

DIFFICULTIES IN UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING ENGLISH IDIOMS IN SPEAKING OF ENGLISH MAJORED JUNIORS AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

It is undoubted that speaking plays an indispensable role in exchanging information, news, culture, literature and sciences among people globally. In other words, English speaking skill facilitates communication and understanding between people who come from various cultures and speak different languages. Owing to the significance of speaking, it is employed as a fundamental subject to English majored students. Nevertheless, speaking is not an easy subject for students to master. Thus, this study aimed at investigating the difficulties that students often encountered when applying English idioms in their speaking. This was a qualitative research. The questionnaire and interview were used as two major instruments to gain the most reliable findings. To achieve the goal, 74 English majored juniors from English 14A, B, C at Tay Do University were selected randomly as the sample for this research. The results showed that English majored juniors faced many difficulties in understanding and applying English idioms in speaking at Tay Do university, in Vietnam consisting of vocabulary, grammatical structures and cultural aspects.

Key words: *speaking, idioms, English majored students, university*

1. INTRODUCTION

It is hard to deny that English is the most important language in the world, it is the international language because it appears everywhere, and every field such as business, bank, science and technology, tourism, and global computing. So, English is necessary for those who want to be successful in one's job. Moreover, (SICETE, Mrs. Dr. Madhumati R. Patil, p35), "*it is the major medium of education, publishing and international negotiation. It is perhaps the most flexible of all languages.* Therefore, people belonging different parts of the world widely use English. Education has multiplied the role of English language, because universities worldwide often use English as the common mode of learning and communication. "*Different people can communicate with one another with the help of English*". Indeed, in Vietnam, learning English becomes more and more imperative. English, previously included in the curriculum from the first year of middle school, is now officially taught for children from kindergarten. (Nguyen Thi Thu Thao, 2007, P 2), "*Foreign language centers are dramatically increasing in number and English is the most popular foreign language offered for learners*".

In fact, learning English is not easy because it has many skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among these skills, listening and speaking are considered as two principal skills used in communication because according to Dr.J.J.Magdum in the Journal of Mechanical and Civil Engineering (IOSR-JMCE) (2012:35) "*Everybody has realized the importance of communication and therefore, he/she wants to be a better communicator. It has left no field untouched: be it a medical, or engineering, arts or law, or even sports or music.* However, at the bottom of these lies an effective communication skill. If students fail to see the broader scenario of the corporate world and ignore the communication skills, it can endanger a shallow level of understanding". Therefore, listening and speaking are very necessary to learners. Especially, it is found that speaking is more important than listening. According to Dr. Vathana Fenn (2014, p141) "*the ability to use second language would develop automatically if the learners were required to process of using language to communicate*". Additionally, "*English speaking is very important to participate in the wider world of works. The speaking skill measured in terms of ability to carry out a conversation in the language*" (Aye Hernia Susan, English Department Faculty of Tarbiyah, 2007, p.1). In other words, speaking can be considered as a very crucial and compulsory skill in learning English in general and communicating in particular.

However, the more significant speaking is, the harder it is to learn because when speaking, learners need to be confident, flexible and active. Although English has become an indispensable tool in school as well as find job opportunities, it is hard for Vietnamese to pronounce English properly and naturally. According to Viet Toan (P.26, 2013) “*Vietnamese students start studying English as early as middle school, with many even learning it in elementary school or kindergarten – just like many other countries where it is spoken as a second language – but few of them can speak the language fluently and naturally when they leave high school*”. The truth is “students who have studied English for seven years beginning in grade six are often not able to use English beyond simple greetings and questions such as “hello,” ‘good-bye,’ and ‘what’s your name?’” (Dr. Diana L. Dudzik, 2013). That is the reason why students always feel worried and unconfident when speaking English. Therefore, speaking English naturally seems to be impossible. There are many students talking about their problems in BBC Viet Ngu forum. All over the time at secondary school and high school, English lessons had never given students enough confidence to talk in English. People never thought of going out of Vietnam and speaking English well. The biggest difficulties with English are speaking and writing. Minh in England shared, although studying English for four years before leaving Vietnam, he was considered as a good student in university, his speaking and listening skills were very poor when arriving in Australia seven years ago. The native speakers could not understand him and he could not understand all of what they said. English majored students generally and English majored juniors at Tay Do University particularly also face above problems. Actually, they can express their ideas but it is very difficult to speak fluently and naturally. English has become an international language. English helps people in many different countries exchange the culture and the economic. It is the most widely used language in the world and play a crucial role together with the development of society and technologies. That is the reason why many countries in the world use English as their second language.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 DEFINITION AND CONCEPTS

2.1.1 Definition of idioms

There are many definitions of idioms, they can be defined in many different ways but all have some points in common. In English Oxford learner’s pocket dictionary, idioms are defined as “a group of words with whose means is different from the meanings of the individual words”.

For example:

A chip on your shoulder - means you are holding a grudge;

High as a kite - means you are drunk or on drugs;

Sick as a dog - means you are very ill,...

While Michael McCarthy (2010) defined “idioms are expressions which have a meaning that is not obvious from the individual words”. For example, the idioms “drive somebody rough the bend” means make somebody angry or frustrated. With this idea, it is difficult to understand an idiom by looking for the meaning of each individual word in the dictionary, “the best way to understand an idiom is to see it in context”.

Researchers also know about idioms by reviewing the following definition from the Wikimedia “*an idiom is a combination of words in common use that have a figurative meaning, and sometimes a literal meaning*”.

On the other hand, “An idiom is a conventionalized expression whose meaning cannot be determined from the meaning of its parts” and “*Idioms differ from other figurative expression, such as similes and metaphors, in that they have conventionalized meaning*”.

From above definitions, it can be seen that an idiom is a special phrase that people cannot understand it by translating word for word. So it can be difficult to know what an idiom means even knowing the entire individual words in the idioms.

2.1.2 The role of idioms in speaking skill

English is a language particularly rich in idioms. “*Idioms make the English sound very warm, informal, easy going, interesting and creative*” (Roberto Decaro, Ehana Edith, 2009). People use it as a good way to express their ideas more vibrantly and attractively. For instance: if you want to express your happiness or excitement, you can say “I was on cloud nine when he bought me a new car”, or instead of saying “I have to go to sleep now” you can say “I have to hit the hay now” to make your sentence more interesting and colorful.

On the other hand, idioms are important for learners because they are very common. According to Jon Wright (Idioms Organizer, organize by metaphor topic and key word, Language Teaching Publications Series, Thomson Heinle, 1992, P.9), “*It is impossible to speak, read or listen to English without meeting idiomatic language. This is not something you can leave until you reach an advanced level. All native speakers are idiomatic. Every newspaper is full of metaphorical language. You cannot avoid it or leave it till later*”.

