

Body Parts Idioms: A Cross-Cultural Significance

Instructor :Nawal Fadhil Abbas *
Assistant Instructor: Lina Laith Younis *

Language is not merely a combination of words that by collecting their total meaning the whole phrase significance can be guessed. Idioms are defined as fixed phrases which contain a number of words carrying a meaning that cannot be predicted and understood from the total sum of the meaning of the individual words. Idioms are very useful to the writers who want to catch and use what the natives actually say. Linguists try to classify idioms in terms of the types of components that they may carry, like color idioms, numbers idioms, animals idioms etc.

This paper tries to explore a syntactic reality of importance to Iraqi learners of English as a foreign language. Idiomatic expressions often pose problems for those learners. This paper realizes itself in terms of a fieldwork survey, which concentrates on the body parts idioms that contain the names of body organs with their significance in idiomatic language. Fifty body parts idioms were selected and first year students of the Department of English, the academic year 2006-2007, were exposed to this long list of idioms and were asked to use them in their composition writings. The results are apt to show that when those learners find counter parts/ equivalents in their own language and/or culture, they both recognize and syntactically operate these idiomatic expressions. Among the recommendations the researchers have come up with is to suggest some supplementary material that brings the students closer to the heart of the culture of English to be taught in conversation, composition, comprehension, etc.

Definition of Idioms:

Every language has some phrases or sentences that cannot be understood literally. Even if we know the meaning of all the words in a phrase and understand the grammar completely, the meaning of the phrase may still be confusing. Many clichés, proverbs, slang phrases, phrasal verbs and common sayings pose this kind of problem. Phrases or sentences of this type are usually said to be idiomatic'(Spears: 1991: xiv).

English conversation in human daily speech is full of expressions or phrases that are so characteristic of the spoken and written language .These phrases make the native speaker's language richly idiomatic and it will be a matter of puzzle to many users and students of English.

Until now, there is no complete guide to the large number of phrases that are peculiar to everyday conversation. Any idiom, whatever its types, is deceptive. Its real meaning is not what it appears to be on the surface. Idioms provide an opaque¹ connection between the surface sense of the words and their real individual meaning (Manser: 1992: xi).

Language is not merely a combination of words in the sense that by collecting their total meaning the significance of the whole phrase can be guessed. Idioms are also defined as fixed phrases, which contain a number of words carrying a meaning that cannot be predicted and understood from the meaning of its components. Idioms are very useful to the writers who want to catch and use what the natives actually say. For example, those who write cartoons, titles of books, articles, programmers on

*University of Baghdad - College of Education for Women - Department of English

¹ Means not transparent, hard to understand.

televisions and radios find them quite adequate. Those expressions can function as a single unit and their meaning cannot be guessed from their separate parts. What may prove these afore mentioned notions is this example: **"He washed his hand of the matter"**.

It means he refused to have anything more to do with the matter (Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, 1985). The meaning of the separate words is different from the total meaning of the expression. If we take the phrase 'pullover' which means 'stop' and the phrase 'allover' (Allen: 1972) which means 'finish', we shall see that they are quite different from the meaning of pull+over and all+over.

We can consider idioms as distinctive and colourful expression, which have no literal meaning. Linguistically speaking, idioms are defined as "multi-word lexemes, whose meaning is not a compositional function of the meaning of the component words" (Arnold: 1995).

Idioms can be regarded as semi-fixed collocation and have a metaphorical meaning which makes our writing very rich, colourful and interesting. They are commonly used in English textbooks, movies, songs, and in the titles of articles. That could be explained by the following example: "He and his ex-wife finally buried the hatchet after years of fighting", thus we can see that the phrase buried the hatchet² carries a metaphorical meaning rather than a literal one (ibid).

Those expressions (idioms) convey a distinct meaning without the necessary application of the grammatical rules, while the meaning that is carried by the individual words of those idioms does not provide us with any clue to guess the meaning of the whole idiom ([URL:http://www.btinternet.com](http://www.btinternet.com), 2003).

