Recognition of the Meaning of English Idioms among College Students in Oman

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Abstract

Research suggests that EFL students' comprehension and production of idioms can act as an indicator of overall language proficiency. Authors such as Cieslicka (2000) report a link between a lack of English-language proficiency and the non-recognition of idioms, while an understanding of contextualized idioms has also been associated with improved language comprehension. This study asked 76 Omani university student participants to write the meanings of 40 contextualized English-language idioms in either Arabic or English. Findings indicate that participants struggled to understand the meanings of idioms and that context alone is not sufficient as a cue for idiom recognition and interpretation and can, in fact, interfere with understanding.

1. INTRODUCTION

Comparative studies exploring how idioms invoke cultural elements and help set apart one community from another (Hou, 2013; Wang & Li, 2014), and those looking at the inter-lingual transfer of idioms and proverbs (Abdulmoneim, 2002), are many. Research on idioms has also been conducted in relation to equivalence and translation (Wang & Li, 2014). However, very few recent studies have devoted attention to the ways learners go about recognizing and comprehending contextualized idioms (Daoudi, 2014; Liontas, 2003). In fact, research investigating EFL learners' recognition of idioms when they have been minimally exposed to them has been largely marginalized. This is especially the case in the Arab Gulf. The current research seeks to explore whether Omani EFL learners in an Arab Gulf university can utilize contextualized cues to understand idiom meaning. It also examines the accuracy with which learners are able to understand English idioms, with a special focus on those idioms that are specifically-linked to various aspects of Western culture/s.

Idioms are fixed language expressions whose meanings are generally opaque and not discernable from the meaning of their component words alone. Several studies (Abdulmoneim, 2002; Wray, 2002; Zyzik, 2011) have noted that the knowledge and production of idioms both act as indicators of language competence. Since idioms succinctly express a specific message, competent language learners can easily express the message they wish to convey through the selection of an appropriate idiom. In fact, a well-chosen idiom can often mean that speakers are not forced to elaborate upon their point, and also helps them to avoid grammatical mistakes or running the risk of being misunderstood. However, despite their potential utility, idioms constitute a substantial challenge for EFL learners. There are two major issues that these learners face when exposed to idiomatic expressions in foreign language learning: comprehension and production.

Since idioms are intricately linked with the culture/s associated with a language, the ability to comprehend and use them accurately is an intriguing issue within the field of EFL. The phase of idiom recognition or identification has been defined by Daoudi (2014, p. 41) as having to do with "what makes an EFL learner decide that the expression s/he is dealing with is idiomatic". Naturally, a number of processes are associated with this phase, including whether the EFL learner looks at the idiom as a series of single words or as a phrase. It is often reported that EFL learners achieve this through the process of elimination whereby the appearance of unfamiliar

words and/or words that do not collocate suggests to them both the appearance and meaning of an idiom.

To assist this process, EFL learners may also translate idioms to or from their own languages and cultures. Since many linguistic expressions like idioms emanate from the cultural and historical aspects of the languages from which they are drawn, frequent exposure to these expressions or to the target language culture/s has been posited as one way of increasing idiomatic understanding in the EFL classroom. Those who support this practice claim that student exposure to the cultural aspects of English is crucial in helping learners contextualize idiomatic expressions in real life situations, and, as such, serves as a tool for efficient English-language communication.

With reference to English language teaching in the Arab world, Daoudi (2011) has suggested that EFL learners in Algeria and Saudi Arabia experience difficulty in recognizing, understanding and using idioms. The author states that an understanding of the socio-cultural and/or linguistic context in which idioms appear is vital in recognizing and understanding their meaning, which may be straightforward (literal) or figurative (idiomatic). However, despite the importance of being familiar with the context in which idioms occur, Daoudi cautions that, in learning tasks assigned to EFL students, idioms are often only presented in a "learning context" where students are required to come to terms with their meanings despite a lack of requisite background knowledge. For these reasons, the current research sought to examine Omani tertiary students' abilities to provide accurate meanings of English-language idioms and whether the use of context assisted in their understanding of idiom meaning.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Hou (2013) explored the ways cultures/s associated with a language are expressed through proverbs. The author notes that an understanding of the meaning of proverbs may help in understanding what is acceptable or unacceptable, in addition to what is desired or undesired, in a given culture. Hou contends that an exploration of proverbs is one way in which cultural understanding of a target language can be built and offers the example of how this exploration can reveal differences between nations that may outwardly appear to share many linguistic and cultural similarities. In this way, Hou notes that proverbs offer "a window" for understanding at least some of the many layers of a particular culture, while also conveying the most important information related to that culture.