Idiomatic English idioms reproduces the ‘message’ of the original but tends to distort nuances of meaning by preferring colloquialisms and idioms where these do not exist in the original.

For example:

Source language: “*Out of sight, out of mind*”

Target language: “*Xa mặt cách lòng*”

Source language: “*Wait and see*”

Target language: “*Thời gian sẽ trả lời*”

Source language: “*No guide, no realization*”

Target language: “*Không thầy đố mày làm nên*”

In addition, idioms not only support people to speak in a more interesting and colorful way but also enrich their vocabulary, express their ideas in colorful ways and help them understand native English speakers’ culture, for example: Diamond cut diamond, keep overhead, make a long story short, ... Furthermore, learning and using idioms are very stimulating, it is interested to learn and to use idioms because there are so many absorbable things to learn and if the language you are learned by the colorful and fascinating ways, there will be more chances for the learners to memorize it.

2.1.3 Some common features of idioms

It is estimated that there are at least twenty-five thousand idioms in English language. However, the researchers still finds some similar features among them.

Word and grammar in English idioms

According to Macmillan English dictionary for advanced Learners, page 710. For language teachers and learners of foreign languages, however, the question is whether it is worth paying any attention to idioms. Some would argue that nothing sounds worse than a language learner using an idiom inappropriately, either through a slightly incorrect use of the idiom, for example “head over feet in love” or through using it in an inappropriate context (“snowed under with shopping”). Indeed, there seems little point in learning a range of idiomatic expressions to a suitable opportunity to work them into the conversation. On the other hand, learners who have reached a reasonable level of proficiency in the foreign language often complain that there is nothing left to learn. All the major structures have been covered, they already have an extensive vocabulary and they can communicate in a several of situations by using a wide range of expressions, they still want to study and improve it.

Most idioms are fixed

Both the grammar and the word of idioms are fixed, and if people change them they lose the meaning of the idiom. For example: the idiom “bring home the bacon” means “earn the income”, if learners change its grammar to “bringing home the bacin” or we change its vocabulary to “bring home the pork”, people must interpret the phrase literally, and idiom has lost its idiomatic meaning.

Idioms are arbitrary

So, the idiomatic meaning from the word cannot be guessed, it intends to use language in a non-literal way. For example: students have a sentence “Peter’s mother had a cow when he broken her favorite mirror” the phrase “had a cow” is the idiom which means “get extremely upset”, so Peter’s mother got angry about what her son had done with her favorite mirror.

The main factor of idiom is metaphorical rather than literal

Metaphors describe a person, object or situation by comparing it to something else with similar characteristics. By those characteristics they are often used in poetry and literature. In Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, for example, Romeo says ‘Juliet is my sun,’ suggesting that she is the most important force in his life, bringing him light and warmth. Many idioms are based on metaphors. However, idioms are expressions that are used so frequently and are so fixed in the language that people often do not think about the metaphors behind them. The metaphors used in idioms are therefore much less original and thought-provoking than those used in literary contexts. People say, for example, ‘The new president was / took centre stage at the meeting’ [was the most important or noticeable thing or person], without thinking of the original image of a theatre. For example: He’s a big cat, love me love my dog, you’re the apple of my eyes, etc, most of literal work and new on magazines or newspaper use metaphor to polish their meaning.

Idioms vary a great deal on how metaphorical and invariable they are. In other words, idiomaticity is a matter of degree or scale

Many studies (e.g. Gibbs 1980, McGlone, Glucksberg & Cacciari Cristina 1994, Nippold & Martin 1989) treated metaphoricity as a fundamental characteristic of an idiom, and one of the most tenacious ideas of idioms in linguistics is that idioms are dead metaphors. It has been generally presumed that idioms were originally metaphorical (i.e. the relationship between the literal and figurative meanings can be detected), but have lost their figurativeness and are now

dead metaphors, but this view has been challenged during the past decades (e.g. Lakoff 1987, Gibbs 1992, Gibbs & Nayak 1989, Kövecses & Szabo 1996).

As Gibbs (1992: 486) proposed, many idioms are not 'dead' metaphors, but they in actual fact "retain a good deal of their metaphoricality". A dead metaphor is one in which the sense of a transferred image is absent. Examples: "to grasp a concept" and "to gather what you've understood" use physical action as a metaphor for understanding. The audience does not need to visualize the action; dead metaphors normally go unnoticed. Some people distinguish between a dead metaphor and a cliché. Others use "dead metaphor" to denote both. A mixed metaphor is one that leaps from one identification to a second identification inconsistent with the first.

For instance, spill the beans bears somewhat metaphorical relation to its idiomatic meaning (Glucksberg 1993: 4) as does flip your lid. Its figurative meaning (in this study figurative and metaphorical are used as synonyms) can be "motivated by two conceptual mappings" (Gibbs 1992: 486): the conceptualization of the mind as a "container", and that of ideas as "physical entities". Those conceptual mappings link the single words of idioms to their metaphorical meanings.

2.1.4 The difficulties faced by learners when using and apply idioms

Recognizing

Idioms are phrases. This due to fact that not all of them are to be recognized easily. According to Baker (1992), the first difficulty that learners come across, while interpreting idioms, is the ability to recognize and distinguish idiomatic from non-idiomatic usage. In the conversation the speaker may use some idioms and if researchers do not recognize it we surely interpret it in literal meaning and it can lead to misunderstand each other during the conversation. To overcome this problem, the learners and Tay Do's students may determine it whether the meaning fits, if the literal meaning does not make sense they can then recognize it as an idiom and deal with it like such "*General speaking, the more difficult an expression is to understand, the less sense it makes in a given context, the more likely the translator will recognize it as an idiom*" (Barker, 1992, P.65).

Analyzing the meaning of idioms

Denotation and connotation

Connotation and denotation are two principal methods of describing the meanings of words. Connotation refers to the wide array of positive and negative associations that most words naturally carry with them, whereas denotation is the precise, literal definition of a word that might be found in a dictionary. Connotation is a meaning of a word or phrase that is suggested or implied, as opposed to a denotation, or literal meaning a characteristic of words or phrases, or of the contexts that words and phrases are used in while idiom is a manner of speaking, a way of expressing oneself.

Denotation refers to the literal meaning of a word, the "dictionary definition".

For example, the word snake in a dictionary, denotative meanings are "any of numerous scaly, legless, sometimes venomous reptiles, tapering, cylindrical body and found in most tropical and temperate regions".

Connotation, on the other hand, refers to the associations that are connected to a certain word or the emotional suggestions related to that word. The connotative meanings of a word exist together with the denotative meanings. The connotations for the word snake could include evil or danger. For example, using the words "chick" or "babe" to refer to a woman often carries a negative connotation, especially if women are part of the audience.