McCarthy M. & O'Dell elucidate some characteristics of idioms:

- There are many idioms that are connected with the parts of our body, like eyes, hands, head, etc...
- Idioms are used in telling stories, in commenting, and when voicing opinions.
- Idioms carry their own meaning and explanation.
- The main function of idioms is to paraphrase what is going on and what is being said, and
- Idioms are very useful and interesting in the texts of Horoscopes, because it carries more than one meaning, so the readers interpret them in different ways (McCarthy M. & O'Dell F.2003).

Idioms and their " Style Markers":

The Style marker is the sign by which we can distinguish the particular type of idiom, whether the idiom is informal, slang, formal, etc... For example, we have informal everyday expressions, which have no style marker; those types of idioms should not be used in writing. They are only used among friends. A slang, which is represented by a very informal style, takes place among young group of people. We have also markers that are represented by ill-formed phrases that are not accepted by the native speakers who like to embrace nonstandard marker. There is also a literary marker used in the writing of poetry. Some groups of idioms are treated as being old-fashioned, because they are not used in modern spoken English, yet they are still being used by speakers. The last type of marker is the one that indicates the country of the language (Manser: 1992: xv).

² To make peace with somebody after a disagreement.

Types of Idioms

Idioms are classified differently by different linguists: each one sees idioms from his point of view. Others may add new types of idioms in terms of different considerations. So the following number of types are defined and classified by Spears 1991:

Cliché: It is a type that indicates an expression, which is used too frequently. We should not use clichés in writing. It can also be defined as a term that is used with conversations and with another language field. Clichés may give the mood of the language user; they rarely have a distinct meaning. We can examine cliché and know whether it is idiomatic or not, e.g., 'a smash hit'³ can not be predictable from its separate words, the whole meaning of this idiom is completely different from its literal one.

Proverb: A proverb refers to a fixed saying that is often quoted. We can also consider it as a fixed phrase that has a metaphorical meaning, but at the same time it offers wise knowledge about human life. It may include old-fashioned words, which make it hard to be understood.

Arnold suggests that they are commonly used in both spoken and written English especially in the titles of books, movies, songs, and articles. They can provide a good starting or concluding point in writing essays in English, e.g. "Every storm cloud has a silver lining"⁴. We can consider this proverb as idiomatic, because it has a metaphorical meaning, which goes beyond its literal one (Arnold: 1995).

Slang: Slangs refer to the terms that are recognized as casual or playful. Idioms are yesterday's slang, and slang is tomorrow's idioms which have through use and over time become acceptable to be used in the informal language. Thus, we cannot use slang expressions in writing, e.g. "tip someone off"⁵, we cannot use this idiom in writing or in formal spoken English. This expression is idiomatic, because we cannot guess its total meaning from its separate parts or words.

Informal expressions: They refer to a very casual expressions that are suitable to be spoken and not written, (e.g. "lock horns"⁶). The suggested idiom can not be used in writing or in spoken English with someone who has a formal position. We can call it idiomatic because we cannot know the meaning of the whole idiom from the meaning of its individual words.

Formal expressions : They are literally in origin and usually reserved in writing. They are also found in conversations that taking place among people who share formal relationship(like student/teacher relationship) e.g. "pave the way"⁷ this idiom can be used in formal speech.

Folksy: It refers to expressions which are rural, and old-fashioned. They cannot be used in writing, e.g. "pushing up daisies"⁸. The suggested metaphoric idiom

³ That means sell out.

⁴ This means that every bad situation has something good.

⁵ That means to give someone a hint.

⁶ That means to get into an argument with someone.

⁷ That means to prepare for someone or something.

⁸ That means dead.

contains a rural word (daisies), which makes the term difficult to be understood.

Phrasal Verbs: A phrasal verb is a combination of a verb plus an adverb, like: 'make up', and 'put down'. We can know its possible idiomaticity by putting those examples under specific exam. For example we have the verb 'make up' that has the meaning of the verb 'invent', we can consider it as an idiomatic verb because the total meaning of 'make up' is different from the meaning of the verb 'make' and the adverb 'up'. This phrasal verb is high in the ladder of idiomaticity. (Palmer: 1981).

Partial Idioms : These are a type of idioms which appear when the meaning of one of the words has its usual meaning, while the other has a meaning that is peculiar or unusual to the particular sequence; for example the idiom red hair refers to hair, but not the red one in strict. We have another partial idiom like; make your bed⁹. This idiom can be used as a comic expression by comedians when is said in a play, the reaction will be bringing a set of carpenter's tools in order to produce a funny situation (ibid.).

