

Misinterpretation of the Non-Literal Use of Body Idioms by Kurdish EFL LearnersMukhalad Malik Yousif¹, Aras Abdalkarim Amin²

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Email: mukhalad.malik@sulicihan.edu.krd¹, aras.abdulkarim@sulicihan.edu.krd²**Abstract:**

Language may be used non-literally for multiple reasons and to achieve various purpose and this is a delicate nature which makes language so unique among other means of communications. The major concern of this paper is to thoroughly examine the improper interpretation of the non-literal use of body idioms particularizing the complications that Kurdish EFL learners may encounter while attempting at interpreting such idioms in certain given sentences. The paper focuses on revealing linguistic incompetence Kurdish EFL learners may encounter in this respect grouping such incompetencies according to the percentages of the improper occurrences in the interpretation of the body idioms, and, thus, demonstrating the significance of linguistic knowledge required for a better and an efficient language performance. To examine the possible inefficiency of the body idiom knowledge, a test compromising various body parts with non-literal sense in specific contexts is administered for the academic year 2023-2024. The results of the study reveal that Kurdish EFL learners lack knowledge concerning how body parts can be used nonliterally and this results into misinterpretation which can be grouped according to the influence of the linguistic factor resulting into such misinterpretation.

Key Words: Idioms, nonliteral use, body parts, misinterpretation, learners.**المخلص:**

تستخدم اللغة بشكل غير حرفي لأسباب متعددة ولتحقيق أغراض مختلفة، وهذه طبيعة حساسة تجعل اللغة فريدة من نوعها بين وسائل الاتصال الأخرى. يهتم البحث الحالي بصورة رئيسة بالتحقق من التفسير المغلوط للاستخدام غير الحرفي لأجزاء الجسد بشكل شامل مع تحديد الصعوبات التي قد يواجهها متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية الأكراد أثناء محاولتهم تفسير مثل هذه المصطلحات في جمل معينة. ويركز البحث على كشف النقاب عن الاخفاق اللغوي التي تعثر الطلبة الاكراد متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بهذا الصدد. يتم تحليل الاخفاق وفقاً لنسب حدوثها في تفسير اجزاء الجسد، وبالتالي، إظهار أهمية و مغزى المعرفة اللغوية المطلوبة لأداء لغوي أفضل وفعال. للتحقق من الاخفاق و عدم كفاءة المعرفة المحتملة جراء استخدام اجزاء الجسد بشكل غير حرفي ، اختبار يتضمن أجزاء مختلفة من الجسم ذات معنى غير حرفي في سياقات محددة للعام الدراسي 2023-2024. تكشف نتائج الدراسة أن الطلبة الاكراد متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يفتقرون إلى المعرفة بشأن كيفية استخدام أجزاء الجسم بشكل غير حرفي وهذا يؤدي إلى سوء التفسير الذي يمكن تصنيفه وفقاً لتأثير العامل اللغوي الذي يؤدي إلى مثل هذا الاخفاق المتمثل بالتفسير المغلوط لمصطلحات اجزاء الجسد

الكلمات المفتاحية: المصطلحات، الاستخدام الغير حرفي، أجزاء الجسد، التفسير المغلوط.

پوخته:

زمان دهنوانریت به ره هندی واتایی جوراوجور بۆ مه بهستی فرچهشن و دهستپیراگهستن به ئامانجی جیاواز به کار بهینریت. ئەم تاییهتمهندییهی زمان له نیو ههموو ئامرازهکانی په یوه ندی کردندا بۆینه و تاکانهی دهکات. تهوهری سه رهکی ئەم توێژینهوهیه، شیکردنهوهی وردی ئەم لیکدانهوه نادرستهیه که له به کارهینانی واتایی ئیدیۆمهکانی جهستهدا سه رههلهدهن، به تاییهت ئەم گرفت و ئالۆزییهی که فیرخووانی کورد له پرۆسهی فیربوونی زمانی ئینگلیزی وهک زمانیکی بیانیدا رووبهروویان دهبنهوه، کاتیک ههولێ تیگهستن و لیکدانهوهی ئەم جوره دهستهواژه ئیدیۆماتیکانه له چوارچێوهی رستهی دیاریکراودا دهدهن. ئەم لیکۆلینهوهیه تیشک دهخاته سه ره دهستپیشاندنی کهموکوریه زمانهوانیهکان که دووچاره فیرخووانی کورد دهبنهوه که زمانی ئینگلیزی وهک زمانی بیانی دهخوینن. به پۆلینکردنی ئەم ناکارامهییانه بهینی ریزهه سهدی به کارهینانه نادرستهکان له ههلسهنگاندنی ئیدیۆمهکانی په یوهست به جهستهدا، توێژینهوهکه بایهخی زانستی زمانهوانی دهخاتهروو، که پیشمهرجیکی سه رهکییه بۆ به رههمهینانی گوتاریکی زمانی دروستتر و کاریگهترتر. بۆ پشکینی ئەم کهموکوریهی په یوه ندیاردن به زانیاری تاییهت به ئیدیۆمهکانی جهسته، ههلسهنگاندنیک نهجامدراوه که تیدا به کارهینانی واتاییانهی نهنامه جیاواز مهکانی جهسته له دهقیکی دیاریکراودا بۆ سالی خویندنی ۲۰۲۳-۲۰۲۴ تاقیکراوتهوه. دهرهجمای توێژینهوهکه ئاشکرای دهکات که فیرخووانی کورد، له بواری فیربوونی زمانی ئینگلیزیدا، زانیاری پۆستیان نییه سه بارهت به چۆنییهتی به کارهینانی ئیدیۆمهکانی تاییهت به نهنامهکانی جهسته، که نه مهش رینگهخۆشکهره بۆ لیکدانهوهی ههله و نادرسته. ئەم لیکدانهوه ههلهانه دهکریت به رههمی کاریگهری هۆکارگهلی زمانهوانی بن که سه رچاوهی سه رهکی لیکدانهوهی نادرسته.