Vocabulary

Using English is not an easy an easy task, if learners do not have a wide range of vocabulary it will make them confuse with idiomatic expression. For that reason, lacking vocabulary is one of the most difficult things that learners usually face. Furthermore, understanding lexicon of English requires more than knowing the denotative meaning of the word, it requires learners to have connotative word comprehension and more, understanding of figurative language. Idioms fall into this final category (Jacqueline Ambrose, 2003). If the learner's vocabulary knowledge is not good, it can be obstacle to reach the real meaning of idioms. In fact, vocabulary is effected to the meaning of idioms.

Nation and Meara (2010:89) mentioned that "*vocabulary ability is considered a convenient mean sure for assessing language skill*". It is widely acknowledged that vocabulary is an essential part of mastering a language and text comprehension depends on the command of vocabulary knowledge. For example, the source language has the word "book" in the sentence "*I read a book*", "a book" in a noun form means "*quyển sách*", but in the other sentence "*I want to book a room*", the different meaning of "book" in verb form means "*đặt vé, đặt phòng*". Hence, vocabulary is one the most important factors affecting to English idioms.

Collocation

In the process of learning vocabulary, many students face with collocation. Word combination, or collocation, means words co-occurring repeatedly in a language, which sounds "right" to native speakers. According to the Oxford, collocation is a combination of words in a language, that happens very often and more frequently than would happen by chance.

For example, native people use “*it is raining cats and dogs*” to say something when it is raining very heavily. Another example is that “*a big house, a large house and a great house*” have the same meaning, but “*great man*” is different from “*big man or large man*”. *It is clear that a word has many synonyms, but each word only fits one context or situation* (Ying, 2009; Yan, 2010).

However, in Vietnamese the word “*uống*” (drink) can go with many different kinds of liquid water, beer, alcohol, medicine, and even poison. However, in English these are clear distinctions as follows:

Drink beer/water/wine/coffee

Take medicine/poison.

That is the reason why students majoring in English make collocations mistakes. Students usually write “*do good to*” or “*do bad to*” because of knowing the phrase “*do harm to*”, and write “*gain harvest*” because of the meaning of “*obtain*” or “*gain*” in “*gain recognition*” or “*gain experience*”. However, the right collocation should be “*reap harvest*”. Moreover, according to Yan (2010), *ESL learners tend to generalize the language knowledge acquired to formulate new rules without considering the exception and limitation of the special language situation*”.

For example, basing on the correct collocations “*take measures*” and “*commit a crime*”, students make “*take some activities*” and “*commit a mistake*”. Because they have generalized from the correct collocations of commit, such as “*commit a murder*”, “*commit theft*” and so on.

As a result, *the major problem for non-native translators is to achieve appropriate collocations in the target text* (Hatim and Mason, 1990). Therefore, it is suggested that students should read as many English materials as possible and take notes some important collocations under the English standard, and then learn by heart to avoid mistakes.

Idioms

Idioms are applied frequently in literature and in reality. It serves as a tool to make the language more graphic. In some senses, idioms are the reflection of the environment, life, historical culture of the native speakers and are closely associated with their inner most spirit and feelings. According to Oxford, a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words. However, it has been argued that idioms seem to be too complex for foreign language users (Liu, 2003, McLellan, 2010) and there is no exception for English majored juniors due to the fact that every nation has their own characteristics.

For example, due to the differences Vietnamese and English culture, idiom “*to sell like a hot cake*” is usually translated as “*bán đắt như tôm tươi*” instead of “*bán đắt như bánh nóng*”.

“*There is no time like present*” is usually translated as

“*Việc hôm nay chớ để ngày mai*” instead of “*Không có thời gian như bây giờ*”

“*Wet blanket*” should be translated “*người rầu rĩ*” instead of “*cái chăn ướt*”

(Nguyen, 2001).

In addition to this, Vietnam has the cultural tradition of the wet rice production. Therefore, animals have a strong attachment to Vietnamese daily life. That’s why Vietnamese idioms of comparison consist of images related to buffaloes which work very hard every day to help farmers in rice production agriculture. As a result, when Vietnamese people mention about the strength, people usually used idiom “*khỏe như trâu*”.

In contrast, in English, when people want to indicate the strength, people usually use “*as strong as a horse*” due to the fact that horses can not only pull ploughs but also transport and entertain. In fact, it does not mean English people do not consider buffaloes as strong animals or Vietnamese people do not regard horses as strong animals. That results just from the difference in culture.

Although the culture of two nations is different, to some extent, ways of thinking and looking at the world of English and Vietnamese is quite similar.

For example

Vietnamese idioms	English idioms
Cha nào con nấy	Like father, like son
Nhập gia tùy tục	When in Rome, do as the Romans do
Chở củi về rừng	Carry coals to Newcastle
Thương cho roi cho vọt	Spare the rod, spoil the child

Lửa thử vàng, gian nan thử sức. Fire proves gold, adversity proves men

Muru sự tại nhân, thành sự tại thiên Man proposes, God disposes

In short, idioms are present in all languages, so studying them is in need. A person who does not know how to use an idiom and just use individual word will not become confused when translating and even make the meaning become strange, unnatural, and funny. That is one of the reasons why that make non-native learners cannot get on well with the native ones.

Prepositions

A preposition refers to the word or phrase which shows the relationship between one thing and another, linking nouns, pronouns and phrases to other words in a sentence. Besides, Lawal (2004) stated that *prepositions indicate various relationships between words or phrases in sentence*. The relationship includes those of time, points, position, direction and various degrees of mental or emotional attitude. Preposition exist in both English and Vietnamese vocabulary systems. However, in Vietnamese and English, prepositions have different attributes and usage in each vocabulary.

In Vietnamese, each preposition has a fixed meaning which does not change regardless of the noun, adjective or verb preceding it. In contrast, the meaning of a preposition in English depends on its preceding word. Hence, preposition is one of obstacles in gaining the target language of learners as Richards and Ravina mentioned “*preposition is one of the most problematic categories that students encounter in learning English*” (Richards, 1974; Ravina, 1982).

For example, in Vietnamese, with the preposition “về” can be expressed by different prepositions in English:

<i>a talk on history</i>	: <i>một cuộc nói chuyện về lịch sử.</i>
<i>be disappointed in</i>	: <i>thất vọng về</i>
<i>be interested in</i>	: <i>quan tâm về</i>
<i>lay emphasis/stress on</i>	: <i>nhấn mạnh về</i>
<i>be worried about</i>	: <i>lo lắng về</i>
<i>be proud of/ take pride in</i>	: <i>tự hào về</i>
<i>be famous for</i>	: <i>nổi tiếng về</i>

instead of “*disappointed about*”, “*proud of*”, “*famous about*” as the translator may use (Nguyen, 2001).

To make clear this point, look at the examples (Nguyen, 2001).