Some linguists try to classify idioms in terms of colour, number, animals, etc. In the current paper the concentration is on human body parts idioms and their significance in language.

Features of Body Parts Idioms

Idiomatic expressions can be diagnosed by some properties that are extracted from its practical use in variable discourses. The features that are set below are extracted from an anonymous writer in an article labeled Anonymous. "Czech and English Idioms of Body Parts: A View from Cognitive Semantics, English Language":

- Idioms are conventional, i.e. they are well- established style.
- Idioms have paradigmatic fixity, i.e. The individual elements of idioms are unable to be substituted in the same place of its context.
- Idioms are transformationally anomalous, i.e. they are a unique group of words that cannot be created according to a specific pattern.
- From the formal viewpoint, idioms have combinatory abilities that are not identical with the combinatory abilities of a regular language.
- From the semantic point of view, idioms have no compositional function, i.e. the total meaning of an idiom cannot be predicted from the meaning of its individual parts.
- Idioms have compositeness, i.e. an idiom is a combination of two or more words which function as a unit of meaning and that exactly what is called semantic unity.
- Idioms have a special nature that makes them unique; they are richer than the literal language in terms of their structure and semantic features.
- Idioms cause a high degree of disinformation potential, i.e. the individual parts of idioms are polysemous¹⁰ and can be misunderstood by the listener.
- Idioms are institutionalized, i.e. they are conventionalized and cannot be changed.

⁹ That means restore your bed or rearrange your bed.

¹⁰ That means idioms may have multiple meanings, which are all related by extension.

Strategies of Interpreting Idioms

Idioms and their interpretation depend on a conceptual theory, which is developed by the cognitive linguists who are concerned with the fact that our thinking in idiom interpretation is metaphorical and that is reflected in its use. The explanation of idioms are rendered in terms of three cognitive strategies:

1. Conceptual metaphor,
2. General conventional knowledge, and
3. Metonymies ¹¹.

The general conventional knowledge refers to all the information that people have about the world around them, it is somehow unconscious, because people do not recall the general conventional knowledge when they are speaking, thus the process is usually done unconsciously.

Conceptual metaphors and metonymies are the cognitive devices which provide a link between the concrete knowledge of the world people hold in their memory and the figurative meaning of a given idiom. That means, we have an abstract area in our mind which needs to be brought into our everyday use.

From the cognitive viewpoint, idioms are considered as a product of our conceptual system. Idioms are just expressions that carry meaning which is different from the meaning of its individual parts, but it comes from our general knowledge of the world that is embodied in our conceptual system. That shows when a number of people share the same experience in life or the same culture. Those who share the same stories, traditions, and experiences can understand and interpret them easily rather than those who are not native speaker. That is because people of the same culture share the same images that are stored in their memory and that are gathered through their life. Some linguists like Tylia, Bragina, and Oparina suggest that culture is like a channel through which language is passed from one community to another and that what is called "cultural connotation"¹²(<http://www.bohemica.com>).

Idioms seem to be difficult lexical items to interpret, but if we look at the conceptual metaphors which underlie idioms, we will be much closer to understand them. It is indicated that conceptual thinking of understanding idioms is like a vehicle which connects the literal meaning of the words to their idiomatic meaning. Thus, with idioms that revolve round "head" native speakers are able to infer the idiomatic meaning because they subconsciously know what the word "head" means. So the process of interpreting idioms is conducted successfully when the three cognitive strategies, i.e. conventional knowledge, conceptual metaphors and metonymies are at work. Those can easily simplify most of the inferences about the meaning of idiomatic expressions.

Another factor that helps us to understand and infer idioms, is "context"¹³ in the sense that the surrounding co-text has a strong effect on what we think the word means. Context helps to interpret the meaning of idiomatic phrases. We cannot infer the meaning of an idiom unless we know the context by which we can comprehend the total meaning. Context is very important for the interpretation of literal language

¹¹ That means figure of speech.

