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FACULTY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION**

GRADUATION PAPER

**IDIOM LEARNING STRATEGIES OF ENGLISH MAJOR
STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

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ABSTRACT

The study is conducted in light of increasing emphasis on the practice of idiom learning and teaching worldwide. It aims to explore idiom learning strategies adopted by second-year students at the Faculty of English Language Teachers Education, the difference in strategy types between those with high and low idiomatic competence and the factors affecting their strategy choice. The study involves 94 second-year mainstream students majoring in English, with the adoption of multiple research methods ranging from a written likert-typed idiom learning strategy questionnaire, an idiom test and semi-structured interviews.

Results from the study show that the participants have made use of various strategies to learn idioms, with using monolingual dictionary, asking teachers and guessing from the context being the most frequently used strategies to discover the meaning of new idioms. When consolidating knowledge about idioms, participants tend to endorse strategies in meta-cognitive and memory groups. Meanwhile, there has been a marked distinction in strategy use between learners who obtain low and high scores in the idiom test. While the former gravitate towards such strategies as guessing meaning based on context, using mono-lingual dictionary, interacting with friends, associating with personal experience, grouping, taking idiom test, and continuing to study over time, the latter prefer checking cognates, using bilingual dictionary, written repetition and flashcards. Moreover, learners' choice of idiom learning strategies are reported to be closely relevant to their belief, learning experience, style, motivation, their affective states and daily habit. These findings are expected to help teachers to provide students with more useful strategy recommendation and make more informed choice of idiom teaching strategies which well correlate with students' learning approaches.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
ABSTRACT	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
LIST OF TABLES	5
LIST OF FIGURES	6
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	6
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 Statement of the problem and rationale for the study	7
1.2 The aims of the study	9
1.3 Scope of the study	9
1.4 Significance	9
1.5 Outline of the research paper	10
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1 Idiom	12
2.2 Idioms as a part of English vocabulary	13
2.3 Vocabulary learning strategies	13
2.3.1 Language learning strategies	13
2.3.2 Inter-relationship between language and vocabulary learning strategies	15
2.3.3 Vocabulary learning strategies	16
2.4 Factors affecting the choice of idiom vocabulary learning strategies	21
2.5 Related studies	24
2.5.1 Studies around the world	24
2.5.2 Studies in Vietnam	27
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	28
3.1 Participants	29
3.1.1 Questionnaire respondents and test-takers	29
3.1.2 Interviewees	30
3.2 Data collection instruments	30
3.2.1 Questionnaire	30
3.2.2 The use of interview	32

<u>3.2.3 Idiom test</u>	33
<u>3.3 Procedures of data collection and analysis</u>	33
<u>3.3.1 Phase 1 – collecting data</u>	33
<u>Phase 2: Data analysis past tense</u>	34
<u>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</u>	35
<u>4.1. Results</u>	35
<u>4.1.1 Research question 1: What are the idiom learning strategies adopted by second-year mainstream students in the Faculty of English language Teachers education?</u>	35
<u>4.1.2 Research question 2: What are the differences in learning strategies between learners with high and low idiomatic competence?</u>	43
<u>4.1.3 Research question 3: What are the factors affecting FELTE’s second-year students’ choice of idiom learning strategies</u>	50
<u>4.2 Discussion</u>	57
<u>4.2.1 Strategies used by FELTE’s second-year students to acquire idioms</u>	57
<u>4.2.2 The difference in learning strategies between those with low and high idiomatic competence</u>	62
<u>4.2.3 Factors affecting learners’ choice of idiom learning strategies</u>	64
<u>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION</u>	68
<u>5.1 Summary of findings</u>	68
<u>5.2 Pedagogical implications</u>	70
<u>5.3 Limitations</u>	71
<u>5.4 Suggestions for further studies</u>	73
<u>REFERENCE</u>	75
<u>APPENDICES</u>	78

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 2.3.3 a. Nation's taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies	17
Table 2.3.3 b. Classification of vocabulary learning strategies by Gu and Johnson (1996)	19
Table 3.2.1 The range of frequency score for each strategy group	32
Table 4.1.1 a. Frequency of using different strategy groups	37
Table 4.1.1 b. The frequency of using determination strategies among students	38
Table 4.1.1 c. The frequency of using social strategies among students	39
Table 4.1.1 d. The frequency of using social strategies among students	40
Table 4.1.1 e. The frequency of using memory strategies among students	41
Table 4.1.1 f. The frequency of using cognitive strategies among students	42
Table 4.1.1 g. The frequency of using meta-cognitive strategies among students	43
Table 4.1.2 a. The frequency of using determination strategies among high - and low -achievers	45
Table 4.1.2 b. The frequency of using social strategies among high - and low – achievers	46
Table 4.1.2 c. The frequency of using social strategies among high - and low – achievers	47
Table 4.1.2 d. The frequency of using memory strategies among high - and low – achievers	47
Table 4.1.2 e. The frequency of using cognitive strategies	49

among high - and low – achievers	
Table 4.1.2 f. The frequency of using meta-cognitive strategies among high - and low – achievers	49

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 2.4. Ellis (1994)'s model of second language acquisition	22

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FELTE: Faculty of English Language Teacher Education

IELTS: International English Language Testing System

L1: First language

L2: Second language

ULIS: University of Languages and International Studies

VSTEP: Vietnamese standardized test of English proficiency

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter is intended to provide explanation for the choice of the research topic followed by the introduction of research aims and objectives. Meanwhile, the scope of study and its significance are to be clarified within the chapter. The last part presents the overall structure of the study including the sequence of chapters and their content summary.

1.1 Statement of the problem and rationale for the study

Most English speakers use 20 million idioms throughout their lifetime (Polio, Barlow, Fine and Polio, 1977), and at a rough estimation, four idiomatic expressions are uttered in every minute of speech (Vasiljevic, 2011, p.136). These figures suggest to us a huge part of idioms constitute in daily language. As a result, English learners are well advised to equip themselves with knowledge about idioms to become proficient in the target language. This idea has been reinforced by Burke (1998) who thought that “there is absolutely no way a nonnative speaker of English could fully understand an American movie, TV show, news broadcast, or even a typical conversation without help because our language is loaded with nonstandard English, i.e., slang and idioms” (p. 1, as cited in K. Rodriguez & Winnberg, 2013, p.12).

In fact, the findings from many studies have helped to provide an abundance of evidence demonstrating an inextricable link between idiomatic competence and language proficiency. According to Sinclair (1987), Yorio (1989), Ellis (1997), Wray (1999), Liu (2008) and Shirazi and Talebinezhad (2013), the control and proficiency of proper idiomatic language are two characteristics that are usually associated with skilled non-native speakers of any language (as cited in Al-kadi, 2015, p.514). As can be seen from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) listening band descriptor, people who already reach C1 level are expected to “recognise a wide range of idiomatic expressions” (Council of Europe, p. 66). Also, in the IELTS test, the proper use of idiomatic expressions is required of candidates wishing to obtain Band 7 and above, which is equivalent to C1 level in the

CEFR (IELTS speaking band descriptor – British Council). Therefore, the practice of teaching and learning idioms are definitely something that English learners and teachers cannot overlook.

Important as they appear, idioms have yet to receive due attention in the context of English language teaching in Vietnam. Due to its arbitrary and non rule-governed nature, teachers usually consider them difficult to teach, and thereby might feel reluctant to provide instruction on idioms (Tran, 2012, as cited in Tran, 2013, p. 24). That accounts for the fact that idioms are not likely to be taught in a formal, systematic and explicit manner. At the University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS), knowledge about idioms makes up a minor part in the syllabus, and is included sporadically in communicative skill-based lessons. For most of the time, the acquisition of idioms is left to students' own devices.

A look at related literature shows that there have been a large number of studies conducted in Vietnam and other countries to gain understanding of English learners' vocabulary learning strategies. Nonetheless, very few touch upon their use of strategies to learn idioms which are perceived as multi-word units or (2004, p.56; as cited in Ranong, 2014). Meanwhile, many studies have been carried out in accordance to the increased awareness about the importance of idioms; however, most are restricted to idiom teaching strategies only. Also, not many studies go as far as to point out differences between learning strategies adopted by learners of varying idiomatic levels and factors leading to their choice of strategies. As a result, idiom learning strategies, the difference in learning strategies between students with low, high idiomatic competence and factors behind their choice of learning strategies remain a novel research area.

Given the importance of idioms and the lack of proper attention to idiom learning and teaching, the research has already decided to carry out a study on *“Idiom learning strategies of English major students in the University of Languages and International studies (ULIS)”*.

The first part of the study is directed towards exploring different learning strategies adopted by the target population to learn idioms. As the students' idiom learning strategies are already identified, the researcher would like to investigate factors behind their choice of strategies to acquire idioms. This study hopefully will offer an insight into idiom learning situation of ULIS students, based on which recommendations for effective idiom learning and teaching activities are to put forward.

1.2 The aims of the study

The study was designed to explore the strategies that second-year students in the Faculty of English language teacher education use to acquire idioms, the difference in the type of strategies adopted by those with low and high idiomatic competence, and the reason behind their choice of learning strategies.

In brief, the study purports to address the three following questions:

1. What are the idiom learning strategies adopted by second-year mainstream students in the Faculty of English language Teachers education?
2. What are the differences in learning strategies between students with low and high idiomatic competence?
3. What are the factors affecting FELTE's second-year students' choice of idiom learning strategies?

1.3 Scope of the study

The study placed emphasis upon learning strategies which are employed by FELTE's second-year mainstream students. Issues concerning the effectiveness of these strategies or the correlation between strategy use and language proficiency or idiomatic competence are beyond the scope of the present study. Additionally, apart from the idiomatic competence among participants, such variables as gender, type of idioms are not taken into researcher's consideration.

1.4 Significance

Once completed, the study would be of great value to different cohorts including EFL learners, teachers and researchers who are interested in the topic. The research might give learners opportunities to reflect upon their current practice of learning idioms. This helps to develop students' awareness of their own idiom learning process, which serves as the stepping stone to "the development of autonomous learning" (Kohonen, 1991, as cited in Rinkevičienė and Jūratė-Zdanytė, 2002, p.96).

As for the lecturers at ULIS, data obtained from the study could inform teachers of the current idiom learning situation among second-year in the faculty, and thereby facilitating their selection and implementation of proper idiom teaching methods.

As far as researchers are concerned, the study could provide them with extensive relevant literature and serve as preliminary studies on idiomatic competence, laying foundation for their upcoming research works on similar topics.

1.5 Outline of the research paper

The research paper is comprised of five chapters:

Chapter 1 states the rationale of the study, its research questions, scope and the significance.

Chapter 2 provides extensive literature on vocabulary learning strategies, the factors determining learning strategies choice.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the participants and research methodology. It involves the justification of research methodology, data collection instruments, the procedure to data collection and the data analysis method.

Chapter 4 shows the results and discussion of students' idiom learning strategies.

Chapter 5 draws the conclusion from the research, and provides pedagogical education for English instructor as well as offer suggestion for future development.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is devoted to the elaboration of theoretical concepts closely relevant to the research topic, serving as a sound foundation for the research to be based on. towards the end of this chapter is a brief review of studies on similar or related topic.

2.1 Definition of idiom

According to Swinney and Clutler (1972, p.523), an idiom is “a string of two or more words for which meaning is not derived from the meanings of the individual words comprising that string” (as cited in Zarei & Rahimi, 2012, p.9). In other words, it is impossible to decipher the meaning of an idiom based on the meaning of its constituents. For example, the meaning of “kick the bucket” is somehow irrelevant to the meaning of the two words “kick” or “bucket” which form the idiom. This is echoed in the definition of idioms established by Irujo (1986) and Abel (2013) (as cited in Zarei & Rahimi, 2012, p.9). Abel is more specific by pointing out that it is the figurative meaning of the fixed expression that cannot be inferred from the literal meaning of its elements. Mentioned above are simplified definitions which fail to reflect the intricate nature of idioms as well as narrow down the range of idioms into several types only.

Moreover, none of these definitions can be as detailed and systematic as that developed by Grant (2004) who made attempt to establish the taxonomies to define idioms (as cited in Ranong, p.57). Specifically, idioms are classified into “core” and “none-core”. In order to be classified as “core idioms”, they have to meet the following requirements: (1) multi-word units (MWUs) indicating that they should “include at least two words”, (2) non-compositional, indicating that the idiom’s overall meaning independent of the meaning of its constituents, (3) frozen and fixed, commonly known as “the inflexibility in terms of grammar”, (4) institutionalized, which means they have to be “commonly used by a large number of people in a speech community” (Ranong, p.57). Another type of idiom is a

non-core idioms which can be further classified into a figurative and a ONCE, a multi-word unit having one non-compositional element (Ranong, p.58).

The present study looks at both core and non-core idioms, the identification of which will be based on Grant's taxonomies as presented above.

2.2 Idioms as a part of English vocabulary

As Proctor (1996, pp. 678 - 1628, as cited in Easterbrook, 2013, p.11) asserted, the term "vocabulary" refers to "all the words used by a particular person or all the words which exist in a particular language or subject". More often than not, vocabulary is viewed "more technically" (Easterbrook, 2013, p.12) as lemmas and lexemes. A lemma is perceived as "a word's generalised or glossed meaning and its word class", for example, nouns, adverbs. Adjectives (Aitchison, 2003; Field, 2005), while a lexeme is "a word's morphology and form" (Aitchison, 2003, pp. 220–21, as cited in Easterbrook, 2013, p.12), and "running" as mentioned above serves as a good example.

Notably, the multiword units are included by Nunan (2003) and Schmitt (2010) (as cited in Easterbrook, 2013, p.12) in the category of lexemes. The Vocabulary can thus be classified into two forms: a single word item or a multiword item (Nation, 2001; Nunan, 2003 as cited in Easterbrook, 2013, p.12). The multiword items do suggest to people the "combinatorial nature of words" commonly known as "lexical chunks" (Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997, as cited in Easterbrook, 2013, p.12). Accordingly, the strategies to learn idioms are highly likely to parallel those adopted to acquire vocabularies in general. This explains the reason why the vocabulary learning strategy framework is employed in order to investigate into the ways language learners acquire idioms.

2.3 Vocabulary learning strategies

2.3.1 Language learning strategies

The word "*strategy*" has its root in the ancient Greek word "*strategia*", meaning "steps or actions taken" with the aim of winning a war (Oxford, 2003, p. 8). As time elapses, the meaning associated with the war has faded away, yet

“the control and directedness” can still be well noticed in the modern version of the word. Rubin (1975) defined language learning strategies as “techniques or devices” in order to acquire knowledge while Stern (1983) considered them to be a more general concept which helps to “govern the choice of specific techniques”. Under the influence of the cognitive theory, O’Malley and Chamot (1990) perceived language learning strategies as “special thoughts or behaviours”. They were also more specific when pointing out three purposes of these strategies which corresponded to the natural stages of the language acquisition process known as “comprehend, learn or retain new information”. As for Oxford (1989), language learning strategies were “steps taken by learners to aid the acquisition, storage and retrieval of information”. What is special about this definition is that she attempted to articulate the three distinct stages through which learners acquire language (as cited in Ellis, 1994, p.531).