کلیله وشه: ئیدیۆم، به کارهینانی واتایی، نهنامه مهکانی جهسته، لیکدانهوهی ههله، فیرخووان.

1. Introduction

Language is more than using words, phrases or sentences in certain contexts; it is a human behaviour that needs all possible requirements to achieve various purposes, the most important of which is communication. This latter significant purpose may have various spoken or written forms which humans can utilize to express various ideas, achieve multiple goals, act and interact, do things, motivate and all other possible purposes which are intended by speakers when they use language in all communicative situations, contexts and talks.

It is beyond dispute that any language comprises a set of elements that are used to perform such communicative purposes including words, phrases and sentences of various syntactic and semantic structures. But this is not the whole picture, there is always more to be achieved by and through the use of those elements. Sometimes, for certain intended communicative purposes, it is possible to use a set of words or phrases combined in certain syntactic structures in a way that is entirely not related to what they denote, rather, to what they intend to connote so as to achieve a certain purpose. In other words, sometimes we use certain words or phrases in a specific syntactic pattern to give a meaning that is beyond their literal meaning which can be called the non-literal use of language or the figurative one. The purpose of such special use of language varies according to the intention of the speaker and according to the context whether spoken or written in which this special use of language is performed. At this point, many factors beyond the use of language interfere such as psychological, social, mental and other possible factors. But what is the purpose of such special use of language? This question needs digging deep and deep to arrive at an answer that is often not comprehensive because of the fact that humans' mentalities and psychologies are so complex and in a continuous state of change. Indeed, the non-literal use of language is an accumulation of long years of experiences, events and interactions reflecting cultural, traditional, and social norms.

The paper is an industrious attempt to reveal and explore how Kurdish learners approach interpreting the meanings of some selected body parts in various contexts. In fact, mastering idioms in general and body parts idioms in particular is so significant for learners seeking a better language performance. Thus, the paper would be a great opportunity to explore thoroughly how those learners approach this special non-literal use of language and, by doing so, there would be, hopefully, a precise linguistic identification of their misinterpretation so as to be taken into consideration for future recommendations and suggestions. The most important questions this paper raises can be listed as in the following:

1. What are the major linguistic factors behind misinterpreting body idioms of non-literal use?
2. Why would such linguistic factors resulting into misinterpretation occur?

2. The Scope of Idioms

To have a better understanding of the overlap of the individual-whole meanings of idioms, it is possible to consider a situation when, for instance, one says ‘I put my foot in it the other day at Linda’s house – I asked her if she was going to marry Simon’ what does it mean? If you do not know that “put your foot in it” means, say something accidentally which upsets or embarrasses someone’ ((McCarthy & O'Dell, 2002, p. 6). Indeed, the area of non-literal use of language through idioms would be a crucial and vital as far as having an efficient performance of language is concerned. Knowledge of idioms with non-literal use can be assumed to have a great influence on language process at the two main levels of competence and performance due to the fact that such knowledge is a prerequisite for learners who will be capable of comprehending and using idiomatic expressions, and, thus, they may have potentialities in making idiomatic choices similar to the way the native usually do and ultimately learners will approach fluent language performance in various communicative and contextual.

What is a prerequisite about such special use of language is to know precisely how this use can be achieved when using language. Simply, idioms are the bridge through which one can arrive at understanding the presupposed intended meaning of the non-literal use of language. In fact, idioms are the forms of communication through which they usually go beyond the literal meaning of words and phrases and thus understanding their meanings entails more than understanding what they literally mean taking into consideration certain linguistic factors which influence their intended and precise meanings (Stemmer and Whitaker, 2008). Hence, idioms, though look like any other piece of language as they are a group of words combined together within certain syntactic structures, are not explicit since it is so difficult to expect what they mean based on their meanings when they are used individually. In other words, the words which the idioms are composed of and which are to be interpreted literally have entirely different meanings when they are used alone (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2002).

