took two standardized tests in their department in the previous term. The participants were enrolled in three distinct disciplines in the Education Faculty at a state university in Turkiye. Their age ranged between 19-24. They all consented to participate voluntarily in the study.

The instrument

In this study, a questionnaire that interrogates the notions of EFL learners on learning English idioms in English classes was employed. The questionnaire was originally formed by Liontas (2002) with two sections. For this study, only part II was adapted to examine learners' ideas about learning English idioms. Part II in the original questionnaire involved 44 items, yet 21 of the total items were included in this study as others were about performing idioms and the assessment process of learning idioms. This study did not involve an assessment procedure, hence the questionnaire in this study involved 24 items. The first three items asked for the demographic information of the respondents regarding their age, gender, and native language. The items 4-23 covered the questions for learners' notions about learning English idioms. These items were prepared using a 5-point Likert scale format. This form asked participants to rate the relevant question types on a scale from 1 to 5. The last item (I24) was asked learners to make an evaluation of the process of learning English idioms to investigate their notions in an open-ended question form. A pilot study was conducted with five EFL learners to get feedback on the clarity, language, and relevance of these items. The questionnaire, which is originally in English, was translated into Turkish language by the researcher to eliminate any meaning deficiency in English version. In the pilot study, the translated items were validated to improve item clarity. The value for Cronbach's Alpha was found $\alpha = .90$ indicating a highly reliable internal consistency for the questionnaire items.

Data Collection

The data were collected through a questionnaire that was generated on an online survey program and the questionnaire was shared with the participants through the online link supplemented by the program. Data collection process was completed in the classroom environment after participants received feedback based on the meaning and usage of the idioms under task. Learners could participate in the questionnaire by clicking on the survey link that was shared with them through an online communication platform. The whole process of data collection was administered in the Spring Semester in 2023.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis, both qualitative and quantitative procedures were followed. For the quantitative analysis, the mean values, standard deviation, and the percentage values were measured through a statistical package program, SPSS 21. For the qualitative analysis, thematic analysis was applied consisting of six stages (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher and a colleague coded the themes based on the qualitative findings for the inter-coder reliability. Using the percent agreement method, the inter-coder reliability was estimated 90%.

The procedure

Initially, the idioms were randomly selected from Penguin Reader Idioms Book. The random selection ensured that the items represented a diverse and unbiased sample of idiomatic language and were not influenced by learners' prior exposure or curriculum-based familiarity. This approach aligns with the study's aim of exploring learners' perceptions of idiom learning rather than focusing on specific frequency or thematic categories. After that, students were given a multiple-choice test (Fuhrman, 1996), involving 24 selected idioms to assess their knowledge of the meanings and usage of each idiom. This test covered four

multiple choice options, all provided in Turkish language while the final option indicating 'I don't know'. Based on the results, nine of the idioms were extracted from the list and 15 idioms that proved to be unfamiliar to the students were selected for inclusion in the instructional phase of the study. Later, the students were given activities with 15 English idioms through a task-based design (Ellis, 2003) during two following English courses.

in "pre-task", the target idioms were introduced to the students with their Turkish equivalents and their usage in specific situations. The literal meanings of the Turkish equivalents of the proverbs were checked through the official website of Turkish language dictionary at https://sozluk.gov.tr/. After that, in "during task" process, the students were given 15 sentences involving target idioms to be translated into Turkish. Each of these sentences are written to showcase how idioms function within sentences, mirroring their figurative meanings in specific contexts. For the completion of the translation tasks, participants were given seven days. The procedure of the tasks was designated through a remote learning program operated by an online education system called AYDEP that was used by the university in which the students were registered. Learners were asked to upload their translation tasks in the program. At the end of the translation procedure, the tasks were examined by the researcher. Finally, in the "post-task" process, participants were given feedback about the proper translations of the sentences with English idioms into Turkish and also their usage in specific contexts. The list of the English idioms translation test is available in Appendix A. Later, participants were asked to participate in the questionnaire that examined learners' notions about learning English idioms through a task-based design. It is important to note, however, that the aim of this study was not to measure performance of participants in learning idioms, but rather to explore learners' notions about the process of idiom learning following instructional exposure. The procedure of the research is illustrated in the figure 1 below.
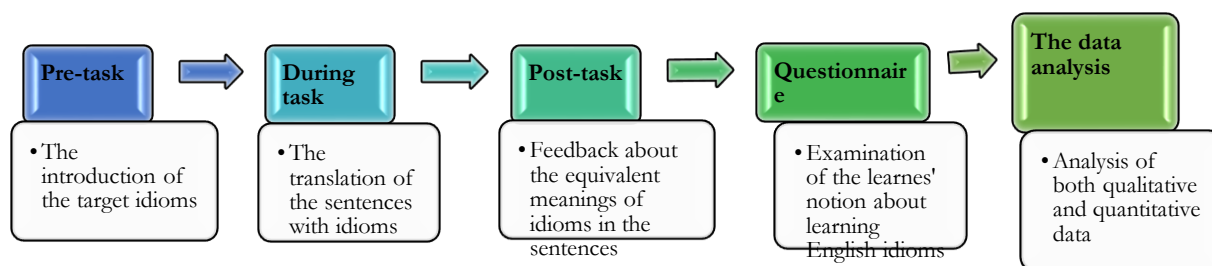