During the 1970s, there was an emerging consensus that inborn aptitude for language made a minor contribution to high learning achievement. Instead, learners’ attempt during the process of acquiring the language was broadly believed to help learners to overcome challenges and thrive as language learners. In parallel with this trend, attention was diverted away from teaching-related activities to learners’ actions and the influence they exerted on their language acquisition. According to Oxford (1990, p.8), a good grasp of proper language strategies could “make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (as cited in Oxford, 2003). More importantly, knowledge about learning strategies was the key to high level of learning autonomy as pointed out by Allwright (1990) and Little (1991). These aforementioned factors combined have turned language learning strategies into a much-researched area for decades. In 1975, Stern initiated a series of studies into the field by introducing a list of ten strategies adopted by good language learners to attain desirable learning result. This was then followed by research carried out by Rubin (1975), Naiman et al. (1978); Wong-Fillmore, 1979 (as cited in Schmitt, 1997, p.2). While Stern (1983) could be regarded as the trailblazer in the field of language learning

strategies, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) are the first to present a systematic, psychology-oriented categorization framework in which language learning strategies are classified into three main types: metacognitive, known as strategies for “overviewing the processes of language use and learning, for taking steps to efficiently plan and regulate those processes”, cognitive indicating “strategies which involve the manipulation of information in an immediate task for the purpose of acquiring or retaining that information” and social/affective denoting “strategies dealing with interpersonal relationships and those which deal with controlling emotional constraints” (as cited in Schmitt, 1997, p.2).

Since this classification was criticized for not elaborately working on the social and affective aspect, there was a demand for a more comprehensive taxonomy which was then fulfilled by Oxford (1990) who brought to light a list involving direct and indirect strategies. According to Oxford (1990), direct strategies refer to “strategies involving mental process” and have direct influence on the target language (p.14). In contrast, indirect strategies are mainly used to facilitate the language acquisition “without directly involving the target language” (Oxford 1990, p.14). While the former is characterized by Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective and Social, the latter is divided further into Metacognitive Strategies, Affective Strategies, and Social Strategies.

2.3.2 Inter-relationship between language and vocabulary learning strategies

Vocabulary learning strategies belong to a narrower spectrum of language learning strategies. Researchers have been well aware of the significance that vocabulary learning strategies hold as many of them are transferable across different language tasks ranging from those related to pronunciation, grammar to “integrative tasks such as reading comprehension and oral communication” (Asgari, 2010, p. 86).

It is also noticeable that vocabulary learning strategies are well represented in Oxford (1990)'s language learning strategy taxonomy, and the other ones can somehow be used to facilitate learners' vocabulary acquisition. These

suggest to us how important it is for English learners to master the approaches or methods to acquire vocabulary in order to attain better proficiency in English.

From the perspective of researchers who are interested in language learning strategies, vocabulary learning strategies can possibly be a fertile land to explore and cultivate further. In fact, there have been many who attempted to establish comprehensive and systematic classifications of vocabulary learning strategies. The following literature will offer an insight into the three most systematic and comprehensive taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies developed by Gu and Johnson (1996), Schmitt (1997) and Nation (2001).

2.3.3 Vocabulary learning strategies

Schmitt (1997) defined vocabulary learning strategies as any factors that affects the learning process by which information is obtained, stored and regained. Building upon this definition, Catalan (2003) proposed a more detailed and concrete one, indicating that vocabulary learning strategies are “knowledge about mechanism used in order to learn vocabulary as well as the steps and actions taken by students” to figure out the meaning of a new word, and ensure its long-term retention, retrieval and application in productive skills like writing and speaking (p.56). In general, both of these two definitions indicates that the efficacy of vocabulary strategies is apparent in every single stage of the vocabulary acquisition starting from the first-time encounter with new words to the recollection for written and spoken output.

Nation’s taxonomy

Nation (2001) introduced a list of different vocabulary learning strategies divided into three major groups: planning, sources and processes which correspond to different aspects of vocabulary knowledge.

Planning strategies refer to where, how and how often to focus attention on a vocabulary item” (Ghazal, 2007, p.86). Besides, sources strategies are associated with the ways to gather information about a word which covers

various aspects of vocabulary knowledge including the word itself (word part analysis), the context, sources of reference or L1 cognates.

The third sub-category is the process strategies which are used to memorize the words and make use of them in providing spoken or written output. Strategies within this group are then further divided into noticing, retrieving and generating which are in correlation to three stages of vocabulary learning.

Table 2.3.3 a. *Nation's taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies*

General class of strategies	Types of strategies
Planning: choosing what to focus on and when to focus on it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing a word • Choosing the aspect of word knowledge • Choosing the strategies • Planning repetition
Sources: finding information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the word • Using context • Consulting a reference source in L1 and L2
Processes: establishing knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noticing • Retrieving • Generating

One notable point of Nation's taxonomy is its simple and easy-to-understand nature. Unlike the taxonomy developed by Schmitt (1997), Gu and Johnson (1996) which elaborate on 58 individual strategies and employ a number of psychology terms, Nation's one features the label of classes and plain terms only.

Gu and Johnson's taxonomy

Gu and Johnson (1996) conducted a study on 850 second-year Chinese university students to explore their belief about the vocabulary learning strategies they used as well as the their perception about these strategies.

Vocabulary size tests, proficiency tests and a vocabulary learning questionnaire are three main instruments employed during the research. The question includes one section on students' belief about vocabulary learning and the other presenting a list of 91 vocabulary learning strategies which were grouped into meta-cognitive, cognitive, memory and activation strategies.

Meta-cognitive strategies include selective attention used to identify essential words which are required for “adequate comprehension of a passage” (Ghazal, 2007, p.85) and self-initiation strategies involving the employment of various means to clarify the meaning of vocabulary items.

Cognitive strategies are made up of guessing strategies, the ability of using dictionaries skillfully and note-taking strategies. It is typical of learners who use guessing strategies to activate existing prior background knowledge and be aware of linguistic clues such as grammatical structures of a sentence.

Memory strategies entail rehearsal and encoding strategies. The former is exemplified by wordlists and repetition, and imagery, visual, auditory, semantic, and contextual encoding are all included in the latter.

Activation strategies are those through which learners make use of newly acquired words in various contexts.

Table 2.3.3 b. *Classification of vocabulary learning strategies by Gu and Johnson (1996)*

Category	Sub-category
Meta-cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention: Identifying essential words for comprehension • Self-initiation: Using a variety of means to make the meaning of words clear
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guessing: Activating background knowledge, using linguistic items • Use of dictionaries • Note-taking
Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehearsal: Word lists, repetition, etc. • Encoding: Association (imagery, visual, auditory,

	etc.)
Activation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using new words in different contexts

This taxonomy is somehow more complicated than that developed by Nation, which is attributable to many psychological terms instilled in the list. Besides, the classification well reflects different mental stages that learners might go through when learning new words starting from knowing the meaning of a new word to applying it into communicative situations. Nevertheless, this taxonomy pales in comparison with Schmitt's vocabulary learning strategy inventory with regards to its comprehensiveness.

Schmitt's taxonomy

It is undeniable that the attempt made by Gu and Johnson (1996) and Nation (2001) to provide a systematic classification of vocabulary learning strategies should be recognized; however, these taxonomies are limited to category level only. Schmitt (1997) have managed to introduce a far more comprehensive list including 58 individual strategies. During the process of building up this taxonomy, he consulted different sources ranging from reference books, students and teachers. Despite the fact that some other strategies have yet to be included in the list, Schmitt (1997)'s inventory is still widely regarded as one of the most exhaustive lists. The major theoretical foundation for this taxonomy lies in Oxford (1990)'s work as he classified vocabulary learning strategies into four categories: Social, memory, cognitive and meta-cognitive. However, he included an additional category named determination strategies. In sum, there were a total of 58 strategies present in the list, divided into two broad categories: discovery and consolidation. These were then further classified into five subgroups: determination (DET), social (SOC), memory (MEM), cognitive (COG) and meta-cognitive strategies (MET). The first two strategies find their way to the discovery group and the consolidation group includes memory, cognitive and meta-cognitive.

Determination strategies are those used by language learners to find out the meaning of new words without recourse to others. The opposite of this sub-category is Social strategies which refer to the act of asking help from classmates and instructors.

Memory strategies are perceived as the practice of associating new words with prior knowledge via imagery or grouping. They are quite similar to cognitive strategies. However, while memory strategies place emphasis upon elaborative mental processing through which long-term retention is guaranteed, cognitive strategies are characterized by mechanical means that aid learners' vocabulary acquisition. The reverse pattern can be seen in Gu and Johnson (1996)'s classification in which rehearsal strategies are put under the category of memory strategies, and guessing strategies are equated with cognitive ones.

Meta-cognitive strategies are strategies that learners adopt to monitor and evaluate their learning. This can be noticed in the way learners seek way to "maximize the exposure to L2 language" by reading "English medium books, magazines, newspapers and movies", or the adoption of strategy to interact with native speakers. At the same time, "testing oneself" is also considered to be a meta-cognitive strategies in the sense that learners are better informed of their existing competence, and make timely proper adjustment to their learning strategies (Schmitt, 1997, p. 16). These strategies also involve scheduling, organizing their reviewing time and evaluating which words should be learnt and which words should be skipped based on many factors, especially their frequency of appearance in real-life communications.

Since attention is distributed to a number of individual strategies, many of which are previously overlooked by other researchers, such a broad-ranging list has long been favoured as an effective instrument for studies into vocabulary acquisition among second-language learners. This is verified through Schmitt's research on 600 Japanese English learners at tertiary level. Due to the research value that the taxonomy carries, it has already been chosen as the theoretical framework for the researcher to build up the questionnasire on the use of idiom learning strategies among second-year students (See *Appendix 1*)

2.4 Factors affecting the choice of idiom vocabulary learning strategies

There has a consensus among different researchers that the adoption of learning strategies is largely determined by different factors. Stern (1983) asserted that “aptitude and motivation, learners’ individual characteristics, a social context, and teachers’ characteristics” play a role in learners’ process of selecting second language learning strategies (as cited by Prakongchati, 2007, p.66). This viewpoint was then reinforced by Cohen and Oxford (1992) who maintained that “Factors such as learning styles, world knowledge and beliefs, attitudes toward the language and motivation to learn it, anxiety, sex, and ethnicity” did not receive due attention yet (as cited by Prakongchati, 2007, p.66).

Ellis (1994) concurred with Stern (1983) and Cohen (1998) by saying that “there is ‘Less attention has been paid to the role of social factors such as socioeconomic group, sex, and ethnicity on the use of learning strategies’” (p. 545, as cited by Prakongchati, 2007, p.66). Ellis also went as far as to develop a model of L2 acquisition demonstrating the relationship between individual difference, situational and social factors, the choice of second language learning strategies and learning outcome. Within the scope of this study, only the influence of situational, social factors and individual differences upon the choice of learning strategies is to be closely examined. Figure 1.2 illustrates the link between individual difference, situational, social factors and second language learning strategies.

As can be seen from the framework, there are two major factors leading to the choice of learning strategies: individual experiences and the social, situational factors.

Figure 2.4. *Ellis (1994) 's model of second language acquisition*

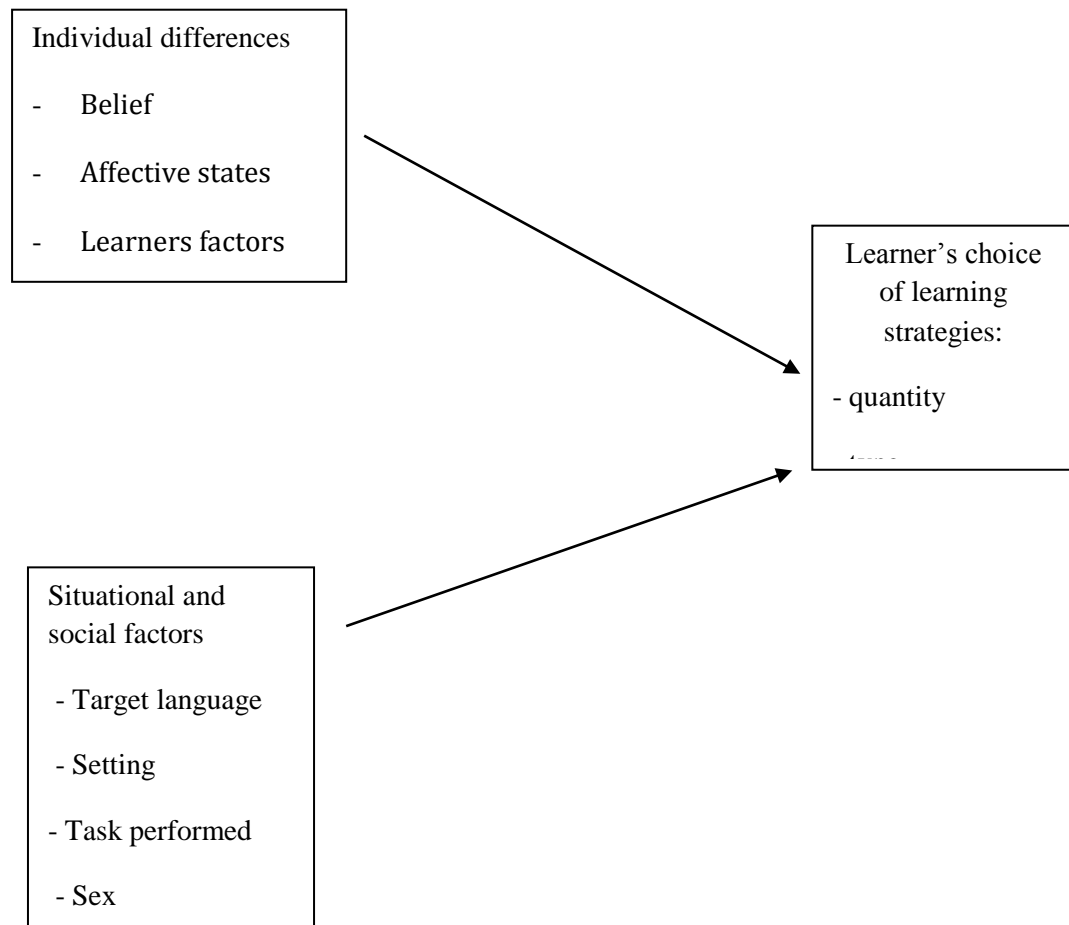


Figure 2.4: the relationship between individual learner difference, situational factors and learning strategies. Adapted from *The study of second language acquisition* (p. 530), by Ellis, R, 1994, Oxford: Oxford University press.

In the first set of factors, the adoption of language learning strategies is under the strong influence of individual difference regarding their belief about “how how an L2 is best learnt” (Prakongchati, 2007, p.71). Wenden (1986a, 1987a) interviewed 25 adults enrolled in a part-time advanced level class at a US – based university, and then summarized interviewees’ response into 12 statements which are categorized into three groups. The first group, labelled as “use of language”, concerning beliefs relating to the crucial role of “learning in a natural way” – practising, “trying to think in the L2” or living, studying in an environment where L2 is widely used. The second category refers to the belief on “learning about the language”, indicating the importance of learning grammar, enrolling in a language class, receiving feedback on errors and being

mentally active (Ellis, 1994, p. 477). The third group named “importance of personal factor” is associated with the belief about the feeling that fosters or impede learning , “self – concept” and “apptitude for learning” (Ellis, 1994, p. 477). The need to acquire cultural knowledge, the utmost importance of vocab and grammar rule memorization, or the willingness to “develop friendship with Americans” are additional items added by Horwitz (1987, as cited in Ellis, 1994) in his study with 32 students at intermediatelevel from heterogeneous groups, at that moment, pursuing an intensive program in the USA. The current research based on Weden’s categorization of learners’ belief for the analysis of factors affecting the strateegy selection among FELTE’s second – year students.

Meanwhile, such affective states such as anxiety about poor performance, “communication apprehension”, “fear of negative evaluation” and their motivation to learn might interfere in learners’ selection of learning strategies (Prakongchati, 2007, p.71).