E.g.1: “*Tòa án nhân dân quyết định kết án họ 15 năm tù về tội buôn lậu ma túy*” which is translated into English as:

“*The People’s Court decided to condemn them to 15 years imprisonment **about** the drug smuggling*” is incorrect because of the interference of Vietnamese mother tongue (về → about).

This Vietnamese sentence should be translated into correct English as follow:

“*The People’s Court decided to condemn them to 15 years imprisonment **for** the drug smuggling*”

E.g. 2: “*Là một giáo viên ưu tú trong nhiều năm, ông Nam có nhiều kinh nghiệm về giảng dạy và giáo dục học sinh.*”

→ “*As a qualified teacher for many years, Mr. Nam is experienced **about** educating and teaching the students*” (incorrect)

It must be translated “*As a qualified teacher for many years, Mr. Nam is experienced **in** educating and teaching the students.*”

From the mentioned example, learner tended to choose the English preposition basing on Vietnamese meaning without paying attention to their variations.

Guessing meaning

Another obstacle thing in understanding idioms is that they use the words metaphorically. “*An idiom is a kind of complex lexical item. It is a phrase whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the morphemes it comprises*” (Langsher, 1968, p.79).

For instance, the learners may know the word pain and the neck but wonder why they do not understand the sentence “he is a pain in the neck”. They do not know the actual meaning in the context that it means he is an annoying person.

Cultural problems

So that people can easily guess the meaning of the idioms which consists of many factors. According to Yowell and Lataiwish (200, P.107), “*the greater the gap between the source and target culture, the more serious difficult would be*”. The culture may include geographical, religious, social and linguistic ones. Idioms are reflection of cultural and cultural shape language and the metaphors will be different from those of another that is the reason why learners face many difficulties if they lack knowledge about cultural background behind the idioms.

2.1.5 Some useful advice to understand and apply idioms

According to Michael McCarthy “*the best way to understand some idioms is to see it in context*”. If someone says: “This tin opener’s driving round the bend!” I think I will throw it away and get a new one next time I am in town. Then the context and common sense tell us that “drive round the bend” means something different from driving a car round a curve in the road. The context tells us the tin opener is not working properly and that it has an effect on the person using it”. It is helpful if learner try to guess the meaning of an idiom from the context. Moreover, many idioms are made of images, we should try to image them, and this will help learners remember idioms by seeing the picture in their mind.

In addition, idioms learners can make a dictionary for their own. Whenever knowing and reading an idiom, write it down and take note it into the sentences to remember it. Keeping idioms diary may help learners widen their vocabulary as well as enrich their idioms’ collection. Furthermore, learners can translate English idiom into idioms in their own language, it will be more motivate and easier when learning idioms.

2.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES

As discussed in section 2, during the last three decades there has been a rise in vocabulary studies; also formulaic language and idioms have been studied, but mainly in relation to native speakers and children. There are only a few studies that have focused on English idioms and L2 (the second language) learners. Irujo (1986b, 1993) investigated Spanish speakers’ idiom comprehension and production, while Kellerman’s (1987) study concentrated on Dutch speakers’ recognition of English idioms.

2.2.1 Suzanne Irujo

Suzanne Irujo has conducted two studies on Spanish speakers’ comprehension and production of English idioms. In her first study (1986b) Irujo investigated whether L2 learners benefit from the knowledge of their L1 (the first language) when they understand and produce idioms in English. The subjects were twelve advanced learners of English studying in an American university. Production and comprehension of 45 idioms was tested; one third of the idioms were such that their form and meaning were identical to their Spanish equivalents, one third had equivalents that were formally very similar, and one third had totally different forms in English and Spanish. The results indicate that identical idioms were the easiest to understand and produce, whereas similar idioms showed interference from subjects’ mother tongue, but were understood almost as well.

Idioms with no equivalents in learners’ L1 were the most difficult but were less distracting than similar idioms. Irujo also found that the subjects produced and comprehended most correctly the idioms that were frequently used and transparent with easy structure and vocabulary (Irujo 1986b: 287). In addition, Irujo (1986b: 296) reports that learners used both L1 and L2 strategies in producing idioms and they did not seem to fear to rely on their L1. In 1993 Irujo carried out another study on non-native speakers’ idiom production in English.

The aim of her study was to test the presumption that even very fluent and advanced speakers of a second language avoid using idioms. In addition, Irujo wanted to find out what kind of idioms second language learners use the most. The subjects were twelve native speakers of Spanish who had learnt English as adults and were very fluent, living and working in an English-speaking environment. The subjects were asked to translate 45 paragraphs, each containing an idiom, from Spanish into English. As in the study reported above, one third of the idioms had identical counterparts, one third had counterparts that were formally very similar, and one third had totally different forms in English and Spanish.

The results of the study show that subjects were not avoiding idioms but tried to use an idiom in two thirds of the English idiomss. Moreover, the subjects produced a correct idiom in 59% of the cases. Another interesting finding was that identical idioms were much easier to produce than similar or different idioms. However, it could be argued that this type of English idioms task cannot be referred to as a production task.

2.2.2 Eric Kellerman

Eric Kellerman (1987) has investigated the role of L1 in SLA, and has conducted a study on Dutch speakers’ recognition of English idioms. The subjects of his study were Dutch university students (first, second and third-year) and first-year College of Education students. They were given a list of sentences in English and were asked to judge whether they were correct or not thus only recognition was studied. Half of the expressions were “idiomatic”, while the other half were “non-idiomatic”. There were sentences containing Dutch-like idioms which were correct also in

English, sentences including Dutch-like idioms which could not be transferred to English, sentences containing idioms that were not possible in Dutch and sentences including idioms that were not possible either in Dutch or English.

The study found that College of Education students and first-year students tended to reject. Dutch-like idioms whether correct in English or not, while third-year students made the fewest rejections. Kellerman (1987: 114) pointed out that College of Education and first-year students are linguistically naïve and that the emphasis in school is not on “grammatically perfect production”, but in communication. He added that the idioms did not play a big part in the school curriculum, thus students had to rely on their own feelings. Another interesting finding of his study was that even advanced learners of English treated Dutch-like idioms as untransferable. However, third-year students were more successful at distinguishing correct English idioms that were similar to Dutch ones from Dutch-based erroneous idioms.

According to Kellerman (1987:118), this results from their increasing awareness of the similarities that exist between the two languages. In addition, there seemed to be a correlation between opacity and rejection. Semantically opaque idioms were almost totally rejected by all students while semantically more transparent idioms were generally accepted.