In fact, it is quite plausible to state the fact that the non-literal use of idioms in different spoken or written communicative events or any other type of language interaction reflects the fact that they resemble “frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components” (Baker, 1992, p. 63). This definition necessarily entails that the most important interpretative characteristic of such idioms in

relation to language use is the whole meaning of the parts of the idiom together; the meaning of each part is related to the other and not the individual meanings of each part in isolation. Meryem (2009) states that it is not possible at all to rely on the meanings of the words that constitute the idiom separately as it would definitely results into a total improper interpretation of the idiom. In other words, the literal meaning of the words individually refer to a thing or imply an idea but when they are grouped into a specific linguistic structure to make idioms of non-literal use, the meaning will be entirely different as if they will turn into new words which are not related to their original literal meanings at all. For instance, in “X breaks something with Y, Y typically is an instrument” but when interpreting such interactive relation in language would be different from the literal idea or semantic interpretation as ‘X’ which has an agent role may turn into the patient role as when saying ‘you break my heart’ and here it is so important to state the fact such interpretation would absolutely go beyond the literal interpretation (Sporleder & Li, 2009).

3. Body Idioms

Since the major concern of this paper is to verify how Kurdish EFL learners interpret idioms of body parts used nonliterally and whether they encounter certain difficult linguistic aspects, an account of interpreting such type of idioms is essential so as to efficiently understand how and why those learners may misinterpret or encounter linguistic difficulties when dealing with the non-literal use of body parts being idiomatic expressions.

First of all, it is worth mentioning that body parts are one of the major sources humans usually exploit to express ideas, opinions, feelings and so on. In fact, they reflect the accumulated experiences humans have in their lives in a wide range of communication, interaction and behaviour.

The spread of the non-literal use of body parts idioms has been possibly caused by the fact that human beings give central importance to their bodies and are considered a bountiful source for enriching language with various interesting and influential use of such idioms (Škara, 2004). According to Manerko (2014), idiomatic expressions of the body parts used nonliterally are viewed as ampule duplicate structure. She mainly divides them into groups according to the non-literal sense they have as their distinctive features as in the following:

- 1) In the first group of body parts, *head*, *eye(s)*, *nose* and *mouth* are considered as carriers since they have this physical feature. According to this clarification, a simulated limit signified by the use of the preposition *in* highly assist in featuring a body part (eyes, nose, mouth) as a perceived object. For instance, the idiom ‘*have eyes in one’s head*’ means ‘to be attentive; to be able to carefully watch the surroundings and, thus, ‘eyes’ are used to express a major pivotal distinction.
- 2) The body parts in this special sense might be open or closed if the meaning of the verb is meant to indicate some limited intrinsic subpart of the apparent surface of the body part. This can be clarified by the following example: if someone says ‘*And then I’ll be good and not open my head again*’, then he/ she may uses the phrase ‘*open one’s head*’ to express the idea that someone talks a lot to the extent that he/she says everything in his mind. In fact, the paper is centered around such interpretation with the aim of exploring, revealing and identifying why it might be possible. In the second sentence *Everything I say is wrong this morning. I’m frightened to open my mouth* the expression to *open one’s mouth* means "to say something, the implication often being that

somebody speaks too readily or indiscreetly". The difference between *to open one's head* and *to open one's mouth* is associated with the positive in the first case and positive or negative evaluative connotation in the second phrase (Manerko, 2014). As can be seen from the examples mentioned earlier about body parts of no-literal use, they usually have this figurative sense of meaning only when they occur with certain other words so as to have the non-literal use. In other words, body parts accompany specific words so as to connote various meanings and ideas beyond their literal sense.

Additionally, it is also important to point out the fact that there are certain structures that shape the use of such idioms as, for instance, when someone says 'an eye for an eye', the meaning is entirely beyond the literal sense of using or describing the physical entity 'an eye' where the meaning might refer to "the idea that people should be punished according to the way in which they offended" (Dictionary, 1982). But why an eye is taken to deliver such meaning? Why not other parts? In fact, the choice of any body part with non-literal use is subject to a number of various attributes and factors that may go beyond language and must have had a great influence in shaping the non-literal use along with the specific structures they may have.

It might be satisfactory to state the fact that such special use of language has been the result of the physiological and physical body part; what is the function and the properties of this body part which, later, is associated with non-literal use. Another factor is the convention which it represents in certain cultural background where it is possible to annex the non-liter sense and, perhaps, some other factors have largely interfered in shaping the non-literal meaning of a body part like humans' imagination, experiences, universality and so on (Aitchison, 2012).

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Sample

In this study, 25 Kurdish university EFL students majoring English as a foreign language in the Department of English (4th stage)/ Cihan University/ Sulaimaniya/ for the academic year 2024-2025, voluntarily participated to be the sample of the study. The participants' ranged age was from 20-24 years old in both genders.

4.2. Research Design

To explore the performance of Kurdish EFL learners concerning the body parts idioms of non-literal use and to reveal and identify the linguistic sources leading to the misinterpretation of such idioms, the paper necessarily takes into consideration the quality and the quantity of the data collected. As a result, the paper has a mixed-method approach which is the most appropriate approach to arrive at precision and clarity in identifying the possible linguistic sources which influence the performance of the learners and result into misinterpretation. In fact, this mixed-method would permit the establishment of a solid ground for a deeper and thorough understanding of how the questions of the paper are verified in addition to the fact that through using this method, the findings would have a broad view to be considered and inferences resulting from the data analysis (Enosh, et. al, 2014). There is no doubt that the quality approach would reveal much about the nature of competence Kurdish EFL learners have when they interpret body idioms as it would,

manifest the interpretation of the body idioms, then clarify why they may possibly misinterpret them by revealing the linguistic inefficiencies they may have in this respect.