Figure 1. The procedure of the research design in the study

1a- What are learners' notions of classroom implementation for learning idioms?

Table 1. Learners' notions of classroom implementation in learning idioms

Items	Completely agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Completely Disagree		X̄
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	
I4- Idioms should be included in the foreign language curriculum.	23	28.75	47	58.75	9	11.25	1	1.25	-	-	4,15
I5- Idioms should be used for classroom practice and testing.	25	31.25	47	58.75	7	8.75	1	1.25	-	-	4.18
I6- Idioms study should progress from the most frequent ones to the less frequent ones.	33	41.25	29	36.25	13	16.25	5	6.25	-	-	4.12
I7- When learning idioms, presentation style and activity format should be varied.	27	33.75	42	52.5	9	11.25	2	2.5	-	-	4.17
I8- I learn idioms best when they are accompanied by a variety of activities.	28	35	43	53.75	9	11.25	-	-	-	-	4.23
I9- Idiom activities should make sense to me.	19	23.75	52	65	6	7.5	3	3.75	-	-	4.08
I10- When learning idioms, one should start with the most useful ones.	29	36.25	39	48.75	10	12.5	2	2.5	-	-	4.18
I11- I can often figure out an idiom from an equivalent one in my language.	14	17.5	43	53.75	18	22.5	4	5	1	1.25	3.81
I12- It is useful to me to predict the meaning of idioms.	13	16.25	56	70	9	11.25	2	2.5	-	-	4
I13- I like to know what other strategies I can use to make sense of better sense of idioms.	26	32.5	46	57.5	7	8.75	1	1.25	-	-	4.21
I14- I like to be taught specific strategies in learning idioms in foreign languages.	26	32.5	45	56.25	6	7.5	2	2.5	1	1.25	4.16
I15- I like to be taught the skills and processes necessary to create meaning from idiomatic texts.	28	35	43	53.75	9	11.25	-	-	-	-	4.23

The majority of the participants (M=4.15) were in favour of integrating idioms instruction in the foreign language curriculum. A great deal of the participants showed agreement on the ideas that idioms should be used for classroom practice and testing (M=4.18) and when learning idioms, the learners should start with the most useful ones (M=4.18) and should progress from the most frequent ones to the less frequent ones (M=4.12). The participants also agreed that when learning idioms, presentation style and activity format should be varied (M=4.17), these activities should be meaningful (M=4.08), and they learn best when these activities are varied (M=4.23). Regarding the meaning of the idioms, more than half of the participants revealed that they can figure out an idiom when it has equivalent in their L1 (M=3.81) and it is also useful for them to predict the meaning (M=4). The majority of the participants also stated that they would like to be informed about effectivestrategies that assist them to figure out the meaning of an idiom (M=4.21), as well as the skills and processes that help them understand the texts with idiomatic expressions (M=4.16). They also expressed interest to specific strategies for learning English idioms (M=4.16), and being taught the necessary skills and processes to construct meaning from idiomatic texts (M=4.23).

1b- What are learners' notions of the use of visuals for idioms instruction?

Regarding learners' notion of the use of visuals for learning idioms, the results were examined. Table 2 below shows the frequency, percentage, and mean values for each item.