In his exploration of the transfer of idioms by Arab learners, Abdulmoneim (2002) maintains that students cannot comprehend and use idioms unless they attain a reasonable level of proficiency in the English language and that, even after years of exposure to EFL instruction, Arab students rarely use English idioms. This is a fact that Abdulmoneim attributes more to ignorance of the potential utility of English idioms than to intended avoidance. The author states that the type of errors that Arab speakers of English tend to make with idioms are either grammatical (prepositions and articles) or lexical, and that transfer errors occur across all idiom types including for idioms whose form and meaning in English are similar to Arabic, idioms whose meaning only is similar, and Arabic- or English-specific idioms.

Wang and Li (2014) discuss the translation of idioms based on Nida's principle of equivalence. The authors highlight the intricate link between idioms and culture and claim that it is extremely difficult to produce faithful translations of idiomatic expressions. They state that idioms are associated with specific cultural hallmarks, religions, traditions and customs, all of which must be taken into account when seeking to translate them. Despite these difficulties, Wang and Li offer three distinct strategies for translating idioms: literal translation, partially literal translation, and free translation or paraphrasing, with the authors highlighting the importance of dynamic translation as a means of coming to terms with the restrictions of culture.

Zyzik (2011) explored the acquisition of Spanish idioms in a Spanish language classroom after ten weeks of formal instruction. 65 Spanish-language learners performed pre- and post-tests to examine their ability to recognize and use idioms in addition to a vocabulary test to measure their lexical knowledge. The author focused on two major issues: prior lexical knowledge which targets constituents (not individual words), and whether organizing idioms into themes facilitates the learning of these idioms. Results indicate that that prior lexical knowledge had a significant impact upon participants' success in understanding idiomatic expressions, although there appeared to be no benefits to students accrued from grouping idioms based on themes.

Holsinger (2013) explored the role that syntactic, lexical and contextual factors play in the identification and interpretation of idioms. The author achieved this through two experiments, with the first involving the examination of syntactic and lexical compatibility on the processing of

idiomatic strings, and the second exploring the role of the provision of contextual information on idiom processing. Holsinger concludes that literal computation plays an important role in discerning the meaning of idioms and that the processing of idiomatic strings is supported by the provision of contextual, lexical and structural information.

In Saudi Arabia, Aljabri (2013) explicitly acknowledged the relative lack of research about idiom comprehension among EFL and ESL learners, with this being especially the case in the Arab world. In seeking to redress this, the author distributed a set of 20 English-language idioms to 90 male students from the English department of the country's Umm Al-Qura University. Participants were asked to rate idioms in terms of three areas. These were familiarity judgment which was concerned with how often participants encountered the idiom, idiom comprehension or whether respondents could indicate the idiom's meaning from a list of four options, and idiom transparency which required respondents to decide how closely the literal and non-literal translations of idioms were related. Results indicate that, while English-language proficiency was associated with greater familiarity with, and comprehension of, idioms, more opaque, or less literal, idioms presented difficulties for all participants. The author recommended that teachers in the region provide learners with more activities that focus on inferring idiom meanings in meaningful contexts.

Also in Saudi Arabia, Rajab (2012) examined the errors made by Arab EFL learners when attempting to directly transfer idioms from Arabic into English. Rajab administered oral examinations and a written exam to 200 male Saudi university-level preparatory students over the course of three years. All exams employed in the study formed part of participants' end-of-semester assessment. Analysis of errors with the use of idiomatic expressions suggests that respondents tended to transfer Arabic-specific idioms directly into English despite their confinement to Arab cultures and environments. While these errors occurred in both written and oral exams, students were far more likely to make these during oral interviews. Again, the author suggests that participants' overall English-language level was associated with their accurate use of English idioms.