4.3. Data Collection & Analysis

The quantitative approach would point out to the most occurring misinterpretation to the least one so as to find out what is the most occurring misinterpretation. So as to have efficient qualitative and quantitative analyses, a test is carefully administered to elicit the answers of Kurdish EFL learners and this test would ultimately manifest and demonstrate the aims of the paper. The test comprises ten body idioms taken from McCarthy & O'Dell's (2008) and Gomez (2020) (appendix 1) along with their key answers (appendix 2), so as to compare them later to the interpretations of the learners. To this end, the test has reliability. The participants are asked to write down their answers within the allotted time which was 30 minutes. Hence, the data to be analysed represent the responses of the learners as far as how they interpret the body idioms grouping the responses in accordance with the possible misinterpretations which are, in turn, grouped according to the linguistic influence and attribute of the potential misinterpretation. The data analysis relies on providing percentages for each linguistic factor resulting into possible misinterpretation.

5. Results

The results of the study reveal precisely the percentages of the misinterpretations of the body idioms which represent ultimately how learners failed to interpret the exact meaning of the non-literal use of each body idiom giving in sentences.

Table 1: Types of Misinterpretation Based on Each Idiom

Idioms	Types of Errors							
	Failure due to literal interpretation	Percent age	Improper non-literal interpretation	Percent age	The influence of L1	Percent age	Lack of linguistic knowledge	Percent age
One	7	8.64	4	10.00	3	9.68	1	6.67
Two	8	9.88	4	10.00	5	16.13	1	6.67
Three	8	9.88	5	12.50	4	12.90	2	13.33
Four	9	11.11	3	7.50	4	12.90	2	13.33
Five	7	8.64	3	7.50	2	6.45	0	0.00
Six	10	12.35	4	10.00	3	9.68	2	13.33
Seven	6	7.41	3	7.50	2	6.45	2	13.33
Eight	9	11.11	4	10.00	4	12.90	1	6.67
Nine	7	8.64	7	17.50	2	6.45	2	13.33
Ten	10	12.35	3	7.50	2	6.45	2	13.33

As can be explicitly noticed, the results are distributed according the most frequent occurring misinterpretation of the given body idiom within the sentences. Each idiom is given its own percentage of misinterpretation according to the above-mentioned linguistic factors so as to have a clear, thorough and a profound discussion about such misinterpretation. The percentages are arranged from the most frequent to the least. This is beyond dispute very significant since the percentages would reveal where would the learners misinterpret more and why such misinterpretation occurs.