¹² It is "the relation between the image that is contained in the inner form of a language sign and the connect of the cultural pattern."cited in Yule G."The Study of language"1985.CambridgeUniversity.London

¹³ It is a set of other words used in the same phrase or sentences {Yule.G.1985."The Study of Language" . Cambridge University, London} .

and more important to interpret idioms, which have figurative meaning. Palmer (1981: 43) argues that misinformation and confusion often result from our inability to infer the meanings of idioms, which are contextually misplaced.

Idioms have function in human discourse. Idioms focus on the message content including actions. Idioms are interactional including greetings and farewells so that they can secure the cohesion of discourse. The discorsal cohesion seems to rely semantically on idioms. People use idiomatic expressions in order to express their opinion, feeling, emotions, evaluation of events, agreement with or rejection of, other people's statements. Those expressions also show whether this message can be understood, and predicted or not. Although idioms behave as semantic units, their syntactic behavior poses problems. Thus, the sentence "he kick the bucketed yesterday" sounds awkward. Thus the only correct form of past tense is "kicked the bucket", so we cannot consider an idiom like a single word but they are sequence of grammatical words (URL: <http://www.bohemica.com>).

Syntactic Restrictions

There are some syntactic restrictions concerning the idioms for example, we cannot change the number of the nouns of idioms that is why we cannot say, "spill the bean" instead of "spill the beans"¹⁴. In addition, we cannot give the comparative and superlative form of the adjectives in idioms. Thus, we cannot say "redder herring" instead of "red herring". We have some syntactic restrictions of idioms we cannot passives some idioms like "the bucket was kicked". So idioms have some restriction in their use we rather use them as they are with stability and fixity (Palmer, 1981:43).

Idioms and Culture

An idiom is generally a colloquial metaphor. It is a term that requires some foundational knowledge, information, or experience, to use only within a culture where the insider parties must have common reference. Idioms are not considered a part of the language, but rather a part of the culture. As cultures are typically localized, idioms are often not useful outside of their local physical context. Thus, the insiders of a community cannot decode idioms that are related to different linguistic community. But in spite of the gap that exists between cultures, some idioms can be more universally used than others, and can be easily translated. (Wikipedia, 2009: "idioms"). This fact of the cultural influence on guessing idioms. Some linguists claim that idioms that are concerned with the human body parts can be guessed more easily because human beings regardless of their cultures are familiar with the functions of their body parts.

The Tested Data:

In order to prove the above questionable area a test has been applied to the first year students in the Department of English/ College of Education for Women. First year students are chosen because they still have little experience in English and if they are exposed to an idiom, they will immediately think of the meaning of its individual components. At the same time, they have some good experience in Arabic idioms since it is their native language. In this case, the role of cultural differences will be clear and their ability to guess and be familiar with the body parts idioms can be tested. Thus, the students are exposed to a collected data of fifty body parts idioms. Students are then asked to guess the meaning of the following idioms:

¹⁴ That means reveal the secrete, like the meaning of the idiom "let the cat out of the bag".

1. Get out of someone's face.
2. Swelled head.
3. At the top of one's throat.
4. Bad blood.
5. Blue blood.
6. A bundle of nerves.
7. New blood.
8. Too rich for someone's blood.
9. Make someone's blood boil.
10. Make no bones about something.
11. Save one's breath.
12. Straight from the shoulder.
13. Jump out of one's skin.
14. Soaked to the skin.
15. Not have the stomach for something.
16. Sweat blood.
17. All hands on deck.
18. At hand.
19. Burn one's fingers.
20. Cost an arm and leg.
21. Green thumb.
22. Hand over fist.
23. Have clean hands.
24. Have one's finger in too pies.
25. Heavy hand of something.
26. In the hand of someone.
27. Long arm of law.
28. Receive someone with open arms.
29. Sit on someone/something hand.
30. Throw up one's hand.
31. Use some elbow grease.
32. Wash one's hand of something.
33. With hat in hand.
34. Work one's finger to the bone.
35. Have a big heart.
36. Have a soft spot in one's heart for someone or something.
37. Open one's heart to someone.
38. All ears.
39. Apple of someone's eyes.
40. Can't see beyond the end of one's nose.
41. Count noses.
42. Ears are burning.
43. Get a black eye.
44. Have a nose for something.
45. In the twinkling of an eye.
46. Keep one's eye open.
47. Lead someone around by the nose.
48. Play it by ear.
49. Turn a deaf ear to something.
50. Walls have ears.