Table 2. Learners' notions of the use of visuals in learning idioms

Items	Completely agree		Agree		Neutr		Disagree		Completely Disagree		$\bar{x}$
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
I16- Verbal (textual or audio) and visual information (graphic, photographic, or video-graphic) help activate my knowledge of idioms.	40	54.7	37	46.25	3	3.75	-	-	-	-	4,46
I17- Illustrations and graphics support the study of idioms.	44	55	32	40	4	5	-	-	-	-	4.5
I18- Incorporation of idiom graphics and illustrations should be a main part of instructional activities.	40	54.7	37	46.25	3	3.75	-	-	-	-	4.46

The findings relating to learners' ideas on the use of visuals for the instruction of idioms, nearly all of the participants agreed that verbal and visual information help them activate their knowledge of idioms (M=4.46), illustrations and graphics support their study of idioms (M=4.5), and these illustrations and graphics should be a main part of the instructional activities (M=4.46).

1c- What are learners' notions of the contribution of idioms in authentic language?

Regarding learners' notion of the contribution of idioms in authentic language, the results were analysed. Table 3 below shows the frequency, percentage, and mean values for each item.

**Table 3.** Learners' notions of the contribution of idioms in authentic language

Items	Completely agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Completely Disagree		$\bar{x}$
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
I19- Idioms should be current, interesting, and useful in real-life situations.	32	40	45	56.25	2	2.5	1	1.25	-	-	4,35
I20- I like to learn idioms along with the texts and contexts that support their use.	32	40	43	53.75	5	6.25	-	-	-	-	4.33
I21- Idioms should be presented in a manner that mirrors real-life language use.	37	46.35	38	47.5	4	5	1	1.25	-	-	4.37
I22- Authentic audio video recordings and real texts should accompany the study of idioms.	30	37.5	41	51.25	6	7.5	3	3.75	-	-	4.22
I23- I think idioms are useful in everyday communication.	33	41.25	38	47.5	8	10	1	1.75	-	-	4.28

In reference to findings relating to learners' ideas of the contribution of idioms in authentic language, the majority of the participants agreed that idioms should be current, interesting, and useful in real-life situations (M=4.35) and they like learning idioms along with texts and contexts that support their use (M=4.33). Most of the learners also supported the idea that idioms should be presented in a manner that reflects real-life language use (M=4.37), idioms are useful in everyday communication (M=4.28), and that authentic audio-video recordings and real texts should accompany idioms instruction (M=4.22).

2- What is learners' evaluation of the importance of learning idioms in English and what are the reasons behind their evaluation?

Regarding item 24 that interrogated learners' evaluation of the importance of learning idioms in English, using a scale of 1–5 (with 1 indicating the least importance and 5 the most importance), the majority of the learners (*f*=67; %91.7) rated it between 3 and 5, with an average of 4.11 in English.

With reference to the reasons for attaching importance to learning English idioms in EFL learning, the qualitative data was analysed. The findings of the thematic analysis brought up 10 themes that revolved around the importance and benefits of learning idioms. The results are shown in the graphic 1 below.
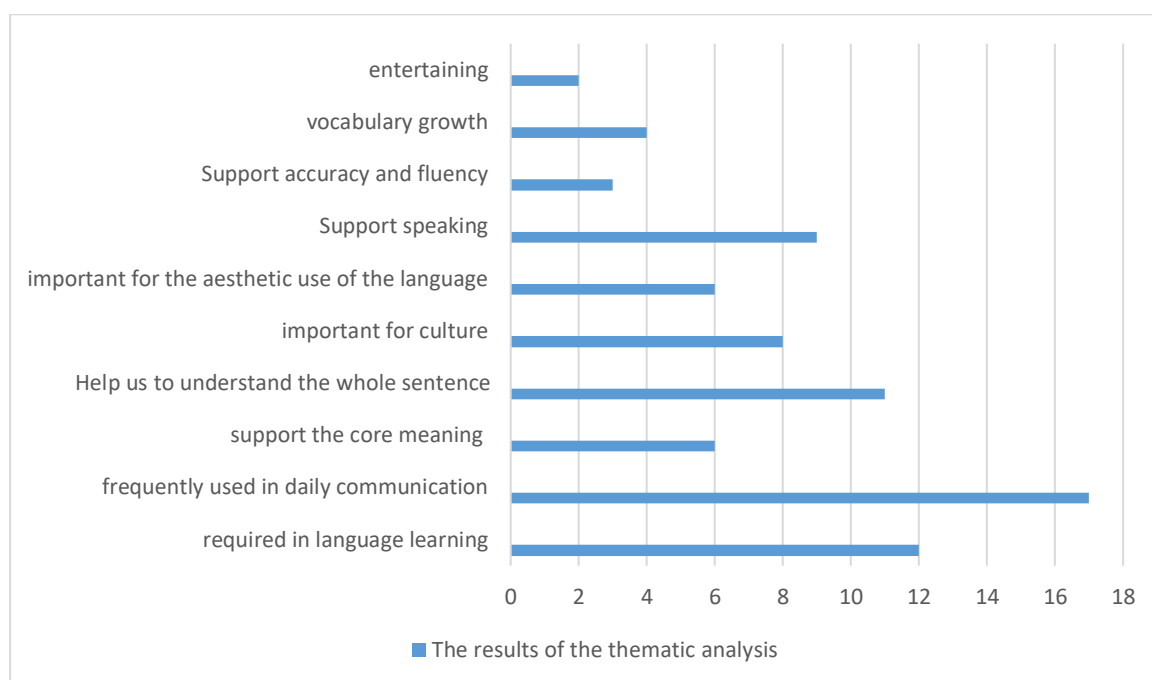
Graphic 1. The results of the thematic analysis