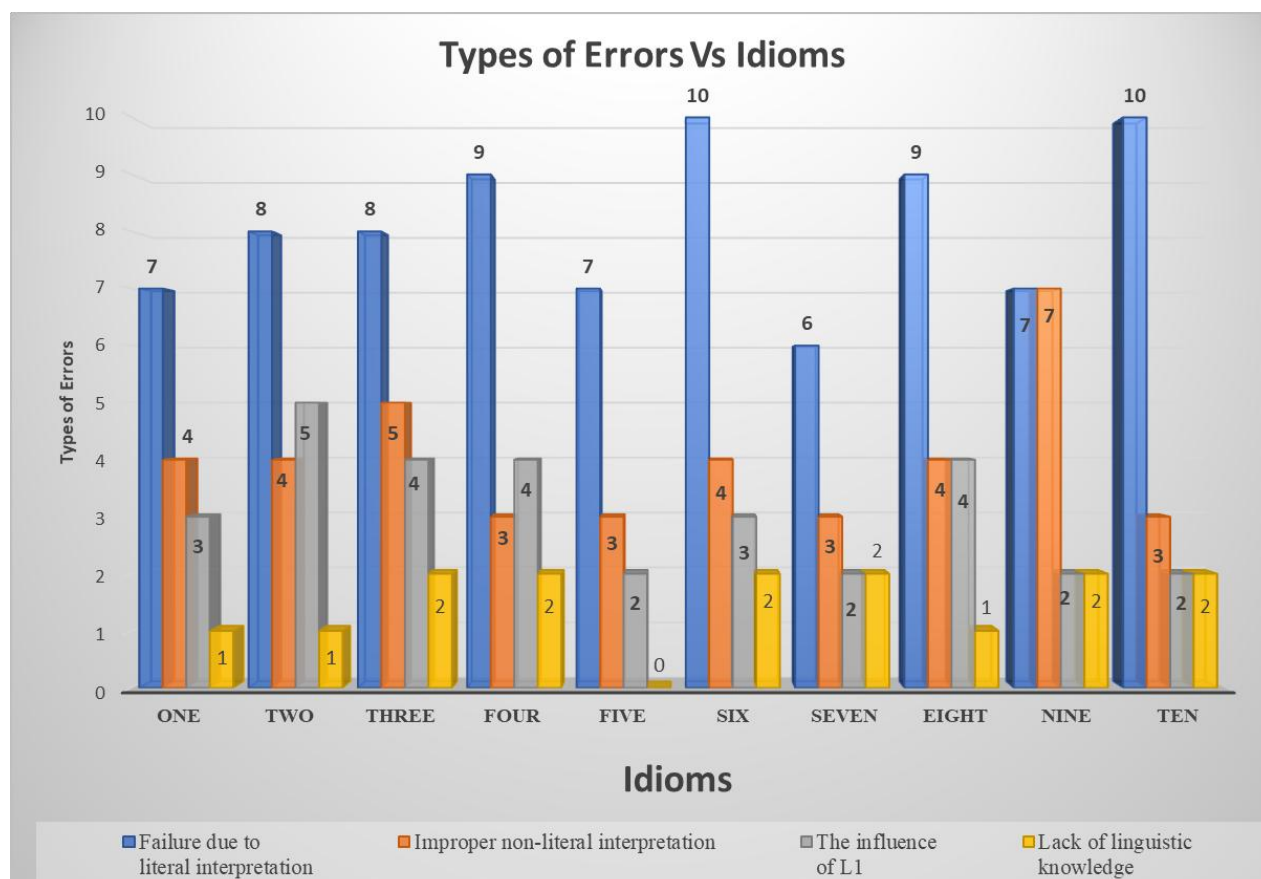


Figure 1: Bar Chart for Types of Misinterpretation of the Idioms

Table 1 and Figure 1 show the number of incorrect answers of the responders for each idiom across the factors, and it is clarified that most incorrect answers belong to the first factor (Failure due to literal interpretation), which is the highest 12.35% (10 incorrect answers) in idiom six, and the lowest 7.41% (6 incorrect answers) in idiom seven.

In contrast, the least incorrect answers belong to the fourth factor (Lack of linguistic knowledge), which is the highest 13.33% (only 2 incorrect answers) in idioms three, four, six, seven, nine, and ten. and the lowest (zero incorrect answer) in idiom five.

Such detailed percentages would ultimately direct the study to explore objectively the misinterpretation of the body idioms taking into consideration the linguistic attributes which lead to such failure. Finally, the results are to be generalized according to each linguistic factor so as to have a more comprehensive and efficient percentages for each misinterpretation as in the following table:

Table 2: Total Number of Misinterpretations within Factors

Types of Errors (Factors)	Number of Errors	Percentage
Failure due to literal interpretation	81	48.50
Improper non-literal interpretation	40	23.95
The influence of L1	31	18.56
Lack of linguistic knowledge	15	8.98
Total	167	100

The percentages of such errors by Kurdish EFL learners reflect their competence as far as the knowledge they have about idioms in general and the body idioms in particular.

6. Discussions

The results of the study, based on the responses of the learners, are used so as to reveal, explore, and discuss the occurring misinterpretations resulting into the errors made by learners. Such errors mainly reflect the improper competence, and, thus performance of the interpretation of non-literal idiomatic expressions.

It is worth mentioning that the discussion is based on the percentages of the committed errors for each given idiomatic expression pointing to the linguistic factor, source or attribute resulting into such failure. The frequency of the errors necessarily demands discussing the highest percentage of errors moving to the lowest providing some examples from the collected data.

6.1. Failure due to literal interpretation

This linguistic factor has the highest percentage of errors which was %48.50 reflecting the fact that learners highly misinterpret body idioms because they are linguistically incompetent in recognizing that body parts are sometimes used nonliterally in specific contexts. As such, learners heavily relied on the literal interpretation of the given body idioms; they are linguistically unaware of the non-literal use though the sentences containing the body idioms have some other words imply that there is more than the literal use of the body parts. This failure due to the literal interpretation might be attributed mainly to the fact that the semantic knowledge of the learners is incompetent which is, in turn, a possible result of not being exposed efficiently to such type of language use. In addition, it might be plausible to state that the learners while attempting at explaining the body idioms are highly engaged with what the words mean separately; they are linguistically unaware of the lexical relations between a word which might be a significant clue to understand what the body

idiom intends to convey within sentences. Such failure implies that knowledge of idioms requires additional attention to the non-literal use which is neglected by the learners. Ultimately, the entire meaning of such an explanation is improper and irrelevant to the intended meaning.

To illustrate this type of failure more efficiently, a number of responses can be analysed in accordance with the aforementioned discussion. The following are some of the incorrect responses by the participants due to this factor:

Idiom (1a) ‘maybe to push because of the problems she has’

Idiom (1b) ‘shoulder is to be strong’

The responses reflect a total literal interpretation where the learners interpret ‘shoulder’ in relation to the physical property as can be clearly seen when using the word ‘push’ in (a) or ‘to be strong’ in (b). In fact, the literal interpretation results into a completely different meaning to be conveyed where ‘blame the shoulder’ means ‘to take the responsibility of some action’. What may motivate such explanation is also the word ‘problems’ as the learners use it in the explanation.

Here it is so convincing to state the fact that ‘shoulder’ is used literally to imply an action because of a problem. The entire explanation is physically motivated relying on the physical connection between ‘shoulder’ and ‘problem’.