Besides, learners’ factors are concerned with age, language aptitude, learning styles, motivation, and personality. Apptitude is defined as “capability of learning a task”, depending on “some combination of more or less enduring characteristics of learners” (Caroll, 1981, as cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 494). Language apptitude is thus entails “a special prospensity for learning an L2” (Ellis, 1994, 494), or learners’ inclination towards the language that they are learning.

Learning style refers to “the characteristic cognitive, affective and psychological behaviours” that are consistently suggestive of learners’ perception of and response to the learning environment (Keffe, 1979, p. 499). Learning style is believed to be “fixed and not readily unchanged”. In other words, one’s learning style is less likely to be affected by the surrounding environment. Learning styles are categorized in different ways, for example: “focuser” (concentrating on one feature at a time) versus “scanner (coping with different features at the sametime), visual versus (learning more effectively through pictures) versus auditory strategy (learning better by listening),

kinaesthetic learning (involving physical actions) or tactile learning (being related to hands-on learning).

As far as motivation is concerned, there are two basic types of motivation which are intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. While the former can be attained from “an inherent interest in the learning tasks” that learners are supposed to perform, the latter is generated by external influence and incentives, for example, getting a scholarship or good marks. There has been a growing consensus among researchers that intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation is ascribed to a desirable learning outcome or learners’ progress. As to learning experiences, they might deal with narratives about learners’ past learning experiences.

The second set of variables might refer to the target language, “whether the setting is formal or informal”, and the “nature of the instruction”, the tasks or activities learners are supposed to perform (Prakongchati, 2007, p.71). Gender (social nature) is also expected to play a role in the choice of learning strategies.

Ellis’s (1994) theoretical framework is considered to be one of the most comprehensive and systematic one concerning the link between different factors and learners’ use of learning strategies. It is believed to be transferable across different learning strategies including idiom learning strategies. Therefore, the researcher decided to employ this framework in addressing the third research question as to the factors behind learners’ choice of idiom learning strategies.

2.5 Related studies

2.5.1 Studies around the world

Ever since the relationship between idiomatic competence and language proficiency was highlighted in a large number of studies, there has been a plethora of research into idioms. Most relevant to the present research are the studies which touch upon idiom learning strategies.

Cooper (1999) investigated into “the on-line idiom processing strategies used by nonnative speakers of English” (as cited Zarei & Pour, 2013). In the study, the participants were supposed to assign the meaning to idioms in a written context. The study results pointed out a number of learning strategies used by participants to understand the meaning of idioms: guessing from the context, discussing and analyzing, using the literal meanings of idioms, using background knowledge, repeating or paraphrasing the idioms, connecting L2 idioms to L1 idioms and other strategies like personal discussion and meta analysis of the idioms (Cooper, 1999, p. 246; as cited in Zarei and Pour, 2013). Among these strategies, the cognitive strategy like guessing meaning from the context was the most popular strategy, being used for 28% of time.

Al-kadi (2015) carried out a study into idiomatic competence, learning strategies and difficulties encountered during the process of studying idioms among EFL undergraduates in Yemen. The study involved 63 students in the department of English, Faculty of Education, Taiz University. These participants were asked to take three tests with a total of 125 idioms collected from the book “Speak English like an American by Gillett” (2004) and a PhD dissertation entitled, *The effects of Transfer on the acquisition of idioms in a second language*, by Irujo Suzanne (1984) (Al-kadi, 2015, p. 516). The three tests are followed by a questionnaire survey in order to get an insightful understanding on students’ strategies and difficulties of learning idioms. One point worth of a note in this study is that the researcher drew comparison in terms of idiom learning strategies between low and high achievers in three idiom tests. It can be inferred from the study that those who performed well in their Spoken English course at university tended to obtain high result in three idiom tests. Meanwhile, while understanding the context and the use of key words were mostly favoured by the high-achieving students, guessing and memorizing are the two learning strategies that the low-achievers usually made use of.

The most recent study is the one conducted by Alhaysony (2017) with 85 male and female senior students at the Department of English at Aljouf

University in Saudi Arabia. Nation's multiple-choice receptive levels test, an idiom learning strategy questionnaire and semi-structure interview are three methods used by the researcher to explore difficulties faced by learners when studying idioms, strategies utilized to facilitate the idiom acquisition. The results show that the learning challenges mostly result from students' lack of cultural background knowledge surrounding the idioms, experience in coping with idioms and the fact that idioms are not formally and systematically incorporated into the syllabus. Also, it is reported that fourth-year students at Aljouf University have made use of various learning strategies to acquire idioms with context-based guessing of meaning being the most frequently used and communicating outside class being the least frequently used strategy.

With regards to the difference in strategy use between more and less able learners, there has been an array of studies aimed at exploring strategies favoured by successful learners. A trailblazer in this area is Rubin who carried out a study involving learners across various age groups in classroom setting using the method of observation. He then came to the conclusion that good language learners were characterized by the adoption of strategies like "attention to form" and "monitoring one's own and others' speech" (Ellis, 1994, 547). These findings were echoed in Reiss (1983)'s research on College learners of French and German as second language. Also, it can be deduced from his research that the high – achievers were also "specific in their learning tasks" and well aware of "how to internalize information" (Ellis, 1994, 547). "Tolerance of ambiguity", "awareness of progression", "high self-esteem" are additional characteristics of these language learners that are explored later in many studies conducted by Huang and Van Naerssen (1985), Gillette (1987) and Lennon (1989) (as cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 548). Despite a plethora of research into language strategies used by successful English learners, the difference in strategy use between people with low and high competence remains a little-researched area, with very few studies which are mentioned above being carried out.

When it comes to factors affecting learners' choice of learning strategy, there have been several studies into the impacts that motivation types have on the selection of language strategy. For example, in Oxford and Nyikos's research, instrumental goal of fulfilling course requirements and obtaining good grades in a course that emphasized analytical skills leads to formal practice and general study strategies being more popular than functional practice (Ellis, 1994, 541). Regarding learners' belief about learning, Wenden (1987a) discovered that those who attached considerable importance to using language gravitated towards communication strategies, and cognitive strategies were dominant among those who placed emphasis on learning itself (Ellis, 1994, p. 541). The impact of learning environment was also closely looked in several studies such as Chamot et al. (1988; 1987) or Wong – Fillmore (1976; 1979). The former found that social and affective strategies were not popular within classroom setting, and that those studying English in the environment where English is spoken as the first language were likely to employ such strategies as contextualization, substitution, or note-taking), while EFL students tended to favour cognitive strategies. It can be seen that previous studies usually investigated one factor in isolation from other ones, and that there have never been any studies where idiom learning strategies and the factors behind strategy choice are placed prime focus on.

2.5.2 Studies in Vietnam

In the context of Vietnam, idiomatic competence has been closely looked at in a study by Tran (2013). The study is conducted on seventy-four undergraduates including both freshmen and sophomores who were pre-service English teachers in Hanoi University of education (HUE). In order to obtain information regarding these students' ability to use idioms, the researcher designed a test using 50 idioms in the list of most frequently used idioms established by Grant (2007), Liu (2003), and Simpson and Mendis (2003) as well as in books on idioms available in Vietnam with over 2 million search results. The test includes two main tasks: gap-filling and matching to

“determine the breadth and depth of idioms that a learner is able to comprehend and use for communication”. Findings gained from this study shows that students had little knowledge about frequently-used idioms, demonstrating a relatively low idiomatic competence.

Although the research is an attempt to explore idiomatic competence among English learners at university level, it did not address the question as to how these students acquired idioms on regular basis. Also, both ULIS and HUE are responsible for training English teachers, the English teaching program is likely to be markedly different. This might lead to possible discrepancy in the idiomatic competence among ULIS and HUE students.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides detailed description of the methods used during the process of conducting the research. Participants’ information is first stated

followed by the justification of different data collection instruments. The narration of the data collecting and analyzing procedure is dealt with in the last section of this chapter.

3.1 Participants

The study is conducted with the participation of 94 second-year mainstream students from Faculty of English Language Teacher, University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University. To be more specific, nearly 10 percent of students in teacher training and interpretation & translation classes took part in the survey questionnaire, and around 10 participants will be singled out for the interview to explore possible factors behind their choice of idiom learning strategies on random manner.

The researcher decided to direct particular attention to these participants for the following reasons. First of all, they are supposed to reach level C1 in the Common European framework of reference for languages by the time they graduate from university. Also, many of them are currently in preparation for the Vietnamese Standardized Test of English proficiency (VSTEP) and many other internationally standardized examinations like the IELTS or TOFLE to be qualified as being at C1 level and above; as a result, acquiring idioms might be of immediate importance to them at the present.

Additionally, as second-year students majoring in English, they are assumed to acquire a wealth of experiences in learning English. Thus, almost all of them might be well aware of strategies which suit them the most in order to master different components of English including idiomatic expressions, and articulate reasons for their selection of idiom learning strategies. Given these mentioned factors, students at FELTE prove to a judicious choice for the study.

3.1.1 Questionnaire respondents and test-takers

The selection of questionnaire and test participants was soundly based on random sampling principle to minimize the sampling bias and maximize the representativeness and validity of research results.

Students partaking in the study are all mainstream students whose entrance levels are relatively the same. Meanwhile, as mentioned above, second-year students are distributed into three types of classes: teacher training, interpretation & translation and international economics classes. Since no differences in language proficiency, language learning strategies and English language learning programs can be noticed between students from them, six classes are randomly chosen for the study and they come from teacher training and interpretation & translation or international economics classes through random selection.

3.1.2 Interviewees

As far as the interviewees are concerned, the researcher invited 10 questionnaire respondents to join in the interview to discover reasons for their current choice of idiom learning strategies. These interviewees included students from teacher training and interpretation & translation and international economics classes.

3.2 Data collection instruments

3.2.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was based on the taxonomy of Vocabulary learning strategies established by Schmitt (1997). It presented a list of statements about vocabulary learning strategies followed by a Likert-type scale with number 5 denoting the highest frequency (always use it) and number 1 indicating the lowest (never use it). Since idioms are defined by Grant (2004, p.56; as cited in Ranong, 2014) as “multi-word units”, and make up a part in English vocabularies; therefore, most learners tend to employ general vocabulary learning strategies to acquire idioms. Therefore, researcher decided to use the

already established questionnaire with some adaptations to obtain data about idiom learning strategies among participants.

Before embarking on the questionnaire designing process, the researcher conducted an informal interview with 15 students in the Faculty to find out strategies they have used to learn idioms. In this way, the researcher could be informed of certain learning strategies which are absent in the list of vocabulary learning strategies proposed by Schmitt (1997), and thereby include them into the questionnaire. This is due to the researcher's assumption that idiom and vocabulary learning, though similar in most respects, might have certain differences, leading to some different learning strategies. The initial version of questionnaire was piloted with 15 students in the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education on random manner. The feedback from these participants helped the researcher to make timely adjustment to the questionnaire in terms of the format, wording and selection of idiom learning strategy statements. To be more specific, item 1 to 18 concerns determination strategies, with item 4 being modified to better reflect the nature of idioms as multi-word units. Social strategies are the focus of the next five statements (9-13). Items from 14 to 16 refer to social strategies which belong to a broader dimension – consolidation. Statement 16 indicates the practice of consolidating idioms through interaction in English with people in general instead of native speakers as can be seen in Schmitt's list as a result of the pilot session in which participants admit that there is little chance for them to communicate with native speakers, and that speaking practice with friends are still more common. Statements from 17 to 26 are closely associated with memory strategies while cognitive strategies are touched upon through items from 27 to 31. The rest of idiom learning strategy statement deals with the final subset of strategies which are meta-cognitive ones. It should be noted that the researcher has already include several additional media-related strategies such as learning through social networking sites or applications, which highlight the crucial role of technology in facilitating language acquisition and particularly idiom learning in present-day language learning context (*see Appendix 3*)

A total of 41 individual idiom learning strategies are categorized into three groups: high-use, medium-use and low-use. Those receiving the mean score from 1 to 2.99 are labelled as “low-use strategies”. Medium-use group includes strategies having the mean score from 3 to 3.99, and high-use strategies are those with the mean score ranging from 4 to 5. The following table points out the range of frequency score for each strategy group:

Table 3.2.1. *The range of frequency score for each strategy group*

Low-use	Medium -use	High-use
1- 2.99	3 – 3.99	4 – 5

3.2.2 The use of interview

After idiom learning strategies among students are recognized, the researcher would like to find out the factors behind their choice of current learning strategies by interviewing a certain proportion of questionnaire participants. The semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was chosen. This kind of interview allows the interviewer to gain control over the interview since he or she is less likely to be off topic than in unstructured interview (Nguyen, 2007, p.52, as cited in Ngo, 2009, p.38). Meanwhile, it is much more flexible than a structured interview or a questionnaire. Also, this kind of interview “gives one privileged access to other people’s life” (Nguyen, 2007, p.52; as cited in Ngo, 2009, p.39). In this way, the interviewer can obtain rich, highly informative data regarding the factors leading to the choice of strategies to learn idioms.

The interview questions were adapted from the model of second language acquisition developed by Ellis (1994, p.530; as cited in Prakongchati, p.91). This theoretical framework presents the relationship between individual learners’ difference, situational, social factors and learners’ choice of learning strategies. The questions were also soundly based on the participants’ questionnaire responses.

The interview started with a brief description of research purpose and general instruction. Throughout the interview, questions were posed to

participants regarding the reasons for their strategy choice as shown in the questionnaire results. (*see Appendix 5*). Similarly, ten students were involved in the process of interview piloting. Again, the piloting provided the researcher with some clues to modify the questions and their wording

3.2.3 Idiom test

In order to address the second research question, a test is needed to single out two groups of learners among questionnaire respondents: those with low and high idiomatic competence. Due to the absence of a standardized idiom tests, the researcher decided to design an idiom test which includes 90 idioms divided in two sets. The first set of idioms could be found in the findings of the corpus-based studies by Grant (2007), Liu (2003), and Simpson and Mendis (2003) (Tran, 2013), where a list of frequently used idioms was introduced. The second set of idioms come from idiom books and has research results reaching two million or above. The test designer also utilized Google advanced search engine to ensure that these chosen idioms were well represented in online documents with each receiving over two million search results. These idioms are summed up in tables 1 and 2 (*see Appendix 2*).

Regarding the test format, it is made up of 30 multiple questions in which test-takers are required to complete a sentence by choosing one out of three idioms labelled A, B, C. Given the constraint of time and the workload that the researcher was supposed to handle during the process of conducting the research, multiple choice test proved to be a judicious choice due to the ease usually associated with the administering and marking procedure (*see Appendix 4*).

3.2 Procedures of data collection and analysis

The process was conducted in two phases.

3.3.1 Phase 1 – collecting data

The questionnaire was delivered to over 94 students in 6 classes in the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education. Before handing questionnaires to class members, the researcher did provide a detailed

introduction about research purposes and questionnaire instruction. Once the questionnaires were completed by students in each class, the idiom test was administered. While the students did the questionnaire and idiom test, the researcher walked around to offer on-the-spot explanation if needed. Questionnaires and tests were collected right afterwards.

With regards to the interview, the researcher began with a brief introduction of herself and the research topic. The researcher then had the participants revisit every single strategy that they reported using in the questionnaire, and questions regarding why the interviewees select their current idiom learning strategies instead of other ones was raised.