For the importance of the idioms, participants noted different aspects about the role of idioms in learning a foreign language. Focusing on the necessity of idioms, P2 wrote that:

"Idioms are the backbone of a language. I don't think some words can be fully understood without idioms".

Some participants compared the role of idioms in their native language with their role in the target language. In this issue, learners revealed that *"Just as we use idioms to strengthen the meaning or facilitate the expression when speaking Turkish, I think it is the same in English"* (P4).

"Because while saying some words in Turkish, idioms become more useful and meaningful. Using it when speaking in English and learning idioms in language instruction shows that you have a command over the language, and it becomes more useful and meaningful" (P23).

Proverbs and idioms, as in Turkish, are important for making the narration effective and easy to understand, etc. (P32).

In daily conversations, embellishing sentences with various rhetoric in other languages as well as in Turkish is remarkable, reinforcing and helpful in terms of expression. For this reason, knowing the idioms in English and using them effectively allows

you to express yourself more easily (P47).

Just as we use Turkish idioms in sentences in daily life, the same things are applicable for English. They are important for reinforcing thought and sentences in English conversation (P76).

Some participants emphasized the role of idioms in improving speaking skills of the learners. They noted that

"When speaking in English, it is important to use an idiom that sums it up when we can't explain things properly" (P15).

"It is important to learn and use idioms, not only to speak ignorant English, but to express yourself better and to exalt yourself in the eyes of other people, even by speaking at a cultural level and expressing yourself better" (P25).

"Because idioms show the wealth of the language. I think that knowing the idioms helps to speak the language more accurately and fluently" (P26).

Some of the participants also addressed the ambiguity meaning when they cannot make sense of the idioms and when they come across with them in a sentence or a text. Upon this issue, they wrote that:

"Because when we write it in the translation, the meaning is not understood, and it causes semantic confusion. When we know the idioms, we can easily solve this problem. We don't feel confused" (P9).

"I'm undecided because I haven't come across idioms much yet, of course, too much information doesn't hurt, but I haven't been able to learn English yet, it still seems very difficult to me, so I have such a hard time with idioms, for example, while Gold corresponds to gold for me, the golden in the idiom (a golden handshake) is completely work-related, that is, difficult" (P59).

DISCUSSION

Regarding learners' notions of classroom implementation for learning idioms, the data suggested that most of the respondents supported the idea that idioms instruction should be integrated in the foreign language curriculum, classroom practice and testing should involve idioms with a variety of engaging and meaningful activities, and the instruction should begin with the most useful and frequent idioms. Moreover, as indicated by the results, they reinforced the view that when an idiom has an equivalent in their native language, they can figure out or predict the meaning of target idioms. The majority of the respondents also reassured that they would like to be informed about the meaningful and specific strategies, and skills and processes that help them attribute meaning, understand, and learn the usage of idiomatic expressions in English. These results should be taken into account when organising activities based on idioms instruction. As promoted by Vasiljevic (2015) high frequency idioms should be premised. Moreover, the instruction process should make sense to the learners in terms of understanding the figurative and cultural aspects of idiomatic expressions (Strakšiene, 2009; Ta'amneh, 2021; Vasiljevic, 2015). As governed by Nguyen et al. (2022), studying idioms enable learners for cultural practices. Similarly, as directed by Kramsch (1993), the instruction of an L2 should reflect the culture of both the target language and the source language. As stated by Byram (2013), the intercultural ability of the learners develops as they gain insight into understanding connections and distinctions in both languages. Hence, the connection between the L1 and L2 is vital for promoting learning and performance in the target language (Byram, 1991).