2.2.3 Pierre Arnaud

Pierre Arnaud and Sandra Savignon (1997) have studied idioms from a different viewpoint. They investigated if advanced learners’ knowledge of rare words and idioms increases when they advance in their studies (the rareness of words was determined by means of frequency lists and when it comes to idioms, only opaque idioms were included). Moreover, they wanted to find out whether advanced learners manage to gain native-like proficiency. Arnaud and Savignon chose rare words and idioms since, according to them, infrequent words carry the highest information load and thus cause problems in comprehension when unknown (Arnaud & Savignon 1997: 158). They emphasised that the knowledge of rare words allows an L2 reader to comprehend the utterances easily and quickly (Arnaud & Savignon 1997: 159).

The subjects of the study were 236 native speakers of French, either students or teacher trainees or secondary school teachers. A group of 57 English-speaking students served as native controls. The results show that learners’ knowledge of rare words and idioms does increase during their studies, and that native-like proficiency is achievable in the case of rare words, but not in that of idioms. Not even the teachers, the most advanced non-native speakers, attained native-like performance even though they had all spent some time in English-speaking countries. According to Arnaud & Savignon (1997: 167), it could be that continuous exposure to the language is necessary for native-like performance in the case of idioms. However, it should be noted that only opaque idioms were included and, as they are idioms where the literal meaning and the figurative meaning are completely different from each other, they are particularly difficult to comprehend for L2 learners.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research questions and hypotheses

Research question

The research was undertaken to address the following questions:

1. What are difficulties in understanding and applying English idioms in speaking skill of English majored juniors at Tay Do University?
2. How do juniors apply English idioms in speaking skill?

Hypothesis

According to the literature review and the research questions, it was hypothesized that English Majored juniors at TDU might face challenges in using English idioms when learning speaking.

3.2 Research design

This research was a survey carried out to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses shown in the previous section. In fact, it followed a descriptive design. In this research, the questionnaire and interviews were employed to investigate some challenges of English majored juniors in English idioms while studying speaking. To conduct the research, 74 students from English 14A,B,C were selected randomly as the participants of the study. The research was performed within 12 weeks.

3.3 Participants

The participants in this study were 74 English majored juniors at Tay Do University. Their ages ranged from 20 to 22. They all speak Vietnamese as their mother tongue and English is considered as their second language. All of them received the same studying environment. Most of them have studied English for more than 10 years.

3.4 Research instrument

A questionnaire and an English idioms test were two instruments used in this research. The questionnaire was utilized to get the data from students' challenges in English idioms. Moreover, interviews for both students and teachers were made with the requirement to render these sentences from Vietnamese into English. Actually, the researchers collected them from *English idioms 1&2* by Nguyen Van Tuan and *Cam nang luyen dich Viet-Anh* by The Windy. This test was used to examine to further describe their problems in English idioms. The following section would discuss the instruments in detail.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

➤ Reasons for choosing the questionnaire

According to Oxford (1990), one of the most popularly used techniques to collect data is questionnaire because it can be objectively scored and analyzed. Questionnaire would help to collect a large amount of data from a large number of participants in a short time. In this research, the questionnaire aimed to seek the information about the students' view on English idioms, their challenges as well as errors in learning speaking English.

➤ Description of the questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 2 parts.

Part one aimed to investigate the students' background including 13 questions (numbered from 1 to 13). In this section, students were required to choose their most appropriate answer.

Part two embraced 11 statements (numbered from 14 to 24 in total featured five-degree Likert-type scale (i.e. strongly agree, agree, no ideas, disagree and strongly disagree). In this part, statement 14 was to point out students' obstacles in English idioms. Next, difficulties in applying English idioms of students while studying speaking were classified into 3 main categories, namely vocabulary (statements 15 to 17), grammar (statements 18 to 22) and culture (statements 23 to 24).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Students' background

The first question asked the students the reasons why they chose English as their major and these reasons were categorized in the following pie chart.

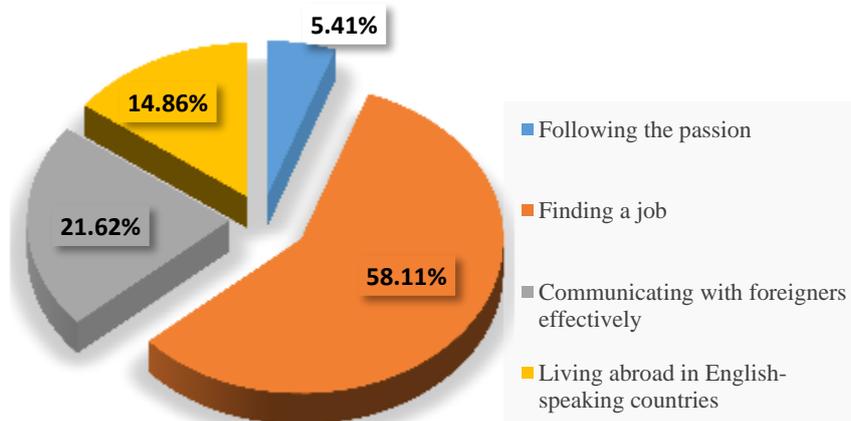


Figure 1. Students' purposes of studying English

The graph illustrated that most of students from English major classes course 14 at Tay Do University would like to have high-paying jobs after graduation (58.11%), because they believed that English is one of the prerequisites to be fully qualified to apply for their dream jobs. Besides, there were 21.62% of students who wished to communicate with foreigners efficiently so as to enhance their English speaking and listening competences and there were 5.41% of the participants studying English to follow their passion. Moreover, there were 14.86% of them asserting that they wanted to move abroad to English-speaking countries such as Australia, England, United States, Canada, etc. as their second country.

Table 1. The students' interests in using idioms when speaking English

2. What do you think about learning speaking when applying English idioms?	Percentage
A. Interesting	68.92%
B. Not interesting	10.81%
C. Normal	16.22%
D. Boring	4.05%

Thanks to the data presented in table 1, the researchers got more insights into students' thoughts about learning English idioms. The responses revealed that most of participants showed their interests in English idioms. To be more specific, over two-thirds of students (68.92%) acknowledged that English idioms is interesting to study so they would practice a lot so as to master this subject. In addition, there were 16.22% of students considering English idioms normal. Perhaps, they did not spend time enough on practicing English idioms and they did not have motivation for English idioms much. In contrast, the rest of them with 10.81% and 4.05% of students, successively considered English idioms to be not interesting and even boring. It could be said that they met a lot of problems in the process of learning English idioms. All in all, the statistics showed most of the students had positive attitude towards English idioms.

Table 2. Student's self-studying speaking

3. How much time do you usually spend practicing English idioms at home per day?	Percentage
A. Less than one hour	54.05%
B. More than one hour	35.14%
C. Within two hours	0%
D. Others:	10.81%

From the table above, self-study had a big influence on studying English idioms of students, especially in English idioms. In the former, there were about half of the students (54.04%) sparing less than one hour every day on practicing English idioms. In addition to this, 35.14% of the participants spent more than one hour for the practice of this English idioms section and none of them spent up to two hours per day. The remainders with 10.81% responded the answer "others" in which they confirmed that they spent less than 30 minutes and nobody said "never". In short, most of the students show their positive attitude towards self-studying English idioms.