Phase 2: Data analysis

With regards to the questionnaire result, the mean score and standard deviation were calculated with the aid of MS excel program and then presented in the form of table. The questionnaire result was processed and presented in the form of charts. The test result was calculated, finalized and 10% of the questionnaire respondents who got the most and the fewest correct answers were identified. At this stage, the researcher worked out the mean score and standard deviation of strategies used by each group of test-takers: the low and high-scoring. The next step is for the result to be presented in two separate tables for the ease of comparison.

When it comes to the interview, the researcher was supposed to identify factors that influence the choice of learning strategies adopted by each interviewee by coding words/phrases found in his or her account. Similar expressions were categorized into subthemes and labelled to describe the content. The analysis of the questionnaire result were demonstrated in narrative passages, evidenced by quotation taken from participants' responses to interview questions.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, all findings acquired from the questionnaires, interviews and idiom test will be analyzed, and then discussed in response to three research questions. Moreover, the data will be discussed in light of the extensive literature about related concepts to provide in-depth understanding on the issue, including the patterns and possible causes behind them.

4.1. Results

4.1.1 Research question 1: What are idiom learning strategies adopted by mainstream second-year students in the Faculty of English language Teachers education?

In order to obtain data regarding the types of strategies that ULIS's second-year students adopt to learn idioms, a likert-type questionnaire is employed. The participants were asked to assign a particular score in the scale from 1 to 5 to each idiom learning strategy listed in the questionnaire, depending on the level of frequency at which the strategy is used. To be more specific, "never" is equivalent to 1, "seldom" to 2, "sometimes" to 3, "often" to 4 and "always" to 5. Individual idiom learning strategies are classified as high-use, medium-use and low-use strategies based on their frequency mean score. Those with the mean score from 1 to 2.99 are considered as "low-use strategies". Medium-use group includes strategies obtaining the score from 3 to 3.99, and strategies with the mean score ranging from 4 to 5 belong to high-use group.

As mentioned earlier, idiom learning strategies are divided into two major groups: strategies to discover the meaning of new idioms and strategies to consolidate idioms. the former is further divided into determination and social strategies, and the latter is classified into social, memory, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. What follows is the frequency of idiom learning strategies under these six categories.

Table 4.1.1 a. *Frequency of using different strategy groups*

No	Strategy group	Mean score	SD
Strategies to discover the meaning of new idioms			
1	Determination strategies	3.21	0.72
2	Social strategies	3.29	0.83
Strategies to consolidate learnt idioms			
3	Social strategies	2.76	1.11
4	Memory strategies	3.39	0.52
5	Cognitive strategies	2.66	0.41
6	Meta-cognitive strategies	3.55	0.84

Table 4.1.1 a. shows that FELTE's students use social and determination strategies to explore the meaning of new idioms at medium frequency, with strategies in the social group being slightly more popular (3.29 and 3.21 respectively). When reinforcing knowledge about idioms, research participants gravitate towards meta-cognitive and memory strategies, both of which belong to medium-use groups. Meta-cognitive strategies are the most frequently used group, obtaining score of 3.55. Social and cognitive strategies with the mean score of 2.76 and 2.66 are placed under low-use category. Following is the report of the frequency at which individual strategies are used within each group.

Strategies to discover the meaning of new idioms

Determination strategies

Table 4.1.1 b. *The frequency of using determination strategies students*

Strategies used to discover the meaning of new idioms – Determination		Mean	SD	Strategy category
1	I learn the meaning of new idioms by checking for their similar idioms in L1 (<i>like fathers, like sons – Cha nào con nấy</i>)	3.02	0.94	Medium use
2	I learn the meaning of new idioms through pictures illustrated in the textbook	2.39	0.88	Low-use
3	I learn the meaning of new idioms from the textual context (<i>sentences, passages</i>)	3.94	0.98	Medium use
4	I learn the meaning of new idioms through their constituents (<i>the words that make up the idioms</i>)	3.79	1.09	Medium use
5	I learn the meaning of new idioms by using a bilingual dictionary	3.01	1.38	Medium use
6	I learn the meaning of new idioms by using monolingual dictionary	4.15	0.93	High use
7	I learn the meaning of new idioms through idiom flashcards	2.14	0.88	Low use

As can be seen from the table above, the majority of determination strategies listed in the questionnaire fall into the medium-use category. Consulting monolingual dictionary is the most favoured determination strategy among Ulis's second year students in the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, having the score of more than 4, finding its way into the high-use group.

Context and constituent-based guessing strategies belongs to the medium-use group, obtaining the mean score at 3.94 and 3.79 respectively. Under the same category is looking for similar idioms in L1 and using bilingual dictionary (English – Vietnamese idiom dictionary).

At the bottom of the list is discovering the meaning of idioms with recourse to picture illustration as well as idiom flashcards, receiving the mean score of just over 2.00 (2.39 and 2.14 for each).

Social strategies

Table 4.1.1 c. *The frequency of using social strategies among students*

Strategies used to discover the meaning of new idioms – social strategies		Mean	SD	Strategy group
8	I learn the meaning of new idioms by asking teachers to translate them into Vietnamese	4.14	0.92	High-use
9	I learn the meaning of new idioms by asking teachers for their paraphrase or synonym	4.09	0.93	High-use
10	I learn the meaning of new idioms by asking teachers to put them into a sentence	3.01	0.86	Medium-use
11	I learn the meaning of new idioms by asking my classmate	3.34	1.18	Medium-use
12	I learn the meaning of new idioms when participating in group work activities	1.87	0.86	Low-use

In terms of social strategies, asking teachers to translate idioms from English to Vietnamese or for paraphrase has come into widespread use among research participants. These two approaches receive the mean frequency score of 4.14 and 4.09, and therefore are classified as high-use idiom strategies. Having teachers make sentence using newly-acquired or asking classmates belongs to the group of medium-use strategies with the mean scores at 3.01 and 3.04. The least frequently used strategies are learning idioms' meaning through groupwork activities. This teamwork-based approach has the mean score of less than 2.00 (1.87), and thus is labelled as low-use strategy. It should also be

noted that asking classmate for the meaning of new idioms show the standard deviation of over 1.00. This suggests that FELTE’s second-year students do use this strategy at varying frequency.

Strategies to consolidate learnt idioms

Social strategies

Table 4.1.1 d. *The frequency of using social strategies among students*

Strategies used to consolidate idiom knowledge – social strategies		Mean	SD	Strategy groups
13	I consolidate learnt idioms in group	2.58	1.18	low-use
14	I consolidate learnt idioms by asking teachers to check my idiom flash cards/idiom list for accuracy	1.50	0.76	Low-use
15	I consolidate learnt idioms by using them when I practise speaking with others	4.19	0.96	High-use

The table above makes it clear that social strategies are classified into two distinct groups. Using idioms in communicating with others is overwhelmingly endorsed by FELTE’s second-year students, having the mean frequency score of 4.19. It is included in the group of high-use idiom-learning strategies.

In contrast, sharpen idiomatic knowledge through groupwork activities or by having teachers check the accuracy of self-made idiom flashcards , idiom lists are not frequently used by FELTE’s second-year students. The former has the mean score of 2.58, and the score for the latter is considerably lower, at 1.50.

Memory strategies

Table 4.1.1 e. *The frequency of using memory strategies among students*

Strategies used to consolidate idiom knowledge – memory strategies		Mean	SD	Strategy groups
16	I consolidate learnt idioms through pictures that illustrate their meaning	3.04	1.64	Medium-use
17	I consolidate learnt idioms by visualizing their meaning	3.21	1.33	Medium-use
18	I consolidate learnt idioms by connecting the idioms to my personal experience	4.11	0.83	High-use
19	I consolidate learnt idioms to their synonyms and antonyms	2.95	1.23	Low-use
20	I consolidate learnt idioms by using semantic map (grouping idioms with similar meaning, <i>Eg: idioms about anger/happiness...</i>)	4.11	1.04	High-use
21	I consolidate learnt idioms by grouping those with similar linguistic features (<i>Eg: animal idioms, colour idioms, comparative idioms</i>)	3.98	1.12	Medium-use
22	I consolidate learnt idioms by writing them in a sentence	3.39	1.13	Medium-use
23	I consolidate learnt idioms by saying them out loud	3.55	1.29	Medium-use
24	I consolidate learnt idioms by using physical actions	2.48	1.17	Low-use
25	I consolidate learnt idioms by paraphrasing their meaning	3.08	1.17	Medium-use

FELTE's second-year students tend to memorize idioms via semantic grouping or association with personal experience at the highest frequency, both of which have the mean score of 4.11. Accordingly, these two can be found in the group of high-use idiom learning strategies.

Medium-use idiom learning strategies do predominate in the table, with six out of ten being labelled as such. Consolidating idioms via grouping those with similar linguistic features receives the mean score of 3.98, the highest in this category followed by learning through saying out loud at 3.55.

The use of physical actions and idioms' synonyms/anonyms prove to be the least common practice among FELTE's second-year students, having the mean score of 2.48 and 2.95 only.

Cognitive strategies

Table 4.1.1 f. *The frequency of using cognitive strategies among students*

Strategies used to consolidate idiom knowledge – Cognitive strategies		Mean	SD	Strategy groups
26	I consolidate learnt idioms by writing them down repeatedly	2.79	1.30	Low-use
27	I consolidate learnt idioms by saying them repeatedly	3.16	1.14	Medium-use
28	I consolidate learnt idioms by taking Flashcards with me whenever I go	2.03	1.15	Low-use
29	I consolidate learnt idioms by taking idiom lists with me whenever I go	2.37	1.22	Low-use
30	I consolidate learnt idioms by keeping an idioms notebook	2.96	1.26	Low-use

The vast majority of cognitive strategies are used at a low frequency. With the mean score ranging from 2.96 to nearly 2.00, four out of five cognitive strategies fall in to the low-use categories.

It should also be noted that verbal repetition appears to gain the greatest popularity as a cognitive learning strategy, obtaining the mean score of 3.16 and thus become the only cognitive strategy that is present in the medium-use group.

Furthermore, one feature shared by different individual cognitive strategies is the standard deviation of more than 1. The highest standard deviation (1.30) can be seen in the written repetition strategy and the lowest seen in verbal repetition (1.14)

Meta-cognitive strategies

Table 4.1.1 g. *The frequency of using meta-cognitive strategies among students*

Strategies used to consolidate idiom knowledge – meta-cognitive strategies		Mean	SD	Strategy groups
31	I consolidate learnt idioms through English songs	3.09	1.15	Medium-use
32	I consolidate learnt idioms through English movies	4.40	0.85	High-use
33	I consolidate learnt idioms through English stories	3.08	1.27	Medium-use
34	I consolidate learnt idioms through Youtube English learning channels	4.56	0.83	High-use
35	I consolidate learnt idioms through Facebook English learning pages	4.54	0.73	High-use
36	I consolidate learnt idioms through English learning applications	3.95	1.35	Medium-use
37	I consolidate learnt idioms by adopting spaced practice (<i>practice time broken into a number of short sessions, not a long period, Eg: learning known idioms through 6 sessions, each session lasts 10 minutes instead of studying within a single hour</i>)	2.31	1.12	Low-use

38	I consolidate learnt idioms by skipping or passing new idioms that I find unimportant	2.98	1.296	Low-use
39	I consolidate learnt idioms by taking online idiom tests	2.2	1.08	Low-use
40	I consolidate learnt idioms by taking idiom tests in books	4.43	0.86	High-use
41	I consolidate learnt idioms by continuing to study them over the time	3.64	1.09	Medium-use

With regards to meta-cognitive approach, certain media-related learning strategies prevail among second-year students. Specifically, Youtube and Facebook pages prove to be major idiom learning sources, receiving the score of over 4.50. English movies are the second most favourite source of learning idioms, having the score of 4.40. Unlike these three strategies which are media-based, the remaining one in the high-use group is taking idiom tests in idiom learning books with the mean score of 4.43.

FELTE's second-year students use English learning application at a medium frequency, having the mean score of 3.95. Under the same category is the practice of continuously studying idioms, listening to songs, and reading stories.

Moreover, the research subjects do not adopt the so-called spaced practice or take online idiom tests on regular basis (2.31 and 2.2 respectively). Nor do they take the level of idioms' importance into careful account (2.98).

4.1.2 Research question 2: What are the differences in learning strategies between the high and low idiomatic competence?

The answer to this question is based on the test result and the analysis of the questionnaire response among two groups of low and high-scoring test-takers. The former includes 8 students who got 14 or less than 14 out of 30 correct answers in the tests, accounting over 10% of the overall questionnaire

respondents. The latter also constitute another 10 % who obtain 26 correct answers or above. Generally speaking, the difference in language strategy use between these two groups are the most noticeable in the determination and meta-cognitive strategies. Following is the detailed report and discussion surrounding the result.

Strategies to discover meaning of new idioms

Determination strategies

Table 4.1.2 a. *The frequency of using determination strategies among high - and low -achievers*

No	Strategies used to discover the meaning of new idioms – determination strategies	High achievers		Low achievers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	I learn the meaning of new idioms by checking for their similar idioms in L1 (<i>like fathers, like sons – Cha nào con nấy</i>)	2.87	0.99	3.25	0.89
2	I learn the meaning of new idioms through pictures illustrated in the textbook	3.00	1.51	3.37	0.52
3	I learn the meaning of new idioms from the textual context (<i>sentences, passages</i>)	4.25	0.71	1.87	0.83
4	I learn the meaning of new idioms through their constituents (<i>the words that make up the idioms</i>)	2.75	1.49	1.87	0.83
5	I learn the meaning of new idioms by using a bilingual dictionary	2.75	0.71	4.12	0.64
6	I learn the meaning of new idioms by using monolingual dictionary	4.37	0.74	3.12	1.36
7	I learn the meaning of new idioms from flash cards	1.75	1.03	1.87	0.83

It is clearly seen from the table that the most noticeable discrepancy between these two groups of test-takers lies in the use of context-based guessing strategy. While this strategy is highly favoured by high-achieving students, obtaining the mean score of 4.25, the low-achievers do not use it on regular basis, with the mean score under 2.00. Similarly, those with high idiomatic competence express a strong preference for monolingual dictionary, showing the frequency score of over 4 as opposed to 3.12 among the test's low-achiever.

A reversed pattern can be observed in the use of bilingual dictionary and checking cognates in L1. The former proves to be popular with low achiever, yet fails to gain popularity among the high-scoring test-takers. Checking cognates is a common practice of learning idioms within the low-achiever group, receiving the score of more than 4.00. In contrast, the frequency at which it is used by high-achievers is considerably lower, at 2.87.

Social strategies

Table 4.1.2 b. *The frequency of using social strategies among high - and low-achievers*

No	Strategies to discover the meaning of new idioms – social strategies	High achievers		Low achievers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
8	I learn the meaning of new idioms by asking teachers to translate them into Vietnamese	4.12	0.64	4.25	0.89
9	I learn the meaning of new idioms by asking teachers for their paraphrase or synonym	3.37	1.19	3.37	0.92
10	I learn the meaning of new idioms by asking teachers to put them into a sentence	3.37	0.92	3.87	0.99
11	I learn the meaning of new idioms by asking my classmate	3.87	0.99	3.75	1.16
12	I learn the meaning of new idioms when participating in group work activities	1.87	0.99	1.75	0.71

When it comes to social strategies used to discover the meaning of newly-acquired idioms, there is no particular distinction between these two groups of

test takers. The level of frequency at which strategies are used is the same for two groups.