Regarding the learners' notions of the use of visuals for learning idioms, the results demonstrated that nearly all of the participants directed that verbal and visual information help them activate their knowledge of idioms, illustrations and graphics support learning of idioms. They also favoured the idea that once learning idioms in English, these illustrations and graphics should be a main part of the instructional activities. On account of these results, The Dual Coding Theory points to the importance of introducing information in visual forms. Initially formulated by Paivio in 1971, the Dual Coding Theory postulated that retention of information is enhanced by the visual and verbal codes. Although these two functions seem independent, they are truly interconnected as input is operated at both visual and verbal levels. This aspect is also applicable to learning the idiomatic phrases as shown by several studies (Boers et al., 2008; Boers et al., 2009). Upon the same issue, Sambursky (2020) stated that introducing idioms provided with their literal aspects of the figurative meaning may enhance particularly low level of learners' metaphorical competence. His study proved that a combination of the literal and figurative sense was helpful for learners. Hence, the integration of literal and figurative elements of idiomatic expressions through visualization facilitates learners to establish a conceptual connection between both, thereby enhancing the comprehensive

understanding of the accurate figurative interpretation (Sambursky, 2020).

The findings relating to learners' ideas of the contribution of idioms in authentic language, most of the respondents pointed to an instruction maintained by contemporary, interesting, and useful idioms in real-life situations and usage. The findings also confirmed that the participants prefer learning of idioms along with texts and contexts that support usage in everyday communication accompanied by authentic instruction materials. These results build on existing evidence on the effectiveness of exposure to authentic language in the process of foreign language education (Gilmore, 2007). As framed by Gilmore (2007), "presenting learners with carefully selected authentic language to work with in the classroom" will help learners to distinguish from natural and non-idiomatic phrases (p.10). In line with the descriptions in the literature, the presentation of idioms in an authentic context through a prism of discourse for everyday usage will help learners to retain their sense and use them properly (Liontas, 2002; Nguyen et al., 2022; Simpson & Mendis, 2003; Vasiljevic, 2015). It was also specified that idioms locate a practical way for improving the interactional and communication skills of L2 learners (Cooper, 1999; Gibbs, 2011; Ta'amneh, 2021).

With reference to the rating of the importance of learning English idioms, the results signified that learners attach great importance to learning idioms. Concerning the underlying reasons for the rate of importance, the results of the thematic analysis depicted that, ten interrelating themes emerged labelled as "entertaining", "vocabulary growth", "support accuracy and fluency", "important for the aesthetic use of the language", "important for culture", "help understand the whole sentence", support the core meaning", "frequently used in daily communication", "required in language learning". These emerging themes reinforce the importance of idioms in building vocabulary (Charteris-Black, 2002; Cooper, 1999; Vasiljevic, 2015), consolidating meaning (Cooper, 1999; Crystal, 1991) and cultural information (Nguyen et al. 2022), and upgrading communication skills (Ta'amneh, 2021) in language learning.