Students are asked to use the above idioms throughout their composition writings. This test results show the fact that students are able to know and use a number of idioms that have corresponding Iraqi idioms. The test reveals how that the students' familiarity with their body parts is not sufficient to know the intended meaning. Shared similarities between cultures is of great help in improving the students' ability to guess and use idioms in their writings. The results will be clearly shown in the following analysis of the tested data below.

Analysis of the Students' Use of the Tested Data

Idiom 1

Example	Meaning	Idiom
I wish that my friend would <i>get out of my face</i>	To go away or leave someone.	Get out of someone's face.
This idiom can easily be guessed by the students because they already experience a similar corresponding one in their colloquial Iraqi language: <i>وخر من وجهي</i>		

Idiom 2:

Example	Meaning	Idiom
My sister has had a <i>swelled head</i> since she got her new job.	When someone has the feeling of being more important than he really is.	Swelled head.
The students cannot guess this idiom because they have no previous experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 3:

Example	Meaning	Idiom
I screamed <i>at the top of my throat</i> to get the man's attention.	With a very loud voice.	At the top of one's throat.
The students can easily guess this idiom because they have already experienced a similar corresponding one in their culture. Throat is very close to the voice in Iraqi Arabic as in its correspondent one: <i>باعلى صوتي او حنجرتي</i>		

Idiom 4

Example	Meaning	Idiom
There has always been a lot of <i>bad blood</i> between the two supervisors.	Anger or a bad relationship due to past problems with someone.	Bad blood.

The students can partially guess this idiom because they have experienced an almost similar corresponding one in their culture: *دمه متعكر*

Idiom 5

Example	Meaning	Idiom
Many <i>blue bloods</i> attended the opening of the new opera series.	the blood (family line) of a noble or aristocratic family.	Blue blood.
The students cannot guess the meaning of this idiom because they have no previous experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 6:

Example	Meaning	Idiom
I was <i>a bundle of nerves</i> after I finished studying for my exams.	someone who is very nervous and anxious.	A bundle of nerves.
The students are able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced an exactly similar corresponding one in their culture: <i>كتلة اعصاب</i>		

Idiom 7:

Example	Meaning	Idiom
We have lots of <i>new blood</i> in our club recently.	New members brought into a group, new workers in a company.	New blood.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture. They usually say new faces instead.		

Idiom 8:

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The holiday in the very expensive resort <i>was too rich for our blood</i> so we didn't go.	Be too expensive for someone.	Too rich for someone's blood.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no experience or a similar corresponding idiom in their culture.		

Idiom 9

Example	Meaning	Idiom
It <i>makes my blood boil</i> to think about what the supervisor did to one of the employees.	make someone very angry.	Make someone's blood boil.
The students are able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced an exactly similar corresponding one in their culture: <i>خله دمي يفور</i>		

Idiom 10

Example	Meaning	Idiom
<i>Make no bones about it</i> , I am not going to lend my friend any more money	Make no mistake about something, do not doubt something.	Make no bones about something.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 11

Example	Meaning	Idiom
You can save your breath and not bother talking to him. He never listens to anyone.	Keep silent because talking will not do any good.	Save one's breath.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 12

Example	Meaning	Idiom
He was speaking <i>straight from the shoulder</i> when he told the workers about the possible factory closing.	An open and honest way of speaking.	Straight from the shoulder.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 13

Example	Meaning	Idiom
I almost <i>jumped out of my skin</i> when I saw my boyfriend at the movie theater with another girl.	Be badly frightened, be very surprised.	Jump out of one's skin.

The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture. It has another indication in the Iraqi culture; it refers to someone who changes his real origin.

Idiom 14

Example	Meaning	Idiom
I was <i>soaked to the skin</i> after walking in the rain for only a few minutes.	One's clothing is wet right through to the skin.	Soaked to the skin.
The students are partially able to guess this idiom because they have experienced the literal meaning of this idiom though they have no similar corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 15

Example	Meaning	Idiom
I do <i>not have the stomach</i> to talk with my friend about his work and financial problems.	Have no desire to do something because you think that it is unpleasant or wrong.	Not have the stomach for something.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no previous experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture. They usually say that they have no mood to do something.		