Table 3. Student's ideas about time for practicing speaking

4. Personally, how much time is enough for you to practice English idiom while speaking?	Percentage
A. About 30 minutes	8.11%
B. Around one hour	68.92%
C. More than one hour	22.97%
D. Others	0%

Nearly 70% of respondents (68,92%) thought that around one hour was the sufficient time for practicing English idioms. Next, 22.97% of them asserted that it should be better if the practice lasted more than one hour. The rest of participants (8.11%) assumed that they just needed around 30 minutes daily. All in all, the amount of time students spending on translating Vietnamese texts into English ones was fairly different from one another. The reasons elaborating on this situation was that they spent time doing part-time jobs and developing other skills.

The students' self-evaluation on their speaking skills when applying English idioms.

It is essential to find out students' English idioms skills in order to investigate the suitable ways to help enhance their level in translating and correct the errors as well. Let's observe the figure below:

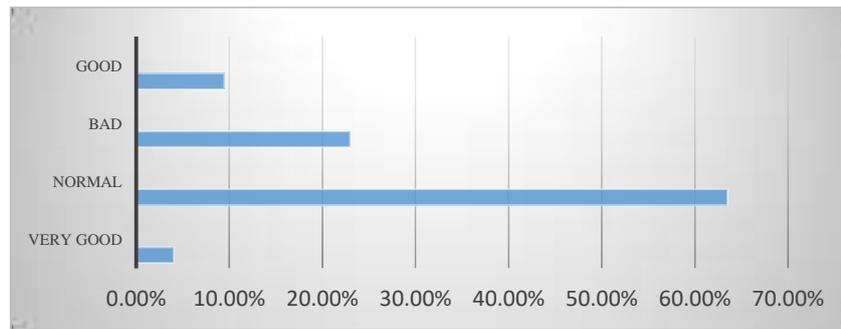


Figure 2. Students’ self-evaluation on their speaking skills while using English idioms

As can be shown in figure 2, it was obvious that more than 60%, exactly 63.51% of participants acknowledging that their English idioms skills were normal. It meant that they were able to translate basic sentences or paragraph given by their teachers in class. In addition, there were 22.97% of students assumed that their English idioms skills were bad. Meanwhile, the percentage of students having good and very good English idioms ability was not high. Specifically, the small amount of students (4.05%) was confident with their very good English idioms skills and 9.46% of respondents believed their English idioms competence was good. Thus, it was visibly noticeable that the students’ English idioms ability was not truly good, so they need to try and practice as much as possible to improve their English idioms skills.

Table 4. Students’ style of using English idioms

6. Word-for-word is your style in finding English idioms	Percentage
A. Yes	59.46%
B. No	40.54%

As can be seen from the table 4, a number of students admitted that they employed word-for-word English idioms technique to cope with their process of studying English idioms whereas the percentage of students who said “no” were 40,54%. From these proportion, it can be concluded that students’ translated tasks were incorrect, unnatural and boring due to the fact that they applied word-for-word method. It indicated that they were greatly affected by their mother tongue and they always kept their own style.

Students’ attitudes towards English idioms

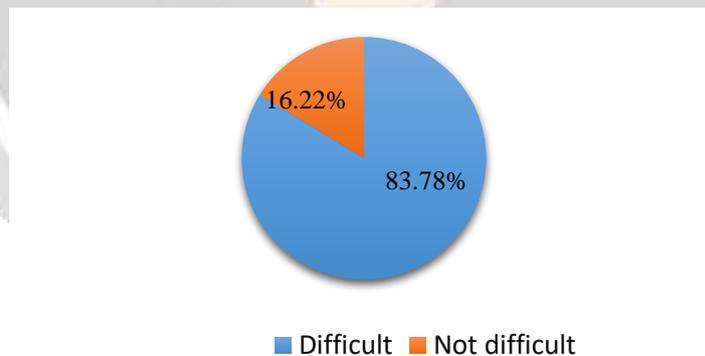


Figure 2. Students’ attitudes towards English idioms

Looking at figure 2, it was evident that merely 16.22% of participants did not consider this kind of idiom a complicated task for them. On the other hand, there were a massive 83.78% of students had difficulties in studying English idioms from Vietnamese to English. This was apparently the result of the fact that our mother tongue and English do not share similar linguistic features as well as cultural aspects. Also, they did not spend an adequate time for practicing such a type of English idioms and thus challenges in the process of rendering Vietnamese into English were unavoidable for students.

Table 5. Students’ frequency of encountering obstacles in English idioms

8. How often do you experience the difficulties in Vietnamese- English English idioms?	Percentage
A. Never	0%
B. Seldom	9.46%

C. Usually	56.76%
D. Always	33.78%

Basing on the results in the table 5, it was not hard to see the participants did have troubles rendering English idioms. Among 74 respondents, there were 42 of them (56.76%) responded that they ran into the challenges very usual. Besides, 25 participants, accounting for 33.78%, affirming that they always faced challenges and there were just 9.46% of students asserting that they seldom got into difficulties in this section of English idioms. Drawing from the students' responses, it was apparent that English idioms was not an effortless task for students.

Table 6. Students' attitude towards the significance of English idioms

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	No ideas	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9. English idioms is an essential subject in acquiring second language.	14.86%	75.68%	9.46%	0%	0%

Taking a quick look at table 6, it was undoubted that the proportion of respondents strongly disagreeing and disagreeing with the statement was zero. By contrast, 14.86% of the students strongly agreed and three quarters of the ones (75.68%) agreed with the fact that English idioms is an essential component in the process of acquiring the second language whereas 9.46% of them had no idea about this statement. In brief, learners were aware that English idioms plays a vital role in language acquisition.

Table 7. Student attitudes towards the advantages of applying English idioms in speaking

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10. Practicing English idioms on a daily basic will widen my lexical resources.	18.92%	70.27%	10.81%	0%	0%
11. Practicing English idioms frequently helps enhance my grammar use.	16.21%	60.81%	17.57%	5.41%	0%

From table 7, the students' perspectives towards the benefits of English idioms were presented. In terms of vocabulary (statement 10), 18.92% of students strongly concurred and 70.27% of consented to the ideas that practicing English idioms on a regular basis helped expand their vocabulary. In contrast to this, the minority of students (10.81%) gave no comment on this statement. Concerning grammatical aspects (statement 11), most of students came to an agreement that grammar also contributed in improving their English idioms competence, namely 16.21% of participants strongly agreed and 60.81% of the ones agreed. Still, a minority of students did not recognize the benefits of English idioms. Specifically, the number of students remained neutral and disagreed with this statement was 17.57% and 5.41%, respectively. Through the findings, generally, most of the students expressed their positive attitude towards English idioms.