Idiom (2a) “it is the bill that have made by the company which contains the name of the foot”.

Idiom (2b) ‘he will step on the bill using his foot’

The responses show clearly that the learners explain the body idiom literally; he explains it by relying on the word ‘foot’ and, thus, the focus is on the physical aspect of ‘foot’ rather than relating it to the word ‘bill’. This literal interpretation results into a meaning which is not related to what the idiom intends to convey and, thus, the misinterpretation occurs due to the focus on the physical aspect of ‘foot’ as a part of the body associating it with the normal function as in (b) when the learners associate it with ‘step’.

Idiom, (3a), “keeps Jana of standing....”

Idiom (3b) “save Jana on her toes....”

The responses above show that the learners focused on the literal interpretation of “toes” which is semantically associated a part of the foot. In addition, the word ‘standing’ is highly misinterpreted because the result of ‘toes’ and ‘standing’ would imply a movement while it is not so at all. Thus, the explanation is directed to show the physical idea of standing rather than explaining the non-literal use of “to keep Jana on her toes” as staying active and focus.

Idiom (4) “Here this line talks about Gina’s eye that you can understand everything in Gina’s eye”.

This response deals with explaining the body idiom “has an eye for” which carries the non-literal meaning of being a good observer or to have the ability to notice in detail while the response shows that the learner focuses on the concept of ‘eye’ physically ignoring the idiomatic tendency together with the other accompanied words. Consequently, the learner explains the use of ‘eye’ literally as to look at someone’s eye to understand and not to relate the use of ‘eye’ with the proper meaning of being a good observer.

Idiom (5) “means hand in hand someone into another”.

This body idiom “hand in hand” is totally explained as having hands together (like shaking hands” when the learner uses the word ‘someone’ he is directly referring to the physical aspect of using a hand and that more than one person is involved.

Once again, the learner’s focus was on the literal use of hand as he/she refers to its literal sense and not to what is beyond; hand in hand does not mean the use of hands physically but the fact that two things happen at the same time.

Idiom (6a) ‘this mean a car hurt the arm and the leg’

Idiom (6b) ‘ the driver is tired.... he used his leg and arm in driving a long time’.

Again, the failure due to literal interpretation is so implicit within this idiom where learners associate ‘arm’ and ‘leg’ to an entirely physical activity. Here, the learners associate ‘car’ with body parts which are usually used in driving and, hence, the misinterpretation is based on the improper bilateral relation between ‘car’ or ‘driving’ on the one hand, and ‘arm’ and ‘leg’ on the other hand. This might lexically demonstrate that the failure of interpreting the body idioms is due to a fixed strategy followed by those learners who are entirely unaware of the non-literal use of such idioms as their mental lexicon is directed towards physical association between body parts and the possible physical activity each body part can naturally perform. Additionally, they are unaware of the significant relation between body parts and other words which are so decisive in giving the body part an entirely different meaning.

In the example above the word ‘cost’ is entirely ignored by the learners though it has a significant role in shaping the meaning of the body part as, together, they create an entirely a new meaning.

Idiom (7a) ‘chin up which means ...raise your head maybe’

Idiom (7b) ‘he gets pain in the chin so it will be better gradually’

The responses imply that the learners have similar strategic lexical approach as with the previous idioms; ‘chin’ is associated with physical movement as ‘raise your head’ in (a) or it is associated with a kind of a physical issue as ‘he gets pain’ in (b). Both examples of such responses reflect that the word ‘chin’ is being focused on as the centre of interpreting the idiom ignoring lexical relations which are a prerequisite for a proper interpretation. What can be also noticed in (b) is the possibility that there is an improper lexical connection as the learner connects ‘chin’ to ‘things will get better soon’ where he/she connects ‘chin’ to the words ‘better’ and ‘soon’ and this can be demonstrated when he/she uses the words ‘pain’ and ‘better gradually’.

Idiom (8a) ‘pulling teeth is to make your teeth making sounds to ask for help’

Idiom (8b) ‘Bobby teeth hurt’

Idiom (8c) ‘Booby in his room is pressing his teeth, he is cold’

Such responses demonstrate the literal use of ‘teeth’ reflecting an entire association between teeth and the physical activity they are usually associated with; ‘teeth make sounds to help’, ‘teeth hurt, ‘pressing his teeth’. Such failure is because of the improper competency concerned with the knowledge of non-literal use of language. ‘teeth’ is used in relation with what they usually

physically are associated with'. What is obvious out of the responses of the learners is the fact that the body part used in the sentence is associated with 'disease'.

In general, what can be explicitly noticed about such responses is that the misinterpretation occurs due to failure to recognize that body parts are used. Strikingly, the misinterpretation due to this factor can be reflected in two main directions as the data analysis of the responses demonstrate; firstly, learners misinterpret body idioms nonliterally due to improper association of the body part with the physical function it usually performs.