Idiom 16:

Example	Meaning	Idiom
I began to <i>sweat blood</i> when I heard that some of our staff would be transferred to another city.	be very anxious and tense	Sweat blood.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no previous experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 17

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The captain called for <i>all hands on deck</i> as the storm became stronger and stronger.	everyone must work together because they have a lot of work to do.	All hands on deck.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no previous experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture. The deck indicates the whole situation of working on the board of a ship, hence the students difficulty in this respect.		

Idiom 18

Example	Meaning	Idiom
There were no tools <i>at hand</i> so I was unable to fix the stove.	Easy to reach, nearby.	At hand.
The students are able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced a similar corresponding one in their culture: <i>جووه ايدي</i>		

Idiom 19

Example	Meaning	Idiom
My father <i>burned his fingers</i> in the stock market and he does not want to invest money there again.	To suffer from a bad experience.	Burn one's finger.
The students are able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced a similar corresponding one in their culture: <i>حرکت اصابعي</i>		

Idiom 20

Example	Meaning	Idiom
My father paid <i>an arm and a leg</i> for his car and he loves driving it.	To cost much money.	Cost an arm and leg.
The students are able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced a similar corresponding one in their culture: <i>أخذت ايدي ورجلي</i>		

Idiom 21

Example	Meaning	Idiom
My sister's husband has <i>a green thumb</i> and has a very beautiful garden.	A talent for gardening, the ability to make things grow.	Green thumb.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no previous experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture. In Iraqi Arabic language, the green colour commonly refers to something that is not ripe.		

Idiom 22

Example	Meaning	Idiom
We have been making money <i>hand over fist</i> in our new store.	Fast and in large amounts.	Hand over fist.

The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no previous experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture.

Idiom 23

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The man claims to <i>have clean hands</i> in the affair regarding the stolen goods.	To be guiltless.	Have clean hands.
The students are able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced an exactly similar corresponding one in their culture: <i>ايده نظيفة</i>		

Idiom 24

Example	Meaning	Idiom
Our supervisor <i>has her finger in too many pies</i> and she is not able to do her job well at all.	to be involved in too many things (so you cannot do any of them well).	Have one's finger in too many pies.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no experience or a similar corresponding one in their culture. They usually say <i>ضيعة المشيتين</i>		

Idiom 25

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The <i>heavy hand</i> of the law is usually able to find those who commit a crime.	the great power that someone or something has over people.	Heavy hand of something.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because although they have a similar corresponding one in their culture, yet it has a different meaning. This idiom usually refers to people who have no control on things they touch they usually break things they hold: <i>ايده تكيله</i>		

Idiom 26

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The court decision is <i>now in the hands</i> of the jury.	A person or organization has control over something and decides what will happen.	In the hand of someone.
The students are able to guess this idiom because they have an exactly similar corresponding one in their culture: <i>الموضوع صار بيدك</i>		

Idiom 27

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The criminal was sought by <i>the long arm of the law</i> until he was finally captured.	The police and laws are so powerful that no matter where you are you will be found and punished.	Long arm of law.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no similar corresponding one in their culture. The long arm in their culture refers to the one who has the habit of stealing things, hence the difficulty.		

Idiom 28

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The employees received their new boss <i>with open arms</i> .	to greet someone eagerly.	Receive someone with open arms.
The students are able to guess this idiom because they have an exactly similar corresponding one in their culture: <i>على الرحب والسعة</i>		

Idiom 29

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The members of the audience <i>sat on their hands</i> after the performance by the singer.	An audience refuses to applaud.	Sit on its/their hand.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no similar corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 30

Example	Meaning	Idiom
I <i>threw up my hands</i> in frustration when I was unable to complete the telephone call.	To give up trying, to admit that one cannot succeed.	Throw up one's hand.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no similar corresponding the in their culture.		

Idiom 31

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The dirty kitchen could <i>use some elbow grease</i> to get it clean again.	To use some effort.	Use some elbow grease.

The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no similar corresponding one in their culture.