Strategies to consolidate learnt idioms

Social strategies

Table 4.1.2 c. *The frequency of using social strategies among high-and low-achievers*

No	Strategies used to consolidate learnt idioms – social strategies	High achievers		Low achievers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
13	I consolidate learnt idioms in group	2.62	1.06	2.75	1.16
14	I consolidate learnt idioms by asking teachers to check my idiom flash cards/wordlist for accuracy	1.62	0.74	2.62	1.41
15	I consolidate learnt idioms by using them when I practice speaking with others	4.37	0.74	2.37	1.06

As for social approaches to reinforce the idiomatic knowledge, the only strategy that helps to distinguish these two groups of test-takers is using idioms when practising speaking with others. This strategy proves to be prevalent among students with high scores. Conversely, it is rarely used by low-achievers illustrated by the frequency score of 2.37.

Memory strategies

Table 4.1.2 d: *The frequency of using memory strategies among high - and low-achievers*

No	Strategies used to consolidate idioms – memory strategies	High achievers		Low achievers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
16	I consolidate learnt idioms through pictures that illustrate their meaning	3.5	1.6	3.75	1.39
17	I consolidate learnt idioms by visualizing	3.5	1.69	3.125	1.46

	their meaning				
18	I consolidate learnt idioms by connecting the idioms to my personal experience	4.25	0.89	3.25	1.03
19	I consolidate learnt idioms to their synonyms and antonyms	2.875	1.12	1.87	1.12
20	I consolidate learnt idioms by using semantic map (grouping idioms with similar meaning, <i>Eg: idioms about anger/happiness...</i>)	3.375	1.30	2.37	1.06
21	I consolidate learnt idioms by grouping those with similar linguistic features (<i>Eg: animal idioms, colour idioms, comparative idioms</i>)	3.25	1.39	2.87	1.46
22	I consolidate learnt idioms by writing them in a sentence	4.25	0.70	1.75	0.89
23	I consolidate learnt idioms by saying them out loud	3.37	1.50	3.12	1.356203
24	I consolidate learnt idioms by using physical actions	2.87	1.88	2.75	1.488048
25	I consolidate learnt idioms by paraphrasing their meaning	3.12	1.35	1.87	0.834523

Although learning idioms by associating with real-life experience is quite a common strategy for both groups. The frequency at which it is used is higher among high-achievers than low-achiever (4.25 vs 0.89). As for idiom grouping, the mean score it obtained from the groups with high result is markedly higher than that with low score, indicating that this strategy is better favoured by high-achievers rather than low-achievers. Most noticeable is that the groups obtaining high scores appear to overwhelmingly endorse the practice of writing idioms in sentence, with the frequency score of 4.25 as opposed to a moderate 1.75 obtained from the opposite group.

Cognitive strategies

Figure 4.1.2 e. *The frequency of using cognitive strategies among high - and low-achievers*

No	Strategies to consolidate learnt idioms – cognitive strategies	High achievers		Low achievers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
26	I consolidate learnt idioms by writing them down repeatedly	2.37	1.30	3.37	1.41
27	I consolidate learnt idioms by saying them repeatedly	3.00	1.07	2.5	1.07
28	I consolidate learnt idioms by taking Flashcards with me whenever I go	1.87	1.12	3	1.31
29	I consolidate learnt idioms by taking idiom lists with me whenever I go	1.5	1.07	2.87	1.36
30	I consolidate learnt idioms by keeping an idioms notebook	1.87	0.83	2.50	1.19

As clearly illustrated in the above table, verbal repetition does appeal to people with high idiomatic competence, obtaining the score of 3.00. The frequency score of the low-achieving group is somehow lower, at 2.5. On the other hands, written repetition and flashcard are strategies commonly adopted by people with lower result in the idiomatic test, at 3.37 and 3.00 respectively. Conversely, the high-scoring test-takers use them at low frequency, with 2.37 and 1.87 respectively.

Meta-cognitive strategies

Figure 4.1.2 f. *The frequency of using meta-cognitive strategies among high - and low – achievers*

No	Strategies to consolidate learnt idioms	High achievers		Low achievers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
32	I consolidate learnt idioms through English songs	3	1.31	2.87	1.25

33	I consolidate learnt idioms through English movies	4.125	0.83	3.62	1.06
34	I consolidate learnt idioms through English stories	3.75	1.03	2.25	1.03
35	I consolidate learnt idioms through Youtube English learning channels	4.125	0.64	3.62	0.92
36	I consolidate learnt idioms through Facebook English learning pages	4.125	0.64	3.37	1.19
37	I consolidate learnt idioms through English learning applications	3.125	1.36	3.00	1.69
38	I consolidate learnt idioms by adopting spaced practice (<i>practice time broken into a number of short sessions, not a long period, Eg: learning known idioms through 6 sessions, each session lasts 10 minutes instead of studying within a single hour</i>)	1.875	0.64	2.37	1.06
39	I consolidate learnt idioms by skipping or passing new idioms that I find unimportant	4.25	0.89	1.62	0.74
40	I consolidate learnt idioms by taking online idiom tests	2.625	1.408	2.75	0.71
41	I consolidate learnt idioms by taking idiom tests in books	4.125	0.641	2.37	1.06
42	I consolidate learnt idioms by continuing to study them over the time	4.375	0.74	2.37	1.60

With regards to meta-cognitive category, both groups of learners show slight distinction in the use of media-related strategies. Facebook, Youtube and Movies prove to be favourite idiom learning resources that high-scoring students employ frequently, having the score of more than 4. Low-achievers do make regular use of these resources, yet at a somewhat lower frequency (over 3.50). The repeated pattern can be seen in the adoption of songs and stories across two groups of students.

The difference becomes pronounced in such strategies as choosing idioms to learn, taking idiom tests or continuing to study over the time. All of these enjoy a high frequency of using among the high-scoring students, gaining the mean score of around 4.10. Nonetheless, learners with lower idiomatic competence do not favour these strategies with the mean score of 2.37 or even under 2.00.

4.1.3 Research question 3: What are the factors affecting FELTE's second-year students' choice of idiom learning strategies

Data obtained from the interviews show that the research participants' choice of idiom learning strategies are influenced by factors which are related to individual learner differences rather than situational and social factors. Their selection of strategies to learn idioms are the result of their belief, learning experiences, style preference, motivation, affective states and living habit. It should be noted that learners' habit is an additional factor that is not inherent in Ellis (1994)'s model, but was discovered during the interview data analysis.

Learners' belief

A close examination of interview transcripts shows that learners' belief is by far the most cited reason for the selection of idiom learning strategies among the research's participants. Of ten students involved in the interview, all reported that they base the strategy choice on their viewpoint about different aspects of second language acquisition, particularly the process of acquiring idioms. Within the scope of this study, the concept of learners' belief manifests itself in through how participants perceive the crucial role of context in discovering the meaning of newly-acquired idioms, the importance of "Learning in a natural way" (Ellis, 1994, p. 477), teachers' competence and human memory capacity.

Learners' belief about the importance of context

Contexts were highly regarded as helpful clues from which the meaning of new idioms is uncovered. It is thought that words or phrases surrounding the

target idiomatic expression could help to narrow down the semantic field it belongs to. This idea is clearly stated in the following extract:

“I choose the context-based guessing strategy mostly due to the fact that a paragraph is about a particular topic which is indicative of some possible meanings that the idiom has, making it much easier for me to have the correct guess of its meaning”. (Interview with student 1, April 2017)

Another interviewee added that:

“The context in which the idiom is used can suggest to me a lot about its meaning...” (Interview with student 2, April, 2017).

A participant in the interview justified the choice of the learning strategy by pointing out a specific figure for the probability of correct guess based on the context:

“If I base my guess on the context in which the target idiom is found, the chance for a correct guess averages between 70% and 80%” (Interview with student 3, April, 2017).

The figure is relatively high, which helps to highlight the crucial role played by context in the process of learners navigating the meaning of idioms..

Learners’ belief about the importance of “learning in natural way”

As mentioned in the literature review, the concept of “learning in natural way” refers to the act of “practising and trying to think in L2” (Wenden, 1986a; 1987a, as cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 477). The research’s participants place great emphasis on these two factors, which mostly account for their choice of certain idiom learning strategies such as applying idioms in speaking practice, writing idioms in sentence and consulting mono-lingual dictionary.

As for the importance of practice, the overwhelming majority of participants (7 out ten) attached importance to communicative activities following the initial meaning discovery of the idiom. They reiterated the role of speaking practice as the bridge leading to the acquisition of productive knowledge about idioms. One insisted that:

“...but whether I can make use of it or not is a different matter. I make attempt to practice speaking with my classmates using learnt idioms with the hope that I can use them naturally and flexibly”. (Interview with student 4, April, 2017)

This idea has been reinforced in the interview with another participant:

“I think it is pretty important to know how to make natural use of idioms in communication, speaking and writing alike instead of just understanding what they mean since I am an English major students...that is the reason why I engage in speaking practice with peers both in and outside the class, and try to use as many idioms as possible”. (Interview with student 5, April, 2017)

An interviewee also brought up the concept of automaticity as another factor leading her to choosing the idiom strategy. According to Bilash (nd), automaticity refers to “the ability to do things without occupying the mind with the low level details that are required”. In response to the interview question, an interviewee said:

“I think if we practice using idioms in speaking day after day, we will be able to make use of them automatically, and effortlessly” (Interview with student 6, April, 2017)

It is clearly seen from the above response that the interviewee attaches considerable importance to regular speaking practice on the pathway to learners’ attainment of automaticity in language use, especially in the use of idioms.

Regarding the importance of thinking in L2, several participants considered mono-lingual dictionary as a source of input to facilitate learners’ thinking process in L2

“English-English dictionary offers learners detailed, easy-to-understand explanation. More importantly, the definition associated with the idiom is in English, so I will memorize the idiom and its meaning in English. This can help me to think and process information in English when prepared to speak and I think that my fluency will be improved” (Interview with student 7, April 2017).

Another interviewee shared the same idea:

“I think English learners should think in English, especially for those who major in the language...I opt for mono-lingual ones. I believe that the more you read (English texts), the easier you will find to think in English.” (Interview with student 5, April, 2017)”

Besides, students could internalize many ways of expressing ideas found in the definition or a range of accompanying examples.

“...I have learnt many words and phrases from the definition and examples in the mono-lingual dictionary. They help me to express some complicated ideas that I have difficulty explaining in English previously” (interview with student 8, April, 2017).

Learners' belief about teachers' role

Among ten participants in the interview, all subscribed to the viewpoint that teachers possess rich idiomatic repertoire, and thus were likely to be the sole knowledge provider within the class setting. As a result, students tended to consult teachers for the meaning of idioms in the first-time encounter. One interviewee said:

"I often asked my teacher when encountering new idioms because no one other than the teacher has the most extensive knowledge about idioms, so I can receive instant response, this can save me a great deal of time" (interview with students 2, April, 2017)

Other interviewees also elaborated on positive aspects of teacher's explanation by saying that:

"...My teacher always give clear and easy-to-understand explanation along with many vivid examples. Sometimes, she even makes sentences using these idioms to give me a clearer sense of the idioms' meaning..." (Interview with student 3, April, 2017).

It can be inferred from students' description that teachers not only have excellent explanation skill, but their knowledge about idioms is also remarkable. These help to explain students' appreciation about teachers' competence, leading to them discovering the meaning of new idioms with teacher's help.

Learners' experience

Learners' experience is the second most influential factor. The majority of participants used to be in high schools or secondary schools where teachers are highly regarded as the authority on the subject that they are in charge of, as well as the only source of knowledge in the class. This long-term learning experience might play a part in their decision to asking for teachers' explanation of new idioms' meaning. For example, an interviewee insisted that:

"...I used to ask my English teacher for the meaning of unknown words or idioms. As I entered the university, it seems that I still stick to the highschool habit, consulting my teachers when coming across new idioms". (interview with student 8, April, 2017).

"I have done this (asking teachers for meaning) for a long time since I think that teachers have vast knowledge about idioms and must prepare carefully

for the lesson. I have been asking for teachers' help (in exploring the meaning of new idioms) since my first year...ah...actually long before I started studying here" (interview with student 3, April, 2017).

Additionally, their frequent involvement in in-class activities is also another factor leading to their choice of teamwork strategy to explore idioms' meaning.

"At university, I am supposed to engage a range of groupwork activities both in and outside class. I have now been familiar with working in team...so I choose to discover the meaning of idioms via groupwork activities"(interview with student 7, April, 2017).

Motivation

Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation is generated by a number of external factors such as the need to pass exam, the desire for financial rewards and the likelihood of future travel. In the case of the research's subjects who are prepared to sit for high-stake exams like the VSTEP (the Vietnamese standardized test of proficiency) or the IELTS, the hope to obtain desirable results serve as the primary source of motivation behind their adoption of such idiom learning strategies as interacting with friends or using mono-lingual dictionary.

"...If I can make correct use of various idiomatic expressions, my speaking performance will sound much more natural, and thus earning me high score in the these exams (IELTS and VSTEP)..."(interview with student 10, April, 2017).

This opinion coincides with the rest of the interviewees who are critically aware of the requirement that they need to fulfill in order to have their performance highly assessed by the examiners.

"The use of idioms can help me to speak in a native-like and natural manner. So I adopt this strategies in order to form the habit of using idioms in speaking during my preparation for the upcoming Vstep".(Interview with student 8, April, 2017)

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation is the result of the enjoyment felt by learners as well as their wish to make themselves feel better. Several interviewees are intrigued by the process of discovering a L1 equivalent to an English idioms, saying that:

“I find it riveting to look for the cognate. I feel as if I could identify the similarities between the two cultures which I assumed to be totally different from each other” (interview with student 6, April, 2017).

For this person, the delight of learning has been associated with the joy of discovering cultural implication behind idiomatic expression. To others, the pleasure lies with the sense of achievement gained from conquering a challenge arising in the process of idiom learning:

“...Because I feel great when finding a Vietnamese idioms. this feeling is comparable to that felt by those who give correct answer to a quiz...” (interview with student 5, April, 2017).

“...finding a similar idiom in Vietnamese is by no means an easy task, but you will be thrilled when you discover one...” (interview with student 7, April, 2017)

There is also a consensus among interviewees as to how interesting it is to see the relevance between the idioms that they acquired and the experiences that have been through in real – life:

“...I usually learn idioms by associating them with my personal experience since it is very rewarding to find out a more interesting way to share with others my personal experience in English...”(interview with student 2, April, 2017)

Some even go as far as giving a specific example:

“For instance, when I learn the idioms “...with flying colours”, the vivid memory of me getting high scores in the exams comes flooding back to me. I find it to be a lively and interesting approach and use it frequently...”(interview with student 11, April, 2017).

it is clear that the enjoyment that they derive from the learning process result in learners’ preference for certain strategies. This positive feeling comes within the learning process itself rather than any external factors; thus, it is considered to be a source of intrinsic motivation.

Learning style

Learning style preference can be indicative of the strategies that learners use to acquire idioms. No specific terms are used, yet the researcher can figure out which style of learning the participants have from their account. It seems that those who “prefer learning through seeing” or “feel at ease when learning idioms through reading texts”, “always opt for Illustration – filled books” or “are able to memorize information more quickly and retain it for longer time

with the help of visual aids” are those who belong to the group of visual learners. These people tend to choose such strategies as learning idioms through pictures or watching movies, reading stories.

“I am able to memorize information more quickly and retain it for longer time with the help of visual aids, that is the reason why I usually learn idioms along with their illustration pictures” (interview with student 5, April, 2017).

“...I am the type of person who prefer learning through pictures, and I love the fact that Facebook pages present idioms in the form of pictures which are more vivid and inspiring to learn” (interview with student 10, April, 2017)

As for those who “can not remember idioms without saying it out loud” or “find speaking to be an effective way to learn idioms”, they can be considered as auditory learners. This group of learners were keen to adopt the practice of drilling idioms through interaction, listening to teachers’ oral explanation, listening to songs, saying idioms out loud or orally repeat them.