In Iraq, Yousif (2012) looked at the ability of 30 fourth-year male and female Iraqi EFL students to recognize the meaning of English idioms at the Department of English in the University of Mosul. Yousif administered a test consisting of two parts. The first involved presenting participants with 30 English-language out-of-context idioms followed by four possible

translations. Only half of these had Arabic equivalents. The second part employed the same idioms though in context and again required participants to select the most accurate translation. Findings suggest that participants found it more difficult to understand out-of-context idioms that did not have an Arabic equivalent than those idioms presented without context that had similar expressions in Arabic. While Yousif suggests that context plays an important role in helping respondents recognize idioms, he nonetheless notes that with more "opaque" idioms, it is much more difficult for respondents to gain a clear understanding of meaning even when context is offered.

Given the relative dearth of topic-related research emerging from the Arab region, the current study examines whether Omani students in an English-medium college in the Arab Gulf were able to accurately provide the meanings or Arabic equivalents of a set of English-language idioms and whether the contextualization of these idioms assisted in this process. It did so by administering a test containing 40 English-language idioms to 76 Omani tertiary-level students.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

76 Omani university-level EFL learners participated in this study. They were recruited from English credit courses in the colleges of education and arts in the country's only public university – Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). Participants were all in their third year or above in their courses. 64 (84.2%) respondents were females and only 12 (15.8%) were males, with 50 (65.8%) participants coming from the College of Education and the remaining 26 (34.2%) from the College of Arts. In terms of specialization, 66 (86.8%) of participants were English majors and 10 (13.2%) majored in translation. The average GPA of participants was around 2.9 with 4.0 representing the highest attainable grade.

Students were recruited from intact classes, with the researchers explaining the nature of the study to them and asking for their participation. All students were reminded of the voluntary nature of the research, and that their participation and responses would remain anonymous and confidential. Moreover, they were reminded that, even though the study was taking place during regular classroom periods, participation or non-participation would in no way influence their standing in the class. Respondents' exposure to the

English language during their time at SQU has been quite extensive, with all participants taking non-credit 20-hours per week of intensive English in the first year of their enrollment and six English credit courses in their second year in addition to studying in an English-medium environment.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Participants were given up to two hours of classroom time to write the meanings of 40 English-language contextualized idioms that they received on a paper test (see Appendix). They were told that they could write the idiom meanings either in English or Arabic, and that they could supply an equivalent idiom from Arabic if they believed one existed. Participants were not allowed to use dictionaries or to ask about the meaning of any of the words that appeared on the test. Examples of the English idioms used include: "to add insult to injury", "after the dust settles", "all that glitters is not gold", and "an apple a day keeps the doctor away". All idioms appeared with some form of contextualization. For example, the idiom "asking for the moon" was presented in the test as: "John asked his mother for a hundred dollars today. He's always <u>asking for the moon</u>".

Students' responses were corrected based on whether they displayed an adequate understanding of the English-language idioms encountered. Each participants received an overall mark from 40 that indicated their total number of correct responses, with these marks then converted into a percentage. Two independent samples t-tests were then used to determine the possible effect of the variables of gender and college of study on these results. Probability levels for both these tests were set at $p \leqslant 0.05$.

3.3 Idioms Selection

English has a wealth of idiomatic expressions which touch on various aspects of its various cultures and often include a wide variety of topics such as weather, ways of living, people's worldviews and so on. Some idioms found in English express similar meanings to those found in Arabic, while others have no equivalent. The researchers chose 40 idioms which can be divided into three main categories. These included three idioms whose form and meaning are similar to Arabic ("All that glitters is not gold", "As ye sow, so shall ye reap", "A mere drop in the bucket"); six idioms whose form is different from similar idioms in Arabic but which express a similar meaning

("Add insult to injury", "To clutch at straws", "Cold shouldered", "Hold your horses", "An elephant never forgets", "Every jack has his Jill"); and 31 idioms which have no equivalent in Arabic. Examples of this final category include "After the dust settles", "An apple a day keeps the doctor away", "Have ants in your pants", and "Asking for the moon".

As stated above, the researchers presented these idioms to participants with two primary research questions in mind:

1. Will students be able to provide the accurate meanings of these idioms in English or Arabic or to write their equivalents in Arabic? Is this level of accuracy influenced by gender or college of study?