Idiom 32

Example	Meaning	Idiom
I decided to <i>wash my hands</i> of the problem with the new secretary and let someone else deal with it.	To withdraw from or refuse to be responsible for something, to stop one's association with someone.	Wash one's hand of something.
The students are able to guess this idiom because they have an exactly similar corresponding one in their culture: <i>غسلت ايدي منه</i>		

Idiom 33

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The boy went to his father <i>with hat in hand</i> to ask to borrow some money.	With humility.	With hat in hand.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no similar corresponding one in their culture. This idiom based on the habit of old English people who used to hold their hat showing respect. In Iraqi culture there are no such habit.		

Idiom 34

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The woman <i>worked her fingers to the bone</i> in order to make enough money to feed her children.	To work very hard.	Work one's finger to the bone.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no similar corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 35

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The man <i>has a big heart</i> and he will always try to help other people.	To be very kind/generous/helpful.	Have a big heart.
The students are easily able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced a similar corresponding one in their culture. <i>قلبه جبير</i>		

Idiom 36

Example	Meaning	Idiom
My grandfather always <i>had a soft spot in his heart</i> for his youngest daughter.	to be fond of someone or something.	Have a soft spot in one's heart for someone or something.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no similar corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 37

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The woman suddenly <i>opened her heart to me</i> when I began talking to her on the bus.	to talk about one's feelings honestly, to confide in someone.	Open one's heart to someone.
The students are easily able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced an exactly similar corresponding one in their culture: <i>افتحلي قلبك</i>		

Idiom 38

Example	Meaning	Idiom
My sister was <i>all ears</i> last night when I talked about starting a home business.	To be eager to hear something, to be very attentive.	All ears.
The students were easily able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced an exactly similar corresponding one in their culture: <i>كلنا اذان صاغية</i>		

Idiom 39

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The young girl is <i>the apple of her father's eye</i> .	Someone's favorite person or thing.	Apple of someone's eyes.
The students are easily able to guess this idiom because they don't have exactly similar corresponding one in their culture, but they usually use a very nearly close one: <i>قرة عيني بوبو عيني</i>		

Idiom 40

Example	Meaning	Idiom
My friend <i>cannot see beyond the end of his nose</i> and he has no idea about what is happening around him.	to be able to see beyond what concerns one at the present time only	Can't see beyond the end of one's nose.

The students are partially able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced an nearly corresponding one in their culture. But they use eye instead: **ميكدر يشوف ابعده من نظر عينه**

Idiom 41

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The teacher stopped to <i>count noses</i> before the students got on the bus.	To count people.	Count noses.
The students are partially able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced nearly corresponding one in their culture. But they use heads instead: يعد الروس		

Idiom 42

Example	Meaning	Idiom
My <i>ears are burning</i> and I am sure that someone is talking about me.	Someone is talking about you when you are not there.	Ears are burning.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no corresponding one in their culture. Nevertheless, they usually say رجلي تحكي instead.		

Idiom 43

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The little boy <i>got a black eye</i> when he bumped into the door	Get a bruise near one's eye from being hit, to have one's reputation harmed.	Get a black eye.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 44

Example	Meaning	Idiom
My friend <i>has a nose for</i> finding cheap items at weekend flea markets.	to have the talent for finding something.	Have a nose for something.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 45

Example	Meaning	Idiom
I went into the store and <i>in the twinkling of an eye</i> , I lost my money.	Very quickly.	In the twinkling of an eye.

The students are easily able to guess this idiom because they have experienced a similar corresponding one in their culture: بلمح البصر

Idiom 46

Example	Meaning	Idiom
I always try to keep my eyes open when I am walking downtown at night.	To remain alert and watchful, to notice what is happening around you.	Keep one's eye open.
The students are easily able to guess this idiom because they have experienced a similar corresponding one in their culture: خلي عينك مفتحه		

Idiom 47

Example	Meaning	Idiom
My sister has been <i>leading her husband around by the nose</i> since they got married.	To make someone do what you want.	Lead someone around by the nose.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no similar corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 48

Example	Meaning	Idiom
I do not know what time I will be back on Sunday so we should <i>play it by ear</i> to find a good time to meet.	to decide what to do in a certain situation when you encounter the situation, to not plan in advance for something.	Play it by ear.
The students are unable to guess this idiom because they have no similar corresponding one in their culture.		