“I do not know the reason why but it seems that I can remember idioms without saying it out loud...” (interview with student 3, April, 2017).

“I learn much better through listening and speaking so this strategy (interacting with others) is my number one choice to consolidate idioms...” (interview with student 6, April, 2017).

Apparently, although there are only some who could articulately name their own learning style, the majority of participants were aware of the way in which they study the most effectively and choose learning strategies in correspondence to that.

Affective states

The research subjects expressed their concern for the physical learning environment. They pointed out several strategies that allowed their learning to take place in different surroundings instead of the confined space of class or study rooms. This could bring them a high degree of physical and mental comfort which helped to optimize their idiom acquisition.

...I can bring the flashcards and notebooks with me everywhere, which means learning is not confined to one place only, so I feel more comfortable and learn more efficiently...(Interview with student 3, April, 2017).

...I want to learn while lying on the sofas which brings me a great deal of physical comfort, so I choose to take note of must-learn idioms on a small, highly portable notebooks...(interview with student 5, April, 2017).

Moreover, their choice of learning idiom strategies can be relevant to the fact that they can get their learning better organized and clear away their sense of puzzlement which is the direct cause of learning anxiety. A participant said that:

...I prefer grouping idioms into different categories since it makes me less baffled over an overwhelming number of idioms that I have to learn... (Interview with student 10, April, 2017).

Living habit

Living habit is an additional category that is not included in the original framework. This is the most mentioned reasons for media-associated strategies like watching movies, surfing Youtube or Facebook pages. The vast majority of people involved in the interview admitted that they visited Facebook every twenty minutes, and are regular visitor to Youtube, leading to the high frequency of employing facebook or Youtube-related strategies.

"I frequently visit facebook since I communicate with my friends mostly via facebook, it is also a major source of information...so it is obviously the reason why I learn idioms there"(interview with student 6, April, 2017).

"I am a Youtube addict. Hardly does a day go by without me surfing my favourite Youtube channels..."(interview with student 7, April, 2017).

4.2 Discussion

In this section, the findings are discussed in light of previous studies, following the order of research objectives: (1) strategies used by FELTE's second-year students to acquire idioms, (2) the distinction in learning strategies between those with low and high idiomatic competence and (3) factors affecting their choice of strategies.

4.2.1 Strategies used by FELTE's second-year students to acquire idioms

It can be inferred from the questionnaire data that idiom learning strategies adopted by FELTE's second-year students are not restricted to any particular

type. In stead, the research subjects utilize strategies across different groups to acquire idioms, judging from the fact that there is no group with every single strategies being labelled as low-use. Meanwhile, social, determination, meta-cognitive and memory strategies are widely endorsed among research participants.

Discovery strategy

A closer look at figure 4.1.1 a, b would show that the research's subjects gravitate towards strategies requiring low mental processing like asking for teachers' help and using dictionary at the innitial stage of idiomatic acquisition. This is attributable to the fact that they present a short-cut to the discovery of new idioms' meaning. In other words, learners tend to be informed of what a new idiom mean instantly by consulting their highly qualified instructors or dictionaries, which can save them a great deal of time. The finding does parallel Alhaysony (2017)'s in a study with 85 senior students at the Department of English at Aljouf University in Saudi Arabia who are reported to make frequent use of dictionary when looking for unknown idioms. However, a strong preference is expressed for monolingual dictionary over bilingual ones. This is in sharp contrast with the result obtained from a vocabulary learning strategy study by Schmitt (1997) on a heterogeneous population of 600 Japanese students at different educational levels. The result indicates learners' favour for bilingual dictionaries over monolingual ones.

Equally noticeable is that as English major learners, the research's subjects make use of idiom learning strategies that require further cognitive effort. These strategies involving guessing the meaning based on the given context. This is in line with what was found in studies by Alhaysony (2017) and Cooper (1999) (as cited in Zarei and Pour, 2013). Findings from these studies help to reinforce the belief about the importance of rasing learners' awareness of context in teaching idioms which have been highlighted in an array of studies conducted by Asl, 2013; Irujo, 1986; Rohani et al., 2012; Saleh and Zakaria, 2013; Sridhar and Karunakaran, 2013 (as cited in Alhaysonay, p2017, p.78).

While checking for cognates commonly known as the equivalent in L1 is found to be used on quite a regular basis in the research, it is used at outstandingly high frequency by participants in Alhaysony (2017)'s study. In contrast, thus strategy is by far the least frequently used in Cooper (1999)'s research. It should also be noted that discovering the meaning of new idioms through group work is not considered to be a common practice among FELTE's second-year students. The finding remarkably differs from that found in Alhaysony (2017)'s research in which groupwork strategy is particularly favoured by the participants. The low frequency of FELTE's students employing groupwork strategy might be ascribed to the notable absence of in-class groupwork activities intended for vocabulary acquisition; as a result, the habit of learning idiomatic expression via groupwork fail to get entrenched among learners.

Consolidation strategies

In terms of strategies used to reinforce knowledge about idioms, memory and meta-cognitive strategies prove to be the most prevalent, with high-use and medium-use vastly outnumbering low-use ones within each group.

Memory strategies

As English major students who appear to acquire an interest in language-related mental processing activities, and possess a wealth of experiences in language and idioms usages, FELTE's second-year students tend to have a strong affinity for the memory approach which require learners to embark on high-level mental functioning and activate their prior knowledge or experiences.

Among ten individual memory strategies, drawing on personal experience is clearly at the top of the list. This might indicate its degree of usefulness perceived by the research subjects. In deed, its effectiveness has been well recognized by those involved in the field of English Language teaching, among whom is David Holmes. Holmes is a veteran English teacher who has a great deal of experiences in teaching English in many countries across the world.

During his time teaching English to Thai learners, he came to realize how effective it is for students to learn idioms by associating it with what they have been through in real life. The realization turns into a huge motivation for him to write a book titled “*Idioms and Expressions*”, in which idioms accompanied by real-life examples are presented as a teaching method and materials for English teachers to consider.

Another memory strategy that is of widespread use among the research’s subjects is semantic grouping. This approach has been strongly advocated by a large number of leading scholars in the field of language teaching, including Hashemi and Gowdasiaei, (2005), Hatch and Brown (1995), Johnson (1995), Machalias (1991), Menon (1991), Seal (1991). They believed that learning vocabulary via semantic grouping can help to “ease the learning task” by pointing out “the similarity between the lexical items” and subtle difference between “related words” (as cited in Gholami and Khezrlou, 2013 and 2014, p. 153). Nation (2000) offered further explanation as to how this redeeming feature manifests itself in the process of acquiring vocabulary in general by saying that grouping semantically related words allows learners to learn vocabularies with “less effort”, get a clearer sense of the logical relationship between acquired knowledge, the way in which information is processed in the brain and the slight distinction among similar words (as cited in Gholami and Khezrlou, 2013 and 2014, p. 153). It seems that the positive impact that this strategy has on vocabulary learning holds true for the acquisition of idiomatic expression, a segment of vocabulary. A close examination of English idiom books available in Vietnam such as *English idioms in use* by Michael McCarthy and Felicity O’dell or *Idioms organizer* by John Wright indicates that introducing idioms according to different semantic groups is a widely used approach. For instance, in *English idioms in use* by Michael McCarthy, all idioms which denote the feeling of happiness and sadness are grouped into two distinct sections in one lesson. Generally speaking, the widespread use of this strategy to organize the content of common idiom books in Vietnam does

account for language learners' inclination towards the adoption of semantic grouping in expanding their idiomatic repertoire.

Meta-cognitive strategies

Most prevalent of all is the use of Facebook and Youtube. The result is conceivable in the heyday of Web 2.0 Social Media technologies where such tools as Facebook and Youtube have enjoyed an upsurge in popularity, and the number of social media users has risen exponentially worldwide. Statistically speaking, more than 1.86 billion people use Facebook on monthly basis, and 1.23 billion on daily basis. As for Youtube, this video-sharing website is regarded as one of the world's largest website with approximately 100 million visitors each year. The research's result also echoed the findings in a study conducted by Liu (2010) with students at the School of Communication. According to Liu (2010), these two social media tools enable learners to "identify the knowledge that is useful and applicable" as well as promote their understanding about "the environment and circumstances" in which knowledge will be used with the view to enhancing "the value of education" (p. 111). Meanwhile, the access to Facebook or Youtube is free of charge, and thus allow educators and eager learners to utilize "valuable learning content at no cost" (Liu, 2010, p.112). This serves as the major contributing factor to the spread of knowledge across different groups of Internet users. For these two reasons, an increasing number of people have nowadays make use of social media tools including Facebook and Youtube for educational purposes, and the fact that FELTE's students use does closely corresponds to the existing global trend.

Another frequently used strategy in the meta-cognitive group is the practice of doing idiom tests in books. It is possibly due to the fact that vocabulary tests already integrated into their coursebooks are designed partly to examine students' idiomatic knowledge, and that idiom books are now widely available for learners both in the form of hard-copy and soft-copy versions. In contrast, online idiom tests prove not to be familiar with students since these

types of tests exist in quite a limited number with no standardized or well-developed format.

Social strategies and cognitive strategies

At the other end of spectrum are social and cognitive group in which low-use individual strategies vastly dominate. Using idioms when engaging in speaking practice is the only strategy labelled as high-use. This is in sharp contrast with the findings from Alhaysony (2017)'s study which highlights a low frequency at which learning idioms by communicating outside classroom adopted by English major fourth-year students at the Department of English at Aljouf University in Saudi Arabia.

As far as the cognitive approaches are concerned, verbal repetition is by far the most used strategy. This strategy is also a common practice across different language learning contexts worldwide. O'malley and Chamot (1990) asserted that the strategy is so deeply embedded that hardly do learners give it up "to try other ones" (as cited in Schmitt, 1997, p. 21). Equally noticeable is that flashcards and notebooks which are often reported to be favourite learning aids in many research into vocabulary learning strategies belong to low-use strategy group in this study.

4.2.2 The difference in learning strategies between those with low and high idiomatic competence

With regards to determination strategies, those who obtain high scores in the idiomatic test are inclined towards context-based guessing strategy. Rubin (1975) did obtain the similar findings which indicates that successful learners tend to show "preparedness to guess" and pay attention to the relevance between the context and the meaning of a word or phrase (as cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 547). Furthermore, the test's high-achievers express their strong preference for mono-lingual dictionary. According to a study conducted by Neubach and Cohen (1988), this type of dictionary was reported to gain widespread popularity among high-proficiency students who explain that it informed them about "more precise meaning of words" (as cited in Lew, 2004,

p.29). However, it should be noted that it is still impossible for the researcher to come into any conclusion regarding the relationship between idiomatic competence and the overall language proficiency within the scope of this study. As for the low-achievers, bilingual dictionary is used at high frequency probably due to the ease with which users understand the meaning of idioms. Also, learners in this group particularly favour the practice of seeking similar idioms (cognates) in L1. The finding comes in sharp contrast with that from the study conducted by Naiman et al. (1978) indicating that it is good language learners who tend to draw “crosslingual comparison” (as cited in Ellis, 1994).

When it comes to social strategies used to consolidate idioms, there is a tendency towards learning idioms through communicative activities with friends among people with high idiomatic competence. A look at studies conducted in a broader area known as Language learning strategies show that successful learners are more concerned with “functional practice” or “communication”, and do make attempt to “engage in real communication by seeking opportunities for natural language use”. In other words, these learners are critically aware of the vital role of communicative activities in promoting learners’ language proficiency and automizing acquired grammatical and lexical features. It is apparent that the finding is echoed in this study which is carried out on a much narrower subject, idiom learning strategies.

In terms of memory approach, associating learnt idioms with personal experience is by far more popular with high- than low-scoring participants of the tests. This is a type of strategy that require a certain amount of cognitive effort on the part of learners since they are supposed to get engaged in deep – level mental processing. Another strategy that manages to gain unanimous favour from students with high idiomatic competence is writing idioms in sentences. it should be noted that writing sentences using idioms is synonymous to the act of providing them with specific contexts. Thus, this attempt somehow reflects learners’ attention to contextualized meaning of idiomatic expressions, which is widely recognized as a characteristic of good

learners in many studies (Rubin, 1975; Reiss, 1985, as cited in Ellis, 1994, p.547).

Regarding strategies under the cognitive categories, only verbal repetition is frequently adopted by high-scoring learners, whereas low – achievers show preference for two of strategies in this group, namely written repetition and flashcards. It seems that people with low idiomatic competence show inclination towards strategies that rely more on mechanical means instead of those that elaborate on mental processing as can be found in the memory group.

Last but not least, media-based strategies which belong to meta-cognitive are prevalent for both groups, with a slightly higher frequency of using noticed among high – achievers. However, several strategies under the meta-cognitive category are more frequently used by the group of test-takers with high idiomatic test result. For instance, they regularly select idioms to learn based on their level of importance, check their progress by taking idiom tests and maintain the practice of learning idioms in the long run. This suggests high-achievers' conscious attempt to monitor their own idiomatic learning process. The findings reminds those intersted in language learning strategies of numerous “good lannguage learners” studies in which being “thoughtful and aware of themselves in relation to the learning process” is the characteristic closely associated with successful learners (Ellis, 1994, p. 549).

4.2.3 Factors affecting learners' choice of idiom learning strategies

Learners' belief about learning

Belief about the importance of context

The reseach participants attached considerable importance to context in the idiom meaning discovery. This belief is shared by the findings from Asl (2013)'s study in which 22 intermediate Iranian students were divided into three groups with group 1 receiving idiom instruction through contexts, group 2 receiving instruction through sentences and group 3 being instructed idioms in decontextualized forms. The result is favorable to the first group of participants who are the highest-achiever in both pretest and posttest. This can reinforce the

belief among FELTE's second-year students about the importance of context which are the major motivation behind their choice of a discovery strategy.

Belief about the importance of learning English in natural way

FELTE's students tend to engage in communicative activities in order to be able to put idiomatic knowledge into practice. These activities are believed to facilitate the development of learners' productive language about the idioms. Productive vocabulary knowledge is often discussed in relation to receptive ones. While the former is defined as learners' ability to use the words in communicative activities in natural way, the latter is associated with learners' being able to "know and recognize the meaning of words that caused them to understand the text they have read" and audios they listen to. Generally speaking, receptive knowledge is restricted to knowing the word's definition, pronunciation, part of speech and grammatical features. In contrast, its related concept – productive knowledge extend to a high-level mental processing in which learners have to "recover the structure and meaning" (Laufer et al, 2004; Webb, 2008) and "pass on the word as in the original learners' language (Webb, 2009) (as cited in Maskor and Baharudin, 2016, p. 264). Meanwhile, these are believed to help learners to use idioms in a natural and automatic way. This echoes Bilash who considered automaticity as "the result of learning, repetition, and practice". In other words, regular interaction help to automatize the existing idiomatic repertoire, allowing learners to use idioms spontaneously, and thus naturally in real-life communication.

With reference to the belief about the importance of thinking in L2, most of participants assert that it is highly important for learners to think in L2, and one way to facilitate this practice is to get themselves exposed to extensive and comprehensible L2 input, leading to their favour of mono-lingual dictionary over the bilingual ones. This viewpoint appears to be similar to that of many researchers who recognize the role of input in "developing the highly connected implicit knowledge that is needed to become an effective communicator in the L2" (Ellis, 2008, p.4). To put it in another way, the implicit knowledge which is held unconsciously, and difficult to explicitly and

articulately explained is turns out to be “easily and quickly accessed” and thus contributes greatly to learners’ automaticity and readiness in communication.