2. Will the context help learners provide accurate responses?

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Due to the familiarity in form and cultural connotations of those idioms whose form and meaning are similar in English and Arabic, the researchers expected students to display high rates of understanding of idioms from the first category. The researchers also expected understanding of English idioms whose form is different from similar idioms in Arabic but which express a similar meaning, or those drawn from the second category, to be relatively high, and certainly higher the third category whose idioms have no equivalent in Arabic. However, Table 1 indicates that participants struggled with understanding the meaning of idioms from all three categories, with percentages correct ranging from around 53%-59% and with an average score of around 55%.

Table 1

Accuracy of participant understanding of idioms across categories

Category	% Correct	% Incorrect
Similar form and meaning	53.94%	46.06%
Different form, similar meaning	58.78%	41.22%
No Arabic equivalent	54.71%	45.29%

Despite the assumption that participants would be able to understand with

relative ease the three idioms whose form and meaning are similar in English and Arabic, they only managed to do so 53.94% of the time – the lowest percent correct from all three idiom categories. Although the majority of participants managed to correctly offer the meaning of the idiom "All that glitters is not gold" (72.36%) from this category, they nonetheless struggled with both "As ye sow, so shall ye reap" (43.42%) and "A mere drop in the bucket" (46.05%) despite the fact that these idioms have equivalents in Arabic.

Participants overall percent for correctly understanding idiom meanings was highest for the second category of English idioms whose form is different from idioms in Arabic but which express a similar meaning (58.78%). Of the six idioms featured here, participants accurately deciphered the meanings of three more than 70% of the time. These were "Add insult to injury" (77.63%), "Every jack has his Jill" (75.00%), and "Hold your horses" (71.10%). More than half of participants also accurately reported the meaning of "An elephant never forgets" (56.58%), even though they struggled with understanding "Cold shouldered" (40.79%) and "To clutch at straws" (31.58%).

The remaining 31 idioms featured in this study have no equivalent in Arabic. Although the researchers assumed that participants would struggle most with idioms associated with this category, their rate of accurately identifying these idioms' meanings (54.71%) suggested that they experienced around the same level of difficulty as they did with idioms whose form and meaning were similar in Arabic and English. Of the 31 idioms featured here, more than half of respondents were able to accurately provide the meaning for 21. The idioms that more than 80% of participants displayed an understanding of were "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" (84.21%), "asking for the moon" (84.21%), and "barking up the wrong tree" (80.26%), while more than 70% displayed an understanding of "after the dust settles" (76.32%), "have ants in your pants" (76.32%), "every Jack has his Jill" (75.00%), "to the last ditch" (73.68%), and "an old head on young shoulders" (72.37%). The idioms that the majority of participants did not demonstrate and understanding of included "dyed-in-the-wool" (14.47%), "baptism of fire" (14.47%), "backs to the wall" (23.58%), and "cut out the banana oil" (34.21%).

Table 2

Idiom	% Correct	Idiom	% Correct
An apple a day keeps the doctor away	84.21%	Stitch in time saves nine	56.58%
Asking for the moon	84.21%	All at sea	55.26%
Barking up the wrong tree	80.26%	Without batting an eyelash	53.95%
After the dust settles	76.32%	Back in the saddle	52.63%
Have ants in your pants	76.32%	Left holding the bag	51.32%
Every Jack has his Jill somewhere	75.00%	A fly on the wall	48.68%
To the last ditch	73.68%	A chip on his shoulder	47.37%
An old head on young shoulders	72.37%	Cold-shoulder people	40.79%
Loose lips sink ships	68.42%	The cat that swallowed the canary	40.79%
Free herself from her mother's apron strings	64.47%	Cotton picking hands	36.84%
In two shakes of a lamb's tail	64.47%	Cut out the banana oil	34.21%
Never lost sight of the fact	64.47%	Backseat driver	23.68%
Hit the ceiling	63.12%	Backs to the wall	23.58%
At the eleventh hour	61.84%	Baptism of fire	14.47%
Get rid of some dead wood	59.21%	Dyed-in-the-wool	14.47%
Was in the prime of life	57.89%		

Independent samples t-tests (with probability levels set at $p \leqslant 0.05$) did not reveal any significant differences between male and female participants and between participants studying in the colleges of arts and education.