Table 8. Students' obstacles in idioms

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12. It is hard to find out equivalent idioms in English idioms texts.	24.32%	44.59%	18.92%	12.17%	0%
13. Idioms containing culture-specific items pose great challenges for me to translate from Vietnamese to English.	27.03%	55.41%	17.56%	0%	0%

Table 8 consisting of 2 statements provided information about students' challenges in rendering idioms from Vietnamese into English. In the former, nearly 70% of students in which 24.32% of the students strongly agreed and 44.59% agreed with the fact that they had troubles finding equivalents for English idioms to translate from Vietnamese. Unlike other students, there were 18.92% of the participants showing uncertainty and just 12.17% of the ones disagreed with this statement. Regarding the latter, it was noticeable that a vast majority of students admitted that they coped with translating cultural idioms, namely, 27.03% "strongly agree" and 55.41% "agree". There were only 17.56% of the participants expressing their hesitation with the statement whilst no one showed disagreement.

In brief, finding out the equivalence of idioms in general and idioms containing culture-specific items in particular was in fact, a big challenge for juniors majoring in English.

4.1.2 Students' challenges in applying English idioms

From the figure 5 for the question number 8, it could be clearly seen that English idioms was a difficult subject to students. Their common challenges were shown in the figure below:

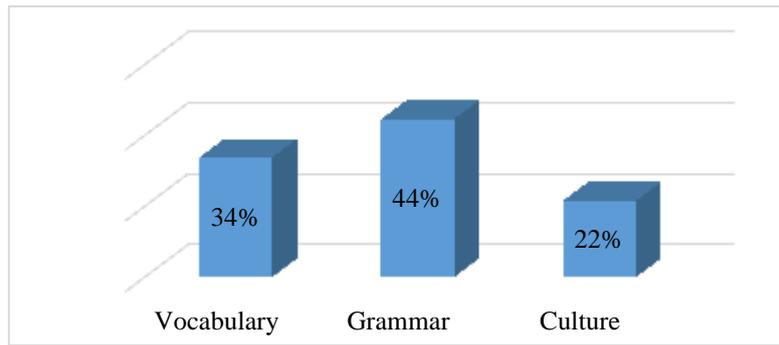


Figure 3. Students’ challenges in English idioms

The bar chart described the data about English majored juniors’ obstacles in English idioms. As can be seen from the responses, grammar accounted for the highest percentage when there were 44% of the students admitted that they had a lot of problems in grammatical structures. The second position belonged to vocabulary with 34% of students encountering difficulties. Finally, students faced the least challenges in rendering cultural elements with 22%.

Difficulties in vocabulary

Table 9. Students’ problems in word collocations

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15. It is hard for me to recognize collocation in English idioms texts.	24.32%	56.76%	18.92%	0%	0%
16. I cannot remember all collocations because they are of various sorts.	21.62%	54.06%	13.51%	10.81%	0%
17. I have a habit of translating word-for-word to form a new collocation.	12.16%	45.95%	27.03%	14.86%	0%

The above table including three statements in total investigated students’ common problems in word collocation. In statement 15, there were 24.32% of the participants strongly agreeing and 56.76% of students agreeing with this statement. Conversely, the remaining with 18.92% of the respondents gave no comments. When delivering the questionnaire, some students asked the researchers “could you tell me what collocation is”. That question was the best evidence for confusion about collocation of the students.

Next, statement 16 in the table indicated that there were just 10.81% of the respondents disagreeing that they could not remember all the collocations. It meant that they practiced English idioms a lot and of course, they could easily remember word collocations. Besides, there were 13.51% of the participants having no idea with the statement, which showed they were hesitant whether or not they could apprehend collocation. On the contrary, about three-fourths of students (54.06% agreed and 21.62% strongly agreed) stated that memorizing collocations was a tough challenge for them because they are of various sorts.

Lastly, the result from statement 17 showed that most of the participants had a tendency of forming new collocations by translating word-for-word, with 12.16% strongly agreed and 45.95% agreed. There still remained 27.03% of the respondents expressing the neutral attitude to this statement. Nonetheless, nearly 15% of the students (14.86%) dissented from the statement owing to the fact perhaps they checked collocation carefully before English idioms.

The difficulties in grammatical structures

Table 10. Students’ challenges in tenses

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18. Tenses in English often make me feel puzzled in English idioms.	27.02%	64.86%	0%	8.12%	0%

As can be seen from the statement in the above table, 27.02% of the students entirely consented and 64.86% of the respondents came to an agreement that they met challenges in transferring tenses from Vietnamese to English. In

addition, only 8.12% of the participants disagreed with the statement. Concerning the second statement which aimed at figuring out if students had problems with inflectional verbs. Through the this statement, it could be said that tenses caused confusion for participants in converting them into English.

Table 11. Students' problems in passive voice

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Strongly disagree
19. I tend to use active voice rather than passive voice in Vietnamese- English English idioms.	18.92%	68.92%	0%	12.16%	0%
20. It is hard to transform active sentences into passive ones in Vietnamese- English English idioms.	20.27%	66.22%	13.51%	0%	0%

As presented in the table, 18.92% of students strongly agreed and 68.92% of the students agreed, whereas only 12.16% of the participants dissented with the fact that "I tend to use active voice rather than passive voice in Vietnamese-English English idioms". Besides, the findings from statement 20 illustrated that nearly 90% of students (20.27% "strongly agree" and 66.22% "agree") asserted that it was truly difficult for them to translate active voice into passive one. However, only 13.51% of the students gave the disagreement with this statement. In general, students met difficulties in translating passive voice from Vietnamese to English.

Table 12. Students' obstacles in countable and uncountable nouns

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Strongly disagree
21. I have trouble translating countable and uncountable nouns from Vietnamese to English.	12.16%	50%	13.52%	24.32%	0%
22. I do not realize that some nouns in Vietnamese cannot be counted in English.	14.86%	41.89%	25.68%	17.57%	0%

Continuing with problems in countable and uncountable nouns, table 12 comprised two statements. With statement 21, it was noticeable that 12.16% of the respondents strongly agreed and half of the students agreed that countable and uncountable nouns challenged participants in reproducing such nouns from the source language (Vietnamese) to the target language (English). Nevertheless, there were 13.52% of students having hesitation and about a quarter (24.32%) of the students did not agree with this statement. As for statement 22, when being asked about the recognition that some nouns in Vietnamese cannot be counted in English, 17.57% and 25.68% of students gave no comments and disagreement, successively. More than 50% of participants, consisting of 14.86% and 41.89% of them who in turn strongly concurred and consented to the statement. In short, due to the fact that students could not escape from their mother tongue, challenges in terms of countable and uncountable nouns were accordingly inevitable.