Learners’ belief about the role of teachers

Students involved in the study consider teachers as reliable source of idiomatic knowledge to place trust on. There are two possible explanations for this trend. Firstly, from the cultural perspective, Vietnam is among country which scores high in the power distance concept, commonly referred to as one of five cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede (1980). This dimension is defined as “the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept that power is distributed unequally”. In a country which features high power distance, teachers are considered to be the sole knowledge provider whose expertise is never questioned or challenged by learners. Another explanation might be that students have been familiar with the classes where the Grammar translation method is predominantly used, and thus might have the perception of teachers as a the primary source of knowledge deeply entrenched in their mind since they were in high school. Given these two possible factors, learners tend to rely on teachers and show preference for strategies that involve asking teachers’ help.

Learners’ motivation

As mentioned earlier, ULIS’s second-year students are supposed to reach C1 according to CEFR. In order to have their proficiency level measured and recognized, participating in standardized proficiency test is a must. Meanwhile, according to band descriptor of these standardized tests, a high-scoring speaking performance does require the test-takers to employ a certain number of idiomatic expression with high accuracy. This is the significant factor that motivates students to learn idioms through regular speaking practice with friends. However, it is said that intrinsic motivation is of greater importance than extrinsic motivation to learners’ academic success in the long run. Therefore, If nurtured properly, it can lead to fruitful adoption of learning strategies, which in turn help to foster their idiomatic competence.

Learning style and experience

FELTE's learners reported to choose idiom learning strategies that are closely related to their learning style preference. This result mirrors Oxford (1989)'s claim that there was "a strong relationship" between a person's use of learning strategies and his or her learning style (as cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 541). Her claim might have been grounded in the learning style descriptors developed by Willing (1987). This description of four learning styles among ESL learners in Australia were believed to provide hints about learning strategies associated with particular learning style. It is also conceivable that learning strategies might reflect learning experiences that learners have been through, especially the positive ones.

Affective states

Physical surroundings are usually overlooked by learners, but they help to uplift the studying morale, which can better guarantee the desirable learning outcome. This current study's finding is similar to the case of F.Schumann who admitted that she found it impossible to "settle down to studying Farsi and Arabic" until she had "achieved order and comfort in her physical surrounding" (Schumann & Schumann, 1977, as cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 479).

Living habits

Daily habits like facebooking or watching youtube are linked to the choice of idiom learning strategies, indicating the trend towards integrating learning English idioms into daily routine among English learners. Idiom learning is not restricted to formal setting only, but is well incorporated into daily activities. Little research has been done on the impact of this trend on the efficiency and productivity of learning. From the researcher's perspective, as for learners who have to juggle with different tasks, this practice can help learners to save a great deal of time. Also, it can undermine the burden or pressure which might be the result of formal and intensive learning.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

As the conclusion of the whole study, the chapter includes a summary of significant research findings that have been elaborated on in the previous chapter. Afterwards, certain limitation of the studies will be pinpointed, followed by recommendation for future research.

5.1 Summary of findings

With the use of multiple data collection instruments including questionnaires, tests, and face-to-face and online interviews, the research yielded the following findings.

First of all, it was found that students employed a broad variety of idiom learning strategies across different groups: social, cognitive, meta-cognitive, memory, determination. When making attempt to uncover the meaning of new idioms, these learners prefer asking teachers for Vietnamese translation or using dictionary. It should also be noted that the kind of dictionary which is better favoured by this group of learners is monolingual rather than bilingual dictionary. Nonetheless, as English major students, they do show preference for high-level mental processing tasks which can allow them to call upon their prior knowledge and a wealth of experiences. Examples of such strategies iscontext-based guessing strategy. In terms of strategies used to consolidate idioms, meta-cognitive and memory strategy groups prove to be more popular with FELTE's second – year students. As for the former, two outstandingly favoured strategies are relating experience and semantic grouping. The practice of learning idioms from Facebook, Youtube pages, taking idiom tests and keeping learning idioms over a prolonged period is the most common among strategies inherent in the latter group. Social and cognitive strategies are less prevalent, with using idioms in speaking practice and verbal repetition being the most frequently used within these categories.

Secondly, when it comes to the difference in strategy use between the high- and low-achievers in the idiom test, the former prefer adopting context – based guessing strategy to explore the meaning of new idioms. In contrast, checking cognates are largely endorsed by the latter. Also, while there is a tendency towards monolingual idiom dictionary among those with high idiomatic competence, bilingual ones are more frequently used by low-achieving learners.

As far as the practice of reinforcing the knowledge about idioms is concerned, test-takers with high scores have strong affinity for strategies involving associating idioms with personal experience, writing idioms in sentences and grouping. Another strategy appealing to them is using idioms when interacting with others. Furthermore, the discrepancy is well noticed in the use of cognitive strategies. The low-achieving test-takers employ written repetition and flashcards at a remarkable frequency as opposed to the high – achievers who rarely use these two strategies. Equally noticeable is the fact that taking idiom tests and continuing to learn idioms over the time are widely preferred among those obtaining high test result.

With reference to the reasons why the participants choose to adopt Idiom-learning strategies, it is clearly seen that learners' belief, learning experience, style, motivation which can be found in Ellis (1994)'s model are commonly-cited reasons among interviewees. An additional factor included in this research's finding is learners' living habits. Specifically, FELTE's second-year students base their idiom learning strategy choice on their belief about the role of teachers, the context in which the target idioms are used and the importance of learning English in a natural way. When it comes to learning motivations, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are reported to be the factors leading to their selection of certain idiom learning strategies. Also, visual and auditory learning styles are said to be another reasons for learners' choice of idiom learning strategies. At the same time, their decision to select certain learning strategies is closely relevant to the concern about the learning comfort offered by physical surrounding. Meanwhile, there exists a strong link between

students' daily use of media tools like Facebook or Youtube and the learning strategies they employ.

5.2 Pedagogical implications

Since teachers are regarded as a reliable source of idiomatic knowledge and the overwhelming majority of learners prefer exploring the meaning of new idioms with the aid of their teachers, attempt is needed on the part of the instructors to engage in a lifelong process of expanding their idiomatic repertoire in order to meet the increasing demand of learners. Meanwhile, advice regarding idiom dictionary use proves to be necessary to students who express strong preference for monolingual dictionary as mentioned earlier in the research. Additionally, in a time when Facebook and Youtube users have been inundated with a massive number of posts and videos about idioms, it is of paramount importance for teachers to offer students with recommendations about trustworthy pages they can visit and learn idioms.

In light of the empirical findings mentioned above, teachers at the Faculty of English Language Teachers Education are recommended to make adjustments to their idiom teaching practice to ensure its correlation with students' current use of idiom learning strategies. Teachers are recommended to stimulate students' interest in the lesson by introducing and presenting idioms along with their context, and having students guess the idioms' meaning based on the context.

Another noteworthy point is that teachers should instill communicative activities in which learners have the chance to apply idioms into speaking. Plus, it is advisable that the instructors encourage students to share their own experience, which they can associate with the learnt idioms. This activity is likely to spark exciting in-class discussion since relating learnt idioms with personal experience is among the most used strategies of the research subjects. Teachers are recommended to consult idiom books like English idioms in use to learn different ways to group idioms semantically.

Given the marked distinction in learning strategies between students with high and low idiomatic competence, it would be a good idea to include a sharing session in which students of higher idiomatic competence can share with the rest the strategies they frequently adopt to acquire idioms, and those with lower idiomatic competence can derive learning approaches which work well for them from these session.

Moreover, since students' choice of idiom learning strategies are closely relevant to their belief, learning experience, teachers are responsible for correcting false, ungrounded assumption about language and idiom learning, as well as creating positive learning experience. These might in turn lead to learners' more informed choice of strategies to learn idioms. Also, it is important for teachers to raise students' awareness about the crucial role played by idioms in day-to-day communication and their relationship with L2 proficiency. This serves as a major motivation for students to embark on the idiom learning process. Nonetheless, whether students' interest in learning will be sustained over the time or not depend on an array of factors which might be personal and vary among learners, and thus far beyond teachers' control.

Also, it is advisable that teachers should make effort to acquire understanding about students' learning style preference through observation, informal interviews or even some simplified version of learning style questionnaire. In this way, they can give suggestion for idiom learning strategies which is in correspondenc with students' learning style. At the same time, as students have the tendency to incorporate idiom learning into their daily activities namely Facebooking or Youtube watching, teachers are advised to provide students with several tips to ensure the effectiveness of this practice as well as the balance between entertaining and studying.

5.3 Limitations

One apparent shortcoming of this research is the lack of theoretical framework tailor-made for idiom acquisition. In this study, the researcher had to employ Schmitt (1997)'s vocabulary learning strategies. Since it is designed

to address vocabulary-learning, certain strategies which are exclusive to idiom learning might not be included, and several strategies used to acquire vocabularies cannot be applied to learning idioms. Although adaptation attempt had been made to ensure the relevance between the chosen framework and the focus of the research by eliminating strategies that can not be transferred across two areas and adding several strategies specifically used to study idioms, the questionnaire is far from comprehensive. In other words, there might be some idiom learning strategies that have yet to be touched upon.

Moreover, the research sample size is relatively small, accounting for less than one-fifth of the population. The sample size for the interview is even narrower (10 participants only) since it is the only way for to ensure the feasibility of the interview. Such a small sample size could not be representative of the majority's opinions and thus not guaranteeing the proper generalization of the research findings.

Another limitation is that the T-test was not employed in order to examine whether the research result is representative of the actual difference in the use of idiom learning strategies between learners with low and high idiomatic competence across the population. It is due to the fact that conclusion about participants' idiomatic competence is restricted to this research only, and the researcher does not intend to make generalization about their idiomatic competence beyond the context of this study. Thus, it might not be necessary to measure how far the distinctions in idiom learning strategies between low and high-scoring test-takers represent those of the whole population.

A further drawback of this research lies with the adoption of self-report methods: the written questionnaire and the interview. The former is frequently criticized for having high level of research imposition since the questionnaire items are the result of the researcher's knowledge gained from a number of sources. This research method also limited the findings to common strategies used by learners to study idioms, and thus failed to provide the researchers comprehensive understanding about the issue (Introduction to research, nd). For instance, it would be impossible for the researcher to explore the reason

behind their choice if only questionnaire method were used. Regarding the interview method, it is considered as time-consuming in both data collection and analysis, explaining the reason why only a small number of participants (10 students) are involved in the interview. A further drawback would be that the irrelevant details found in interviewees' response is likely to pose a challenge for the researcher when interpreting and analysing data.

The absence of the standardized test is another obstacle that the researcher has been presented with. Although attempt has been made to design an idiom test with a careful consideration of the test format, idiom choice, and piloting process, the reliability and validity of the test result might not be guaranteed.

5.4 Suggestions for further studies

Research into this field holds considerable promises for those working in the field of English language teaching. In fact, the present study show significant gaps that need to be filled by future studies to contribute to the growing body of literature on the subject of idiom learning strategies.

First of all, given the fact that the current research aims at exploring idiom learning strategies used by FELTE's second – year students without considering the type of idioms or learners' age, genders. Therefore, it is hoped that future's studies will take a closer look at these variables to provide a more insightful understanding about learners' adoption of acquiring idioms.

Another suggestion is for researchers to establish the correlation between idiomatic competence and L2 language proficiency through their concrete, empirical evidence. this has been reiterated in numerous sources, yet there are not many in which the relationship is empirically proven. As a result, in order to convince an increasing number of students into learning idioms, future research into this area thus is needed.

Plus, since the data obtained from the questionnaire is restricted to the types of strategies and their frequency of being used, it is recommended that

their effectiveness be closely examined, or learners' perception about the effective idiom learning strategies in studies conducted in the future.

Meanwhile, it is of considerable importance for a standardized test to be developed and come into widespread use. This can facilitate the marking procedure, providing on-the-spot result on test-takers' idiomatic competence..

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APPENDIX 1

Schmitt (1997)'s vocabulary learning strategy taxonomy

Strategies for discovery the meaning of new words

DET Analyze part of speech

DET Analyze affixes and roots

DET Check for L1 cognate

DET Analyze any available pictures or gestures

DET Guess from textual context

DET Bilingual dictionary

DET Monolingual dictionary

DET Word lists

DET Flash cards

SOC Ask teacher for an L1 translation

SOC Ask teacher for paraphrase or synonym of new word

SOC Ask teacher for a sentence including the new word

SOC Ask classmates for meaning

SOC Discover new meaning through group work activity

Strategies for Consolidating a Word Once it has been Encountered

SOC Study and practice meaning in a group

SOC Teacher checks students' flash cards or word lists for accuracy

SOC Interact with native-speakers

MEM Study word with a pictorial representation of its meaning

MEM Image word's meaning

MEM Connect word to a personal experience

MEM Associate the word with its coordinates

MEM Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms

MEM Use Semantic map

MEM Use 'scales' for gradable adjectives

MEM Peg Method

MEM Loci Method

MEM Group words together to study them

MEM Group words together spatially on a page

MEM Use new word in sentences

MEM Group words together within a storyline

MEM Study the spelling of a word

MEM Study the sound of a word

MEM Say new word aloud when studying

MEM Image word form

MEM Underline initial letter of the word

MEM Configuration

MEM Use Keyword Method

MEM Affixes and Roots (remembering)

MEM Part of Speech (remembering)

MEM Paraphrase the words meaning

MEM Use cognates in study

MEM Learn the words of an idiom together

MEM Use Physical action when learning a word

MEM Use semantic feature grids

COG Verbal repetition

COG Written Repetition

COG Word Lists

COG Flash Cards

COG Take notes in class

COG Use the vocabulary section in your textbook

COG Listen to tape of word lists

COG Put English labels on physical objects

COG Keep a vocabulary notebook

MET Use English-language media
(songs, movies, newscasts, etc.)

MET Testing oneself with word tests

MET Use spaced word practice

MET Skip or pass new word

MET Continue to study word over time

APPENDIX 2

Table 1. *List of most frequently used idioms*

Most frequently used idioms (Taken from multiple corpora)	
Give sb a break	Serve sb's right
Take into account	Red herrings
Put something to rest	Take sb to task
Get something across	Piece of cake
Over one's head	Pull sb's leg
Take sb for granted	Put your foot in it (put your foot in your mouth)
Take issue with	Make fun of
Keep up with	Touch-and-go
Put up with	Take effect
Draw the line	Make sense
Push the envelop	Fall short
Hang in there	Make good on
In bad shape	Have a say in
In effect	Sell out
Up in the air	Come to mind
Live up to	Hit the headlines
Fill in	Hit home
Make up for	In light of
The level playing field	In place of
Bits and pieces	At the expense of
Keep an eye on	

Go for it	A rule of thumb
Take advantage of	Off the top of one's head
Keep in touch with	Upfront
Beg the question	On the horizon
Make up one's mind	In good faith
Get to the point	On and off
Up for grabs	All out
In the pipeline	At stake
Stick with	Take its toll on
Cast light on	Get a handle on

Table 2. *List of common idioms with over 2 million search results*

Common idioms with over 2 million search results	Number of search results
Over the moon	141,000,000
Out of the blue	1,920,000,000
Off-colour	14,500,000
Let the cat out of the bag	6,200,000
Burn the midnight oil	5,070,000
Give it a shot	140,000,000
Get off chest	20,600,000
Get butterflies in stomach	35,800,000
Fly off the handles	32,400,000

Cost an arm and a leg	44,300,000
Over the moon	141,000,000
Out of the blue	1,920,000,000
Off-colour	14,500,000
Let the cat out of the bag	6,200,000
Burn the midnight oil	5,070,000
Give it a shot	140,000,000
Get off chest	20,600,000
Get butterflies in stomach	35,800,000
Fly off the handles	32,400,000
Cost an arm and a leg	44,300,000
Make both ends meet	11,000,000
Every cloud has a silver lining	3,080,000
It's a small world	278,000,000
Don't judge a book by its cover	5,220,000
A drop in the ocean	30,300,000
A chip on one's shoulder	3,080,000
A pain in the neck	21,300,000
Hit the nail on the head	37,600,000
Hold your horse	85,100,000
Break a leg	99,300,000
Work against the clock	60,000,000
Go the extra mile	76,600,000
Speak of the devil	35,400,000

Tongue-in-cheek	30,400,000
Short and sweet	215,000,000
Smell a rat	14,200,000
Find one's feet	2,290,000
Under the weather	505,000,000

APPENDIX 3

UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES
AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
Hanoi, February, 2017

FACULTY OF ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHER
EDUCATION

SURVEY OF SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS' IDIOM LEARNING STRATEGIES

I am ULIS fourth-year student from class 13E2. I am doing a research on second-year students' idiom learning strategies. Your response to this survey will help give an insight into learners' use of learning strategies to acquire English idioms.