5. DISCUSSION

The current research explored both whether Omani university level students are able to provide the accurate meanings of a series of 40 idioms associated with the three different categories offered by Abdulmoneim (2002), and whether context could, as posited by Yousif (2012) and Holsinger (2013), assist in helping learners arrive at accurate understandings of these idioms. In relation to the first question, it appears as though Omani participants, like those from Abdulmoneim's study, tend to struggle with understanding the meaning of English-language idioms across all categories. For example, they only managed to correctly relate the meaning of idioms associated with each

of the three categories between 53 and 59 percent of the time. While this finding may not be surprising for those idioms featured in the study that were English-specific and did not have an Arabic equivalent, it was somewhat unexpected to find that the category that received the lowest mean was for idioms whose form and meaning are similar in English and Arabic – idioms that were, following Aljabri (2013), assumed to be by far the easiest for participants to understand.

These findings might be associated with the fact that Omani university students in English-medium colleges, even at the advanced stages of their academic careers, are usually exposed to the kinds of academic English that they need to succeed in their majors. It is very unlikely that the English for academic purposes language that they engage with, and which they are expected to have gone a long way towards mastering by the final years of their studies, would feature an explicit focus on idioms as this is an area often associated with colloquial speech. Moreover, when these students use English outside of the classroom within Omani society, the language is often used to engage with the service workers who make up a large percent of the nation's workforce (Razavi & Kirsten, 2011). These workers are usually drawn from the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia and generally speak English as a second or foreign language and may also be unlikely to employ idioms which again limits potential exposure.

In terms of the influence of context, findings here suggest that context alone, despite Yousif (2012) and Holsinger's (2013) belief, does not serve as a sufficient cue to idiom recognition and interpretation and may, in fact, negatively interfere with an accurate understanding of an idiom especially if students are completely unfamiliar with the component words or are not aware of idioms in their own language. To take one example, the idiom "as ye sow, so shall ye reap" was contextualized in the study by the following sentence: "When the leader of a murderous gang was shot himself, the local minister said: "as ye sow, so shall ye reap'". Participant interpretations of this particular idiom included:

1) The major trouble maker is vanished now.
2) You are caught.
3) Became sad.
4) He is responsible for his death.

Many of these responses are directly linked to the context itself.

This indicates that students believed the meaning of the idiom to be literal and subsequently identified some contextual clues to guess its meaning. Moreover, in addition to this low rate of accuracy when interpreting this idiom, it should be noted that more than 40% of participants did not attempt to offer a translation. Taking this with the difficulties with which participants had in translating this idiom, it can be concluded that participants lacked the ability to decide if the idiom had a figurative meaning based on its grammatical structure and semantic make-up, even though the fact that the idiom was presented in "old" English could have served as a clue to its idiomaticity.

A lack of sufficient contextualization in the study may also have contributed to the low rates of accurately understanding idiom meaning reported here. For instance, the idiom "dyed-in the wool" occurring in the context "Max is a dyed-in-the-wool conservative republican" constituted a major challenge for participants due to two main reasons. The first is that there is not sufficient context in order to guess the meaning of the idiom, as most participants are generally unaware of world affairs and would not know about American political parties or even, perhaps, of the political implications of "conservative". The second is the fact that the idiom has a quite unusual grammatical structure and is specific in terms of history and culture. That is, according to *Webster's Quotations: Facts and Phrases*, this particular idiom refers to the fact that fabric may be colored in various ways. For example, woven fabric is died after it is woven. However, when the color becomes "dyed in the wool", then the wool itself is dyed before being worked and the color is very unlikely to fade. Perhaps due to the culturally-specific nature of this idiom, very few participants attempted to translate it.

These findings, therefore, suggest that Omani EFL learners both lack exposure to idioms during their English studies and are largely not aware of how to determine the meaning of an idiom when encountered. Here, instructing students in Wang and Li's (2014) practices of literal, partial literal, and free translation may assist learners in determining their meaning. Daoudi's (2011) conceptual framework for recognizing and understanding idioms may also be useful. The author states that three major steps should be taken by students to understand the idiomaticity of an expression. The first involves relying on syntactic and structural knowledge to determine the grammaticality of an expression. If the expression is seen as being ungrammatical, then students can immediately think that is has an idiomatic meaning and can subsequently apply the elimination process which involves keeping key words as clues to understanding the idiom's meaning. However,

when the idiom is grammatically correct, students then interpret the individual words that form the idiom and look at collocations.