In association with the justifications of the importance of learning idioms, respondents implicated manifold points. It was noted that idioms are like the backbone of a language, and they are required for understanding the expressions in the target language. Some of the participants compared the role of idioms both in their native language and the target language and noted that idioms are useful, reinforces the sense of the expressions and narrations, and they embellish the expressions in daily conversation both in an L1 and L2. Some of the participants emphasized the role of idioms in boosting speaking skills, to express themselves better, and to speak the target language more accurately and fluently. Once run across in a discourse style, the ambiguity in meaning of the unfamiliar idioms was also addressed. In this issue, some of the respondents pointed out that if they are not much familiar with the exact meaning of idioms, they may feel confused due to the implicated sense of the figurative and metaphoric forms of the idioms to grasp their correspondence. Linked to these results, respondents draw attention to the importance of idioms in learning a foreign language, reviewing the role of the figurative language in improving oral skills, inferencing meaning from a written or spoken discourse in daily language use, oral skills, and building cultural bridges between their native language and the target language. Given these points, an important aspect highlighted by these results is that learning idioms is not without its challenges. Hence, it is essential to consider the challenging areas such as lack of vocabulary knowledge on the literal meanings of the idioms, cultural background of the metaphorical themes, the context, and the figurative sense of the idioms being learnt (Boers & Demecheleer, 2001; Charteris-Black, 2002; Vasiljevic, 2015).

CONCLUSION

This study was directed to examine the notions of EFL learners on learning idioms in the target language. The results indicated that learners consider learning idioms as an important part of understanding figurative language and improving vocabulary and communication skills. The findings also demonstrated that learners need a variety of activities supported by authentic and contextualized exposure to idioms in English. As reflected by the findings, an equivalency in the meaning of idioms across L1 and L2 helps learners retain the meaning and usage of the idioms. Moreover, it was also displayed that it is much easier to learn idioms when accompanied by visual aids. The data showed that learners were in favour of being informed about the specific and useful strategies in learning idioms in the target language.

Limitations and Further Research

This study was limited to investigating the perceptions of 80 EFL learners on learning a restricted number of idioms through a translation task in a task-based design. Conducting a study with more participants and focusing on a larger number of idioms may yield more comprehensive results. Furthermore, this study implicated learners' notions about learning idioms in short span. Implementing longer instruction process would direct further aspects of learning idioms in a target language. In addition, researchers can consider using different approaches and methods to obtain a more comprehensive and objective understanding of learners' experiences with learning English idioms. In this regard, as evidenced by the results, benefitting from the visualization techniques, along with the facilitative role of learners' L1, can enhance the effectiveness and retention of idioms in a target language.

Ethical Statements

This study was not supported by any institution. This study was conducted in accordance with ethical rules. The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, author ship, and/or publication of this article. The researcher' contribution rate to this article is 100%. The ethical approval for the study was granted by the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Kırşehir Ahi Evran University, Social and Human Sciences, with the decision dated 14.06.2023 and numbered 2023/05/28.

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Appendix A
English Idioms for Turkish Translation Test

No	SENTENCES
1	The Managing Director of the company was **given a golden handshake** of $200.000 when he left the company.
2	Psycho was one of the most **hair-raising** films I've ever seen. I was really terrified most of the time.
3	My father **flew off the handle** when I told him that I had damaged his car. I don't think I've ever seen him so angry.
4	When I was young, I always had to **mind my Ps and Qs** when visiting my Aunt Matilda.
5	Although the CD player I bought was second-hand it was **in very good nick**. In fact, it looked almost new.
6	Most of the students were **on tenterhooks** waiting for their exam results to be pinned up on the notice board.
7	Your father is a bit **long in the tooth** isn't he to be still going to discos!
8	There were several **gate crashers** at Peter's party on Saturday.
9	Whenever Robert gets the blame for something, he always tries to **pass the buck**.
10	I must **have a kip** for half an hour. I'm feeling really tired after my flight.
11	My father had to **pull a lot of strings** to get me a summer job working at the local hospital.
12	The comedian was really funny and had the audience **in stitches** all night.
13	Don't ask James to do the washing-up. He's **all fingers and thumbs** and is bound to break or drop something.
14	Don't listen to him. – He always **talks through his hat**!
15	The painter spent **busman's holiday** painting his own house.

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Deyimler, genellikle birden fazla kelimeden oluşan ve bu kelimelerin tek tek anlamlarından farklı, mecazi bir anlam taşıyan kalıplaşmış ifadelerdir. Deyimlerin tanımları, genellikle bu yapıların içinde yer alan kelimelerde değişime izin vermeyen, ayrılmaz özelliklerine vurgu yapar (Baker, 1992). Genel hatlarıyla deyimler, kalıplaşmış ifadeler olmaları nedeniyle bir bütün olarak öğrenilmesi gereken, biçimsel olarak sabitlik gösteren ve sözdizimsel ile anlamsal açıdan sınırlı, çok sözcüklü dil birimleri olarak tanımlamışlardır (Alexander, 1987; Baker, 1992; Crystal, 1991). Deyimler genellikle ait oldukları dilin kültürel yönünü yansıtırlar. Bir dilde kullanılan deyimlerdeki sözcüklerin yerleri ya da biçimleri kolayca değiştirilemez. Gerek anadil öğretiminde