Your participation in this survey is totally voluntary. All personal information is kept confidential and serves research purposes only.

Your name:

Tel:

Class:

Email:

Please put ✓ in the box (5,4,3,2, or 1) which best indicates the degree of frequency at which you use the strategy to learn idioms.

Notice:

5 = always use it

4 = often use it

3 = sometimes use it

2 = seldom use it

1 = never use it

Statement of vocabulary learning strategies		Degree of frequency				
		5 Always use it	4	3	2	1 Never use it
Strategies used to discover the meaning of a new idiom						
1	I learn the meaning of new idioms by checking for their similar idioms in L1 <i>(like fathers, like sons – Cha nào con nấy)</i>					
2	I learn the meaning of new idioms through pictures illustrated in the textbook					
3	I learn the meaning of new idioms from the textual context <i>(sentences, passages)</i>					
4	I learn the meaning of new idioms through their constituents <i>(the words that make up the idioms)</i>					
5	I learn the meaning of new idioms by using a bilingual dictionary					
6	I learn the meaning of new idioms by using monolingual dictionary					
7	I learn the meaning of new idioms from flash cards					
8	I learn the meaning of new idioms by asking teachers to translate them into Vietnamese					
9	I learn the meaning of new idioms by asking teachers for their paraphrase or synonym					

		5	4	3	2	1
	Statement of vocabulary learning strategies	Always use it				Never use it
10	I learn the meaning of new idioms by asking teachers to put them into a sentence					
11	I learn the meaning of new idioms by asking my classmate					
12	I learn the meaning of new idioms when participating in group work activities					
Strategies used to consolidate learnt idioms						
13	I consolidate learnt idioms in group					
14	I consolidate learnt idioms by asking teachers to check my idiom flash cards/wordlist for accuracy					
15	I consolidate learnt idioms by using them when I practice speaking with others					
16	I consolidate learnt idioms through pictures that illustrate their meaning					
17	I consolidate learnt idioms by visualizing their meaning					
18	I consolidate learnt idioms by connecting the idioms to my personal experience					
19	I consolidate learnt idioms to their synonyms and antonyms					
20	I consolidate learnt idioms by using semantic map (grouping idioms with similar meaning, <i>Eg: idioms about</i>					

	<i>anger/happiness...)</i>					
21	I consolidate learnt idioms by grouping those with similar linguistic features (<i>Eg: animal idioms, colour idioms, comparative idioms</i>)					
22	I consolidate learnt idioms by writing them in a sentence					
	Statement of vocabulary learning strategies	5 Always use it	4	3	2	1 Never use it
23	I consolidate learnt idioms by saying them out loud					
24	I consolidate learnt idioms by using physical actions					
25	I consolidate learnt idioms by paraphrasing their meaning					
26	I consolidate learnt idioms by writing them down repeatedly					
27	I consolidate learnt idioms by saying them repeatedly					
28	I consolidate learnt idioms by taking Flashcards with me whenever I go					
29	I consolidate learnt idioms by taking idiom lists with me whenever I go					
30	I consolidate learnt idioms by keeping an idioms notebook					
31	I consolidate learnt idioms through English songs					
32	I consolidate learnt idioms through English					

	movies					
33	I consolidate learnt idioms through English stories					
34	I consolidate learnt idioms through Youtube English learning channels					
35	I consolidate learnt idioms through Facebook English learning pages					
36	I consolidate learnt idioms through English learning applications					
37	I consolidate learnt idioms by adopting spaced practice (<i>practice time broken into a number of short sessions, not a long period, Eg: learning known idioms through 6 sessions, each session lasts 10 minutes instead of studying within a single hour</i>)					
38	I consolidate learnt idioms by skipping or passing new idioms that I find unimportant					
39	I consolidate learnt idioms by taking online idiom tests					
40	I consolidate learnt idioms by taking idiom tests in books					
41	I consolidate learnt idioms by continuing to study them over the time					

APPENDIX 4

Idiom Test

Dear test-takers,

I am ULIS fourth-year student from class 13E2. I am doing a research on second-year students' idiom learning strategies. One part of this research is devoted to the difference in learning strategies among learners of different idiomatic competence level. Thus, your responses are sure to be of great value to the research findings. Your responses is kept confidential and serve research purposes only.

Your name:.....

Your telephone number:.....

Your email address:.....

Your Facebook user name:.....

PLEASE WRITE ALL YOUR ANSWERS ONTO THE ANSWER SHEET!

Choose the best answer to complete the following sentences

1. John copied off my test paper. It would.....if he failed the test.
- A. Give him a break
 - B. Serve him right
 - C. Take him to task
2. The president mentioned other issues as a..... to distract people from his failure to lower the crime rate.
- A. red herring
 - B. rule of thumb
 - C. Piece of cake
3. We willyour long years of service.....when we make our final decision
- A. put.....to rest
 - B. get.....across
 - C. take.....into account
4. Don't believe him. He's just.....
- A. pulling your leg
 - B. over your head
 - C. taking you for granted
5. I heard your last statement and I have to.....you
- A. put up with
 - B. take issue with
 - C. keep up with
6. I'm a loyal employee, but I.....when I am asked to do something I think is wrong.
- A. draw the line
 - B. push the envelop
 - C. Hang in there
7. We have no idea which school she'll be attending in September. Everything is still.....
- A. in effect
 - B. in bad shape
 - C. up in the air
8. The breathtakingly beautiful scenery certainly..... expectations.
- A. lives up to
 - B. fills in
 - C. makes up for
9. In my political work I try to concentrate on..... and not be distracted by details.
- A. the level playing field
 - B. the bits and pieces
 - C. the big picture
10. I really..... – I asked her if Jane was her mother, but she said Jane is her sister.
- A. keep an eye on it
 - B. Put my foot in it
 - C. go for it

11. The other children were always.....because he was fat and wore glasses.
- A. making fun of him
B. taking advantage of him
C. keeping in touch with him
12. I had trouble about which coat I liked best.
- A. begging the question
B. getting to the point
C. making up my mind
13. I cannot think of any good examples....., but give me a couple of hours and I'm sure I could come up with something.
- A. up for grabs
B. off the top of my head
C. in the pipeline
14. there is no new drug..... that will make this disease easier to treat.
- A. upfront
B. in good faith
C. on the horizon
15. Peter is very lazy. He only came to class.....
- A. on and off
B. at stake
C. all out
16. Divorce..... children involved.
- A. has a handle on
B. takes its toll on
C. casts light on
17. The medicine..... in less than a half hour.
- A. falls short
B. makes sense
C. takes effect
18. When he's 18, he'll begin to.....the running of the family business.
- A. make good on
B. sell out
C. have a say in
19. He.....two years ago when he was arrested for selling drugs to the mayor's nephew.
- A. hit the headlines
B. hit home
C. come to mind
20.recent incidents, we are asking our customers to take particular care of their personal belongings.
- A. in light of
B. at the expense of
C. in place of

21. When he sent me flowers and a card, was.....
- A. off colour
B. out of the blue
C. over the moon
22. I was trying to keep the party a secret, but Jim went and
- A. Burn the midnight oil
B. let the cat out of the bag
C. give it a shot
23. I sometimes discuss my problems with someone else just to
- A. get them off my chest.
B. start from scratch
C. Get butterflies in my stomach
24. I can't afford this purse! It..... I won't be able to pay my rent!
- A. flies off the handle
B. costs an arm and a leg
C. makes both ends meet
25. Try not to worry about it.
- A. Every cloud has a silver lining.
B. it's a small world
C. You can't judge a book by its cover
26. The money sent by comic relief I to help poverty in African countries is just..... They need far more than this.
- A. A chip on their shoulder
B. A pain in the neck
C. A drop in the ocean
27. I think you've..... That's the reason he didn't get the job.
- A. hit the nail on the head
B. held your hourse
C. broken a leg
28. We're reallynow. We must hurry.
- A. going the extra mile
B. working against the clock
C. speak of the devil
29. It was all..... He didn't really mean what he said.
- A. tongue-in-cheek
B. Touch-and-go
C. short and sweet
30. I can.....He said he has a PhD but he can't even remember which university he studied at.
- A. feel under the weather
B. Find my feet
C. smell a rat

Thank you for your participation!

Keys:

1. B	
2. A	
3. C	
4. A	
5. B	
6. A	
7. C	
8. A	
9. C	
10. B	
11. A	
12. C	
13. B	
14. C	
15. A	
	16. B
	17. C
	18. C
	19. A
	20. A
	21. C
	22. B
	23. A
	24. B
	25. A
	26. C
	27. A
	28. B
	29. A
	30. C

APPENDIX 5

Interview schedule

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study. In order to make sure you understand the purpose of the research, I am going to be asking you questions today based on your idiom learning strategy questionnaire response. Over the next 6-10 minutes, I will be asking you several questions regarding the reasons for your choice of idiom learning strategies. You may stop at any time without consequence. The information you share will remain anonymous and serve the research purpose only. Before we begin do you have any questions for me?

- *As can be seen from your questionnaire response, you make use of.....in order to learn the meaning of new idioms/ consolidate idioms/enhance knowledge about idioms. are there any reasons for this strategy?*
- *I can also notice that you use..... Why so?*
- *Why do choose.....to learn idioms/ consolidate idioms by.....?*
- *Could you please tell me the reasons why you.....to discover the meaning of new idioms/ consolidate idioms?*

*Notice: since it is a semi-structured interview, several additional questions might be asked to elicit further explanation from participants and ensure the flow of the conversation.

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT SAMPLE

Time: April, 5, 2017

Venue: ULIS campus, A2 building

Interviewer = A

Interviewee 7 = B

Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study. In order to make sure you understand the purpose of the research, I am going to be asking you questions today based on your idiom learning strategy questionnaire response.

Over the next 6-10 minutes, I will be asking you several questions regarding the reasons for your choice of idiom learning strategies. You may stop at any time without consequence. The information you share will remain anonymous and serve the research purpose only. Before we begin do you have any questions for me?

Interviewee 7: I guess not

A: when you discover the meaning of new idioms, you usually check for idioms which have the similar meaning in Vietnamese. Any reasons for this practice?

B: Well I find really interesting to do so...you know...finding a similar idiom in Vietnamese is by no means an easy task, but you will be thrilled when you discover one.

A: Another strategy you report using frequently is guessing the meaning of idioms from the context. Why do you use this strategy?

B: I think that context can give me some hints about the meaning of idiom so when I come across unknown idioms and can not get access to e-dictionary or do not have dictionary around, I usually try to read the whole sentence or

paragraph in which the idiom is used. For most of the time, I can find out the correct meaning...

A: I also notice that you use English-English dictionary, don't you?

B: Yes....

A: Why English-English dictionary?

B: I think that English-English dictionary offers learners detailed, easy-to-understand explanation. More importantly, the definition associated with the idiom is in English, so I will memorize the idiom and its meaning in English. This can help me to think and process information in English when prepared to speak and I think that my fluency will be improved...

A: Ok...you also discover the meaning of idioms with the help of pictorial illustration. What are the reasons for this strategy choice?

B: I am the kind of person who prefer learning through pictures... and I find it an interesting way to learn new idioms...

A: When encountering new idioms, you also asks teachers for meaning. Could you please tell me the reason why?

B: there is no special reason for it...I just think teachers have great knowledge about idioms so we can ask them and receive the answer immediately. This can save us a lot of time...

A: you also ask friends around, don't you?

B: Yes, besides teachers, I turn to my friends as well...there is saying "better learn from your friends than your teachers" . I bet you know it...

A: Moving on...you can discover the meaning of new idioms through groupwork activity. Why so?

B: At university, I am supposed to engage a range of groupwork activities both in and outside class. I have now been familiar with working in team...It is

probably the reason why I choose to discover the meaning of idioms via groupwork activities...

A: When it comes to strategies used to enhance the idiomatic knowledg, you usually try to visualize the meaning of idioms in your head?

B: Yes...

A: why do you consolidate idioms from this strategy?

B: I find that I can learn effectively through this approach. As I already mentioned, I am a visual learner...

A: I can see that you make use of idioms when practising with friends?

B: Yes, definitely. Because in this way can I prepare well for the upcoming VSTEP and final exams...

A: Another thing is that you revise idioms through pictures?

B: same reason...

A: Why do you consolidate idioms through asociating with personal experience?

B: I think that this can help me to memorize the meaning better.

A: in what way?

B: Actually, from my learning experience, I usually learn vocabulary by relating it to real-life experience and I've seen that I can remember the meaning quite easily.

A: Another strategy you use is grouping idioms like idioms about colors, animals...? Why so?

B: I think that this strategy helps me to see the logical relationship between idioms and anything logical linked can be easily remembered together because we simply do not feel overwhelmed and confused.

A: I can notice that you make sentences using idioms? what are the reasons for it?

B: I think that writing it in sentence with specific context can help me to memorize the idioms better. I can remember words, idioms immediately if they are presented in a context like a sentence, a conversation. Sadly, sometimes I learn idiomatic expression in isolation from the context, and I have to write sentences to create a context for newly-acquired idioms on my own...

A: You read articles to learn idioms?

B: I love reading, and if you learn something from what you love, it is way more interesting.

A: you also learn idioms through songs?

B: same reasons. I am a big fan of music...

A: another strategy is to learn more idioms through films?

B: I see that idiomatic expressions appear in almost every line in the movies. So films are a rich source of idioms. and also I usually spend at least an hour watching sitcom series so I can learn and relax at the same time.

A: How about Youtube page? It seem you frequently learn idioms through Youtube pages?

B: I am a Youtube addict. Hardly does a day go by without me surfing my favourite Youtube channels...

A: What are the reasons why you take idiom tests in books? I can see it is also a strategy you use quite often

B: You can learn a lot from these books, both course and reference books. I can prepare for important tests in this way.

A: You also continue to learn idioms throughout the time. Could you please tell me the reason why?

B: We can easily forget the meaning of idioms if we stop revising or practising for a while. It holds true for language learning as far as I can see from my own experience.

A: You also skip unimportant idioms when coming across them? Why so?

B: simply we can not remember everything so being selective. We should choose the idioms that we are interested in learning...

A: that's the end of our interview. Thanks a lot, Đông!

**Notice: the interview was conducted in the participant's first language (Vietnamese) and was translated into English by the researcher.*