If the idiom is grammatical but its composite words do not make sense – for example, "it's raining cats and dogs" and "a storm in a tea cup" – learners can then move it from the category of literal to idiomatic. So, when the idiom refers to elements that cannot happen in the real world, then this indicates the pragmatic deficiency of the idiom which, according to the author, should lead EFL learners to assign it an idiomatic meaning. The final stage of Daoudi's recommended approach for determining the meaning of an idiom is semantic interpretation which involves collocation and non-collocation strategies. This involves EFL learners relying on the literal meaning of an idiom and interpreting a string by identifying words that do not collocate. Examples of this include "going bananas" and "feeling blue".

It appears as though both gender and college of study do not have any effect on the ability of students to understand the meaning of idioms. The lack of effect of gender here is particularly interesting, as female students in Oman and, indeed, much of the Arab Gulf, are often reported as having better English-language skills than male students (Mathew, Job, Al Damen, & Islam, 2013). If this is the case, then it could be assumed that, along the lines of Rajab (2012) and Zyzik (2011), their higher levels of English proficiency would result in better recognition and understanding of the idioms featured in this study. However, the fact that such a difference was not found may suggest that gender is not related to idiom understanding in the Arab Gulf, male and female participants in the current study shared similar English language levels, or that the gender imbalance in favour of female participants means that any potential differences could not be adequately explored.

Finally, results suggest that Omani EFL learners are unable to recognize the meaning of contextualized English-language idioms due to a lack of exposure to these in their studies and unfamiliarity with the linguistic components of idiomatic expressions. As a result, it may be necessary for EFL teachers in Oman, and in other similar contexts, to explicitly focus on some of the peculiar linguistic features of idioms introduced in class in addition to discussing their meanings. An important step here involves encouraging learners to explore cases where idioms follow or deviate from grammatical conventions. Therefore, EFL teachers could both explain the specific language characteristics of idioms and discuss the culture/s and historical backgrounds associated with a particular idiom. After introducing

and exploring idiomatic expressions in such a manner, frequent exposure to at least some of the most common English-language idioms in the classroom will also help students begin to integrate these in an appropriate manner into their speech and in their more informal written texts.

6. CONCLUSION

This research, therefore, appears to confirm the findings reported above that Arab learners of English – in this case Omani university students studying in English-medium environments – tend to struggle with understanding the meanings of English idioms. This may be associated with a number of issues, including a lack of awareness of the culture/s of the nations from which these idioms originally sprang, a lack of exposure to idioms as a useful device for developing communication in the English language during their largely academic-focused classes, and even the position of English as a lingua franca or even a foreign language, as opposed to a true second language, across much of Omani society.

Moreover, issues with providing contextualization of the idioms featured here on the data collection instrument, as highlighted above, may also have contributed to participants' relatively low levels of understanding of the meaning of idioms, and even of those idioms that have close equivalents in Arabic. This study also did not attempt to measure participants' English language proficiency, despite its importance on idiom recognition as posited by Rajab (2012) and Zyzik (2011). This is an important concern as the researchers assumed high levels of English language skills due to participants' years and majors in English-medium college/s. However, future research could aim to directly assess this proficiency, at least in terms of vocabulary range (see Roche & Harrington, 2013), to determine if it is associated with levels of idiom recognition and understanding.

However, despite these limitations, the current research suggests that it may be beneficial if instructors in Omani tertiary institutions attempt to develop their learners' understanding of both commonly-used idioms in the English language and the process of first determining if an encountered phrase is an idiom and, if it is, how to extract meaning from it. This can be achieved by following Daoudi's (2011) concept of idiom deconstruction in the Arab world, and could also be achieved through discussion of such issues as ungrammaticality, pragmatic and semantic deficiency.