Idiom 49

Example	Meaning	Idiom
The supervisor <i>turned a deaf ear</i> to our complaints about the heat.	To pretend not to hear someone, to not pay attention to someone.	Turn a deaf ear to something.
The students are easily able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced a similar correspondening one in their culture: انطه اذن الطرشه		

Idiom 50

Example	Meaning	Idiom
<i>Walls have ears</i> and you should think carefully about what you say when you	Someone may hear us.	Walls have ears.

are talking about your co-workers		
The students are easily able to guess this idiom because they have already experienced a similar corresponding one in their culture: الحيطان الهه اذان		

To the reader's surprise the analysis shows that about (27) idioms, which constitute about 54% of the total no. of the idioms used in this study, are difficult for students to guess and use correctly in their writing. While the other 23 idioms, which constitute about 46%, are somehow easy to apply in writing simply because such idioms have counterparts in Arabic. Some students have also committed slight mistakes in using some of the idioms. In other words, some students are partially able to guess some idioms because they have already experienced almost corresponding ones in their culture but sometimes, students tend to replace some words by others, like in "count noses", in English, instead of "count heads" in Arabic; "can't see beyond the end of one's nose", in English, instead of "can't see beyond the end of one's eye", in Arabic. Therefore, unless students become familiar with the culture of English, they cannot master the idioms since they form, as we have mentioned earlier in this paper, the heart of the language/ culture.

To sum up, we can say that idioms are distinctive and colorful expressions which have no literal meaning. Linguistically speaking, idioms are defined as "multi-word lexemes", whose meaning is not a compositional function of the meaning of the component words. In spite of all the research done in this area, there is no complete guide to the large number of phrases that are peculiar to everyday conversation. Any idiom, whatever type it is, is perplexing. Its real meaning is not what it appears to be on the surface. Idioms provide an opaque connection between the surface sense of the words and their real individual meaning and it is this feature what makes an idiom difficult to understand and it is this feature what has made about half of the sample of this study fail to guess and use the right position to give the right meaning. Therefore, the researchers recommend the following:

1. proposing to teach this topic as a supplementary material to any subject in the first year such as conversation, composition, comprehension, literature etc. to bridge (to some extent) the gap between our culture and the culture of the English language.
2. encouraging students to have an access into the internet to get material, to study, to search, to exchange information, to build a mentality within this vast sphere of knowledge and this, of course, should be done under the supervision and control of the teacher.

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مصطلحات اجزاء الجسم بوصفها مؤشراً على تداخل الثقافات

المدرس نوال فاضل عباس*
المدرس المساعد لينا ليث يونس*
* قسم اللغة الانكليزية - كلية التربية للبنات - جامعة بغداد

الخلاصة:

اللغة هي ليست مجرد تجميع لكلمات يمكن من خلالها ان نخمن المعنى. المصطلحات تعرف بصفة كونها عبارات ثابتة تحوي على كلمات تحمل معنى لا يمكن ان يعرف او يتوقع بجمع معنى الكلمات المنفردة. المصطلحات تفيد كثيراً الكتاب اللذين يريدون استخدام ما يستخدمه متكلموا اللغة الاصيلين. يحاول اللغويون ان يصنفوا المصطلحات الى انواع تختص باللون والعدد والحيوان... الخ. تعنى هذه المصطلحات التي تتصل بأجزاء الجسم . وقد اختير ٥٠ مصطلحاً متصلاً بأجزاء الجسم وبعد عرضها على طلاب الصف الاول في قسم اللغة الانكليزية/كلية التربية للبنات طلب منهم استخدامها في كتاباتهم الانشائية وكانت النتيجة ان ما يقرب نصف هذا العدد كان غير واضح للطلاب بسبب اختلاف الثقافة وبسبب كون الطلاب ليس لديهم خبرة سابقة عنها. من بين التوصيات التي خرجت بها الباحثان هو تقديم مادة تكميلية للمواد الدراسية التي تدرس في القسم لجذب الطلاب اكثر لروحية ثقافة اللغة من خلال تدريس المصطلحات في مادة , الاستيعاب وغيرها.