gerekse yabancı dil öğretiminde; deyimler genellikle edebi ve kültürel ifadeler olarak karşımıza çıkar. Bu nedenle deyim öğretimi, deyimlerin kullanımındaki mecaz anlamların ve kültürel unsurların anlaşılmasını sağlamak amacıyla dil öğretimi ve öğreniminin ayrılmaz bir parçası haline gelmiştir (Apridayani vd., 2023). Deyimsel ifadeler günlük dilde hem sözlü hem yazılı söylemlerde sıklıkla ortaya çıktığı için (Miller, 2020), bu ifadelerin anlaşılma düzeyi, dil yeterliliği sürecini doğrudan etkilemektedir (Cooper, 1999). İkinci dil (L2) olarak İngilizce öğreniminde deyimler, sadece kelime bilgisini değil aynı zamanda mecazi anlamı, kültürel farkındalığı ve iletişim becerilerini kapsayan çok boyutlu bir dilsel yapılardır (Türker, 2019). Deyimlerin hem yazılı hem sözlü dilde sıklıkla kullanılması, onların öğrenimini önemli kılmakta; ancak anlamlarının bire bir kelime düzeyinde çözümlenememesi, kültürel referanslar içermesi ve bağlamdan bağımsız düşünülememesi nedeniyle öğrenilmesini güçleştirmektedir (Sambursky, 2020; Vasiljevic, 2015). Deyimlerin bu özellikleri, onların başka bir dilde kullanımını ve öğrenilmesini de etkilemektedir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma, anadili Türkçe olan İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin İngilizce deyim öğrenimine ilişkin algılarını, sınıf içi uygulamalara dair değerlendirmelerini ve deyimlerin dilsel ve kültürel katkılarına yönelik görüşlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Araştırma, karma yöntem desenine dayanmaktadır (Dörnyei, 2007). Nicel veriler, Liontas (2002) tarafından geliştirilen ve bu çalışmaya uyarlanan 24 maddelik bir anket aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Anketin 21 maddesi beşli Likert ölçeği ile hazırlanmış olup, son madde açık uçlu bir soru olarak düzenlenmiştir. Nitel veriler ise bu açık uçlu soruya verilen yanıtların tematik analizi ile değerlendirilmiştir (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Anketin iç tutarlılık katsayısı Cronbach Alpha değeri α = .90 olarak hesaplanmış, bu da yüksek düzeyde güvenilirlik göstermektedir.

Çalışmaya, yaşları 19-24 arasında değişen, anadili Türkçe olan ve A2 düzeyinde İngilizce bilgisine sahip 80 İngilizce öğrencisi (Kadın = 53; Erkek = 27) katılmıştır. Katılımcılar, Türkiye'de bir devlet üniversitesinin Eğitim Fakültesi bünyesindeki üç farklı bölümde öğrenim görmektedir. Veriler, çevrim içi bir anket platformu aracılığıyla, sınıf içi uygulama sonrasında toplanmıştır.

Araştırma süreci, deyimlerin öğretimini içeren üç aşamalı görev temelli bir öğretim tasarımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. İlk olarak, Penguin Reader Idioms Book'tan rastgele seçilen 24 deyimi içeren çoktan seçmeli bir test uygulanmış ve öğrencilerin tanımadığı 15 deyim belirlenmiştir. Bu deyimler, iki haftalık İngilizce dersi kapsamında görev temelli etkinliklerle öğretilmiştir. "Görev öncesi" aşamasında deyimler, Türkçe karşılıklarıyla ve belirli bağlamlarda kullanımlarıyla tanıtılmıştır. "Görev süreci" aşamasında ise öğrenciler, hedef deyimleri içeren 15 cümleyi Türkçeye çevirmiş ve bu çeviri görevlerini üniversitenin kullandığı çevrim içi öğrenme sistemi olan AYDEP üzerinden yüklemişlerdir. Görevler bir hafta içinde tamamlanmıştır. "Görev sonrası" aşamasında ise, öğrencilere doğru çeviriler ve deyimlerin bağlamsal kullanımı hakkında geri bildirim verilmiştir.