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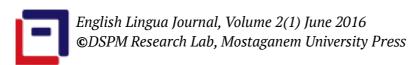**Appendix: Questionnaire**

Dear Student

This study aims to explore Omani students' understanding of the meaning of English idioms. We are grateful for your participation, and we assure you that your answers will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Therefore, no names or IDs are required in the background data section. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Part A: Background Information

1. Gender _____

2. College _____

3. Specialization _____

4. Year at college _____

5. GPA _____

Part B: Idiom Understanding. Please write the meaning of the underlined idiom in either English or Arabic. If you believe an equivalent idiom in Arabic exists, you may also write that as your answer.

1. We started on a picnic, and first it rained, then, <u>to add insult to injury</u>, the car broke down.

2. John invited Tim for dinner, but, since Tim's father had just died, he replied, "Thanks. I'd like to come <u>after the dust settles</u>".

3. Joe's new computer keeps quitting on him. He should have stuck with his old one. It goes to show that <u>all that glitters is not gold</u>.

4. So you have poor digestion? Take more fruit. Don't you remember the old saying, "<u>An apple a day keeps the doctor away</u>"?

5. "How come you recognized me after twenty years?" John asked his friend. "I am like an elephant, you know," came the answer, "and <u>an elephant never forgets</u>."

6. You <u>have ants in your pants</u> today. Is something wrong?

7. Suzie is so immature, I am afraid she will never <u>free herself from her mother's apron strings</u>.

8. John asked his mother for a hundred dollars today. He's always <u>asking for the moon.</u>

9. We had better fix the old car before we leave; you know how they say, "A <u>stitch in time saves nine</u>."

10. When the leader of a murderous gang was shot himself, the local minister said, "<u>As ye sow, so shall ye reap</u>."

11. The job was new to him and, for a few days, he <u>was all at sea.</u>

12. Aunt Matilda got married <u>at the eleventh hour</u>; after all, she was already 49 years old.

13. After his prolonged illness and stay in the hospital, Joe is <u>back in the saddle</u>.

14. The man who drove the car became angry with the <u>backseat driver</u>.

15. The soldiers had their <u>backs to the wall</u>.

16. <u>Cut out the banana oil</u>; flattery will get you nowhere!

17. Many 19 year olds <u>had their baptism of fire</u> during the Gulf war.

18. If he thinks he can fool me, he is <u>barking up the wrong tree</u>.

19. Bill told a story <u>without batting an eyelash</u>, although not a word of it was true.

20. How I wish I was <u>a fly on the wall</u> to hear what my fiancé's parents are saying about me.

21. He went through life with <u>a chip on his shoulder</u>.

22. Jack is planning <u>to chum around</u> with Tim in Europe this summer.

23. When the police made it quite clear that they knew about everything, the accused felon began <u>to clutch at straws</u> to save himself.

24. It is impolite and unkind to <u>cold-shoulder people</u>.

25. "Your son is a very precious person; watch out for him," John said to Ted. "What do you mean?" Ted asked. "He <u>has an old head on young shoulders</u>," Ted went on, "it is obvious from all the remarks he makes."

26. Keep your <u>cotton picking hands</u> off my flowers.

27. Our business will probably start to show a quarterly profit, if we can just <u>get rid of some dead wood</u>.

28. Our university needs several million dollars for its building renovation project; $50,000 is <u>a mere drop in the bucket</u>.

29. Max is a <u>dyed-in-the-wool </u>conservative republican.

30. "I'll never find a suitable woman to marry," Peter complained to his father. "Never fear son," the father replied, "<u>every Jack has his Jill somewhere</u>."

31. Uncle Willie was laughing <u>fit to be tied</u> at the surprised look on mother's face.

32. When Elaine came home at three in the morning, her father <u>hit the ceiling</u>.

33. "<u>Hold your horses</u>!" Mr. Jones said to David when David wanted to call the police.

34. We went out for dinner together but, when it was time to pay, I was <u>left holding the bag</u>.

35. Poor John lost his job due to restructuring when he <u>was in the prime of his life</u>.

36. I'll be back <u>in two shakes of a lamb's tail</u>.

37. They will fight reform <u>to the last ditch</u>.

38. When she won the prize, she went home looking like <u>the cat that swallowed the canary</u>.

39. "You're talking too much about your work," the director warned Joe. "Don't you know that <u>loose lips sink ships</u>?"

40. No matter how rich and famous he became, <u>he never lost sight of the fact</u> that he had been born in the slums.