Secondly, learners also associate the body part with 'disease'. So, the misinterpretation due to this factor is the result of the improper association of the body idioms with physical function on the one hand and with disease on the other hand. This is certainly related to the first question of the study and, for the second question, it can be stated that learners lack knowledge about the use of body idioms nonliterally because they are, possibly, not exposed to such use of language in general and, thus, they are entirely unaware of the significance of the lexical relations which play an entirely a significant role in determining the meaning of the used body part.

6.2.Improper Non-literal Interpretation

This is the second linguistic factor resulting into misinterpretation of the body idioms. Within this factor, some of the learners recognize that the given body idioms are used nonliterally as they interpret the body idioms in relation to things other than their literal meanings. However, their interpretation does not match the exact meaning. Linguistically, they are aware that the body parts are used to mean things other than their physical performance; their literal interpretation, but the interpretation is improper as they give meanings which are by far different from those intended to convey. This might be to a large extent due to the improper lexical association they rely on when attempting at interpreting them; they associate the body idioms with the neighboring words giving an entirely new concepts ideas or thoughts. It can be states that within this factor they seemingly rely on the words occurring with the body parts but giving them interpretation based on the accompanying words and not to relate them to the body parts with which they occur as will be seen in the forthcoming examples. Other responses show that some learners rely on the given body part in isolation from other words within the sentences; they take the body part and attach to it various ideas which are unmatchable. In this case, it is possible to state the fact that learners may have an exposure to the nonliteral use of the body idioms but the exposure might be inefficient, awkward or incomprehensive. All of this discussion can be more elaborated considering the following examples:

Idiom (1a) 'shoulder the blame refers to lying'

Idiom (1b) 'it is related to the difficulty because there was a problem'

Such responses demonstrate that there is a nonliteral interpretation of the given idioms as manifested in the use of the words 'lying' and 'situation', yet, the interpretation is improper as it deviates from the intended ones. In fact, associating 'shoulder the blame' with 'lying' is improper at all and the linguistic factor behind such misinterpretation could be the lexical connection between 'blame' and 'lying' where both might be hypothetically connected expressing a relation like 'lying leads to blame'. Thus, this response implies that the learner relies on the association between 'blame' and 'lying' ignoring the used body part. In (1b), the same could be applied where the word

‘problem’ used in the sentence can be connected to ‘difficulty’ used by the learner and this sounds reasonable as a problem usually means difficulty but sounds unreasonable when it comes to the proper interpretation of the body idioms.

Idiom (4a) ‘an eye means charming’

Idiom (4b) ‘she is angry due to the way she looks’

Here, the responses demonstrate that the learners’ interpretation is centered around the body part itself; they interpreted the given body part nonliterally relying on the possible interpretation it may have or the usual association the body part is familiarized with. The use of the words ‘charming’ and ‘angry’ in (4, a and b) can be connected to ‘eye’ in a way or another reflecting the fact that the nonliteral idea of using ‘eye’ is associated with beauty which is a usual mental image reflection of beauty. In (4b) the learner centered his interpretation on the other possible nonliteral interpretations the word ‘eye’ is usually associated with as when expressing the idea of anger by the way someone looks. The inability to associate properly the body part with the words with which the body idiom can express the intended and exact meaning is the main reason for such failure. It can be also stated that the other possible nonliteral interpretations are also present when learners interpret such idioms but the nonliteral interpretation is improper due to connecting it to other unintended ones, which is, in turn, due to the language exposure experience they have concerning interpreting such idioms.

Idiom (8a) ‘pulling the teeth is to start the fight’

Idiom (8b) ‘pulling the teeth it is about the thinking deeply’

Again, the failure due to improper nonliteral interpretation springs from the fact that the learners centered their focus on the used body part associating it with ideas and other mental images which can be reflected by the use of such idiom. In (8a), the learner associates nonliterally ‘teeth’ with ‘fight’ as, sometimes, using teeth reflects anger and, therefore, the learner might have associated the mental image of using teeth with fight. In (8b), it is not really clear why the learner associates ‘teeth’ with ‘thinking’, but it might be plausible to express the idea that he/she may have associated ‘teeth’ with idea of thinking as, for instance, when people press or grind their teeth, they may show a state of anxiety and, therefore, the idea of thinking can be related to the use of such body part. In such responses, the learners miss the proper association between ‘pulling teeth’ and the intended meaning as they attempt to focus on other possible interpretation of the body part.

6.3. The Influence of L1

This factor also influenced the interpretation of the body idioms as implicitly reflected by the responses of some learners. The most important point to be mentioned about this factor is that learners interpreted the given body parts nonliterally based on the influence of how they are used in their L1 (the Kurdish language). This misinterpretation occurs because the learners are unaware of the nonliteral use of the body parts in the TL (English language), and, therefore, they possibly, resort to interpreting the body part according to the way it is usually associated with in the Kurdish language or the ideas it is usually associated with. Though, the body part in L1 has more than one nonliteral use, the learners focused on one nonliteral use which is common in the TL when they interpret the body idioms. In all cases, this L1 influence results into the misinterpretation as can be

considered in the following examples:

Idiom (4a) “an eye for means you are my eyes”

Idiom (4b) “this sentence mean I am at your service”

The responses of the learners demonstrate that they are largely influenced by the nonliteral interpretation of the body part based on the way the idiom is used in their L1. In Kurdish language the word ‘eye’ when used in many occasions reflects the idea of showing respect and readiness to help and serve others willingly as in "سەر هەردوو چاو"، "سەر چاو"، "بە چاوان"، "چاوی من"، "چاوەکەمی"، which can be centered around the idea of “with my eyes” reflecting serving, respect and friendliness. The possible linguistic factor of such misinterpretation is the fact that the learners are aware of the nonliteral use of the body parts but are unaware of how to interpret them properly in the TL. Thus, they may have resorted to translating the body part in their language then giving it a nonliteral meaning which matches the one used in their L1.