Table 13. Students' obstacles in translating cultural aspects

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Strongly disagree
23. It is a rather complicated task for me to translate topics regarding culture	10.81%	45.95%	27.02%	16.22%	0%
24. I sometimes cannot choose words to render due to cultural differences.	13.51%	51.35%	22.98%	12.16%	0%

From the table, statement 23 manifested that 16.22% of the students disagreed when they assumed that it was not hard for them to convey cultural texts from Vietnamese to English while 27.02% of students admitted they were on the fence with this statement. Nonetheless, a number of students had contrary viewpoints. In particular, sometimes they coped with untranslated words due to cultural aspects. It was discernible that more than half of the students (13.51% "strongly agree" and "51.35% agree") agreed with statement 24. Once again, 22.98% of the students were up in the air whilst 12.16% showed that they did not agree with this statement. Generally, cultural barriers brought about inaccurate, funny and incomprehensible notions in speaking when applying English idioms.

4.2 Discussion

It was truly important to find out some common challenges of English majored juniors in English idioms. After going through the analysis of questionnaires and test papers, it was discernible that students' challenges in translating texts from Vietnamese to English were vocabulary, grammatical structures and culture. To clarify such problems, the researchers would like to review them so that the picture of students' problem could be drawn vividly.

First of all, vocabulary was one of the difficulties that students met in their English idioms while speaking English. In other words, their challenges about vocabulary were related to word collocations, idioms and prepositions. Students asserted that they were unable to produce an idiomatic sentence due to the fact that it was hard to recognize collocations in Vietnamese and English in applying English idioms when speaking. In addition to this, since English collocations were more and more increased, students could not bear in mind such collocated words. Moreover, students also met a lot of challenges in rendering idioms. In reality, due to the fact that Vietnamese and English were two distinct cultures, so students found idioms complicated to find out equivalents idioms in their translating. It was more sophisticated when they dealt with idioms containing culture-specific items. Simultaneously, word-for-word technique appeared as a rescued way for them to tackle collocations and idioms. However, it was the main causes that desired meaning of a translated text could not be fully conveyed. Finally, prepositions also posed challenges for students in using English idioms. Under the influence of their mother tongue, students tended to combine words with prepositions depending on the meaning of Vietnamese. Thus, students usually made errors in using prepositions in English.

Secondly, the vast majority of students admitted that grammatical structures were the top obstacles in translating. Specifically, they had troubles with tenses, passive voice and countable and uncountable nouns. In English, people used many tenses to indicate time concretely and accurately while in Vietnamese merely used “đã”, “đang”, “sẽ” to show the time at the present, in the past and future. That is, Vietnamese verb forms did not change through time. As a result, students often did not conjugate in English idioms. Equally important, students also encountered problems with passive voice. In Vietnamese, active voice was a preferred construction rather than passive voice. However, students were not aware of this habit, which obstructed them in producing a well-worded and natural translated text. Furthermore, they faced many problems in translating countable and uncountable nouns into English. Students had a tendency of focusing on the meaning and ignoring their potential grammatical meaning. Obviously, they did not realize that some nouns in Vietnamese cannot be counted in English.

Last but not least, students had obstacles in translating cultural aspects. Nevertheless, this was the problem that students had the least challenges among 3 above-mentioned elements. Students had difficulty translating cultural topics owing to the fact that they were short of cultural knowledge. Moreover, cultural differences also led to many problems for students to translate. Apparently, every nation has its own culture and it reflects the way people in each country use. As a result, it was a complicated task for students to translate cultural words.

In conclusion, the researchers' outcome figured out that juniors could not break language barriers for the purpose of creating a pure target language. Besides, this indicated that students could not produce well-worded English idioms on the grounds of three big challenges discussed thus far.

5. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Idiomatic expression is considered as one of the most complicated topic for studying. Students usually face many problems in using as well as in understanding it. So the researchers are conducted to help students recognize common difficulties that they usually face in learning idiomatic expression. Idioms can help learners to easily understand the information of the speaker, while reflecting the level of language users. However, idioms shouldn't be used too much in speaking these can affect listeners' understanding and comprehension.

After conducting the research by analyzing important information collected from questionnaires and interviews, the researchers would like to draw some conclusions for the whole study. Students had problems with using English idioms when speaking English because of the following reasons. In term of vocabulary, they encountered troubles in word collocations, idioms. The students could not remember all of the pairs of collocations as well as idioms, so they guessed and used word-for-word translation to deal with these difficulties while speaking English. To avoid these errors, students should read books extensively to collect collocated words and idioms under the English standards and keep them in mind for their latter use. With difficult idioms, students should rescue themselves from the habit of using prepositions relying on the meaning of their mother tongue to make their speaking skills more idiomatic or learn idioms by heart.

In the matter of grammar of applying English idioms while speaking, this was the problem that students had the most difficulties. In particular, they coped with tenses, passive voice and countable and uncountable nouns. In such cases, students are advised to do grammatical exercises on a routine basis. It is a good idea to help familiarize with grammatical structures of the target language. Another feasible solution was that students should read a variety of English material because through reading different genres and styles of writing, they can learn how other authors use language, how sentences are structured to make their using English idioms flexible and natural.

Finally, the shortage of cultural knowledge in both source language and target language was obstacles in students' speaking. To surmount the problems, they could apply many different ways to understand other cultures. Firstly, they could read Vietnamese and English cultural books to enlarge their culture knowledge. Secondly, they could follow local websites with data on entertainment, outings, trends to have a bright outlook on other customs and cultures. Last

but not least, travelling to English-speaking countries could be the best way because they would experience and learn many interesting things from those different cultures.

All in all, it could be implied that students met difficulties in rendering texts from Vietnamese into English though they had studied the theory of studying English idioms or collocations as well as practiced many speaking tasks provided by teachers in class. The possible explanation for this problem was that they had habit of using word-for-word technique. Moreover, they were strongly influenced by their mother tongue in their speaking's improvement. Therefore, facing many challenges in applying English idioms was something unavoidable.

5.2 Implications

Basing on the findings, there were three implications that the researchers would like to refer. First of all, students could be aware of their challenges in applying English idioms as above-mentioned findings. Secondly, students should practice using English idioms in both Vietnamese and English extensively to obtain accuracy in their speaking. Thirdly, teachers would have a thorough understanding concerning students' obstacles in using English idioms while speaking English and then they have more effective teaching methods to help their students study better in speaking subject.

5.3 Recommendations for further research

The main focus of this research was to investigate some challenges of English majored juniors in applying English idioms while speaking English. Accordingly, another study about how to overcome these difficulties or how to improve the speaking skill should be conducted to help students have a better speaking skill. Furthermore, the researchers just carried out the survey on juniors, so the further study should be implemented on seniors or even sophomores who are about to approach the process of speaking to gain more reliable and convincing results.

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