Araştırmanın sonunda uygulanan anket ile öğrencilerin deyim öğrenme sürecine ilişkin görüşleri toplanmıştır. Bulgular, öğrencilerin deyimlerin anlamını daha iyi kavradıklarını, bağlam içinde görsel destekli öğrenmenin kalıcılığı artırdığını ve kültürel boyutun deyim öğreniminde önemli bir unsur olduğunu düşündüklerini ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, öğrenciler deyimlerin iletişimsel yeterlilik kazanmada ve gerçek yaşam diliyle bağ kurmada önemli olduğunu ifade etmiştir. Katılımcıların çoğu, yabancı dil müfredatında deyim öğretiminin yer almasını desteklemiş ve deyimlerin sınıf içinde anlamlı, çeşitli etkinliklerle öğretilmesi gerektiğini belirtmiştir. Sık kullanılan deyimlerden başlanarak ilerlenmesi gerektiği vurgulanmış, deyimlerin ana dillerinde karşılıklarının olmasının anlamayı kolaylaştırdığı ifade edilmiştir. Ayrıca, katılımcılar deyim anlamını çözmede etkili stratejiler ve gerekli beceriler konusunda bilgilendirilmek istediklerini dile getirmişlerdir. İlaveten, katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu, deyim öğretiminde görsellerin etkili olduğunu belirtmiştir. Sözel ve görsel bilgilerin deyim bilgisini harekete geçirdiğini, görsel ve grafiklerin öğrenmeyi desteklediğini ve bu materyallerin öğretim sürecinin ayrılmaz bir parçası olması gerektiğini ifade etmişlerdir. Katılımcıların çoğu, deyimlerin güncel, ilgi çekici ve gerçek yaşamda işe yarar olması gerektiğini belirtmiştir. Deyimleri bağlam içinde ve metinlerle birlikte öğrenmeyi tercih ettiklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Ayrıca, deyimlerin gerçek yaşam dilini yansıtacak şekilde sunulması, günlük iletişimde faydalı olması ve öğretiminin özgün ses–görüntü kayıtları ile desteklenmesi gerektiği görüşünde birleşmişlerdir.

Bu çalışma, deyim öğretiminde görev temelli yaklaşım, görsellerle desteklenmiş çok modelli öğrenme ve kültürel içeriklerin bütünleştirilmesinin öğrencilerin öğrenme süreçlerini olumlu yönde etkileyebileceğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin hedef dilde deyim öğrenimine yönelik görüşlerini incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Sonuçlar, öğrencilerin deyim öğrenimini mecaz anlamı kavrama, kelime dağarcığını geliştirme ve iletişim becerilerini artırma açısından önemli bir unsur olarak gördüklerini

ortaya koymuştur. Bulgular ayrıca, öğrencilerin İngilizce deyimlere özgün ve belirli bağlam temaları aracılığıyla sunulan çeşitli etkinliklere ihtiyaç duyduklarını göstermiştir. Elde edilen verilere göre, ana dil (L1) ile hedef dil (L2) arasında deyim anlamı açısından bir eşdeğerliğin bulunması, öğrencilerin deyimlerin anlamını ve kullanımını daha kolay hatırlamalarına yardımcı olmaktadır. Ayrıca, deyimlerin görsel materyallerle desteklenerek öğretilmesinin öğrenme sürecini önemli ölçüde kolaylaştırdığı da ortaya konmuştur. Veriler, öğrencilerin hedef dilde deyim öğrenimine yönelik özel ve faydalı stratejiler hakkında bilgilendirilmeye istekli olduklarını da göstermiştir. Tüm bu bulgular üzerinde yola çıkarak, araştırmacılara ve dil öğretmenlerine, öğrencilerin İngilizce deyim öğrenme deneyimlerini daha kapsamlı ve nesnel bir şekilde anlayabilmek için farklı yaklaşım ve yöntemler kullanmaları önerilmektedir. Bu bağlamda, görselleştirme tekniklerinden yararlanmak ve öğrencilerin ana dilinin (L1) kolaylaştırıcı rolünü kullanmak, hedef dilde deyim öğreniminin etkinliğini ve kalıcılığını artırabilir.