Idiom (9) ‘cold shoulder refers to taking the responsibility’

This shows that the learner considered the word ‘shoulder’ in isolation from ‘cold’ and, then, apparently, he/she based the interpretation on the way ‘shoulder’ used in Kurdish language where it refers to "شان بە شان"، "شانم داوێتە بەری"، meaning ‘taking the responsibility of doing something’ or doing something together. Such influence is certainly due to the fact of being totally unaware of what such body part means in English and, hence, it can be considered as an L1 negative transfer. Ultimately, not being exposed to idioms in general and body part in particular is the result behind such misinterpretation. What can be added to this factor is the influence of Kurdish language on the performance of English which can be explicitly detected in some of the responses of the learners.

6.4. Lack of Linguistic Knowledge

This is the last factor which, to a certain extent, results into the misinterpretation of the body idioms as the analysis of the learners’ responses demonstrate. Within this factor, some learners could not interpret the body idiom at all as they entirely lack prerequisite linguistic knowledge, in particular, lexical knowledge about some of the used body parts. This shows that there is an incompetency as far as lexical knowledge of what some words mean.

Consequently, if the meaning is vague for learners, they cannot interpret only nonliterally but also the literal interpretation would be also vague. The resulting misinterpretation can be observed by the repetition of the body part using fillers as can be considered in the following examples:

Idiom (2a) “footing the bill is a kind of ...it is footingsomehow not clear”

Idiom (2b) “footing is as you think.....it is about footing.....”

Idiom (3a) “toes are thingsperhaps toes are belong to something”

The responses refer to the lack of knowledge of ‘footing’ and ‘toes’ and, therefore, the interpretation is not efficient at all. What can be noticed is that due to the fact that they do not know about the meanings of such body parts, they repeated the words as they did not know the meanings. Repeating the words might also reflect that their lexical retrieval is useless in attempting at recognizing the meanings of the body idioms. Here, it is significant to state the lack of linguistic knowledge is doubled; firstly, they do not know about the meanings of the words and, secondly,

they have no idea about the nonliteral use.

Conclusion

Idioms are a group of words which usually convey a special meaning which is usually nonliteral when used in certain contexts with certain words. Body idioms are one type of the idiomatic expressions used nonliterally referring to specific meanings when occurring with certain words. The meanings which such idioms have are entirely different from their original meanings. In general, Kurdish EFL learners misinterpret body idioms due to certain linguistic factors which highly influence their interpretation. The factors, as the percentages of the results demonstrate, comprise the inability to recognize the nonliteral use of the body idioms and, thus, learners' interpretations are merely a literal interpretation. This might be linguistically justified due to possible insufficient exposure to idioms in general and body idioms in particular, and this factor is found to have the highest influence on the misinterpretation. Another factor resulting into the misinterpretation is inability to recognize the exact and intended meaning of the nonliteral use of the body part; some learners are aware of the nonliteral use of the body part but are unaware at all of the precise nonliteral use due to awkward or inefficient exposure or due to other possible improper nonliteral association of the used body part. To a lesser extent, the influence of L1 on the interpretation of the body idioms is also found to be one of the factors resulting into misinterpretation. Finally, in few cases, some learners demonstrate a total lack of lexical knowledge concerning some body parts which, in turn, results into misinterpretation. All in all, sufficient knowledge about the body idioms is a prerequisite if a better and a more efficient language performance is to be achieved.

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Appendix 1

Read the following sentences carefully and then explain the underlined:

1. Although others were also responsible for the problem, Sue decided to shoulder the blame.
2. Choose what you like from the menu- the company is footing the bill.
3. Having three sons under the age of five Keeps Jana on her toes.
4. Gina has an eye for detail so ask her to check the report.
5. Unemployment goes hand in hand with the social unrest.
6. This car may cost an arm and a leg.
7. Keep your chin up Things will get better soon.
8. Getting Bobby to clean his room is like pulling teeth.
9. James did not like Nathan, so when he met him, he gave him the cold shoulder.
10. Can you give me a hand with this box? It's too heavy to carry on my own.

Appendix 2

Key Answers

Shoulder the blame	take responsibility for something bad
Foot the bill	Paying
Keep someone on their toes	makes someone stay active and concentrated
Have an eye for	is good at noticing
Go hand in hand with	happens at the same time or as a result of
To cost an arm and a leg	to be very expensive
Keep your chin up	to try to stay positive when things seem negative
Like pulling teeth	to be very difficult
Cold shoulder	to ignore someone
Give someone a hand	to help someone