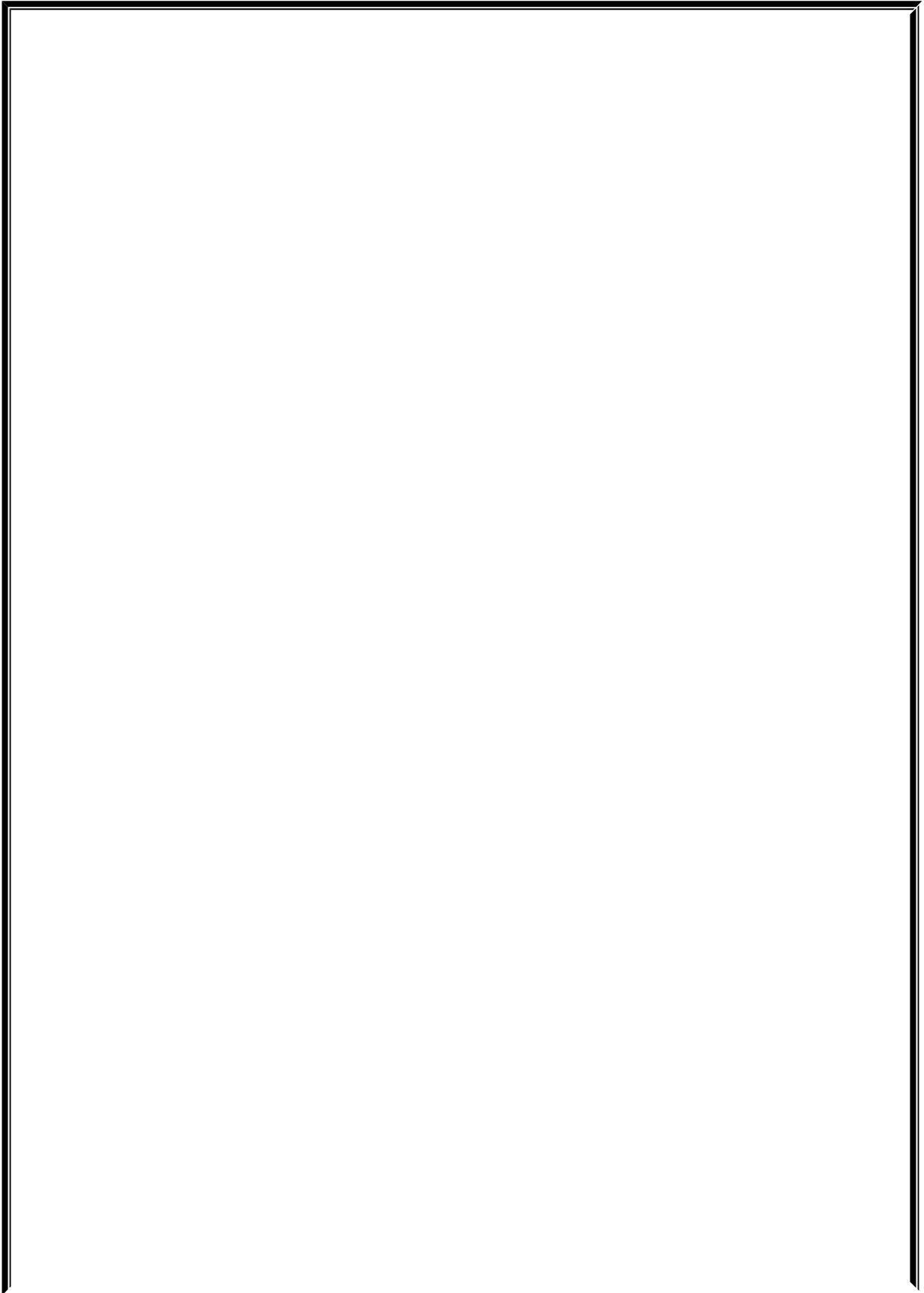**VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, HANOI**
UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
FACULTY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

GRADUATION PAPER

LANGUAGE TRANSFER IN THE ACQUISITION OF IDIOMS IN A SECOND LANGUAGE : A STUDY OF FOURTH-YEAR FAST-TRACK STUDENTS AT FELTE, ULIS, VNU

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QH2008

HA NOI – 2012

ĐẠI HỌC QUỐC GIA HÀ NỘI
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC NGOẠI NGỮ
KHOA SƯ PHẠM TIẾNG ANH

KHOÁ LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP

CHUYỂN GIAO NGÔN NGỮ TRONG QUÁ TRÌNH TIẾP THU THÀNH NGỮ TRONG NGÔN NGỮ THỨ HAI : NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ SINH VIÊN NĂM BỐN HỆ ĐÀO TẠO CHẤT LƯỢNG CAO, KHOA SƯ PHẠM TIẾNG ANH, TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC NGOẠI NGỮ, ĐẠI HỌC QUỐC GIA HÀ NỘI

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To complete this graduation paper, I owe profound indebtedness to many people for their invaluable help during the conduct of my research.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Ms. Pham Thi Thu Ha, MA for her immeasurable help, constant guidance and support during all stages of the study, from whom I have received valuable suggestions and careful critical comments.

Moreover, I would like to show my appreciation to the participants, who are also my classmates in class QH2008.1.E1, for assisting me in collecting data.

Besides, my words of thanks are sent to my friends Nguyen Thi Ngoc Diep, Le Huong Giang and Pham Thi Anh Phuong for their encouragement to help me overcome the obstacles that I have encountered when conducting this graduation paper.

Last but not least, I owe a great debt of gratitude to my parents and my sister for always being there to encourage me.

ABSTRACTS

Vocabulary and grammar are two key factors in language. Within vocabulary, idioms play an important role in language learning. As communicative language teaching (CLT) approach with its aim to create "communicative competence" (Hymes, 1972) is becoming more popular, real life language like idioms draws more attention from educationalists. Furthermore, according to Gass (1979), the forms and patterns of the native language affect second language learning. Accordingly, the current research aimed at investigating the role of L1 on idiom acquisition of Vietnamese learners of English regarding their ability to comprehend and produce idioms. The target population of this study was fourth-year Fast-track students at the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, Universities of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University. 9 students in group QH2008.1.E1were chosen randomly to do two tests: a recognition test and a recall test. The same set of 30 idioms was used in two tests, including: 10 identical, 10 similar and 10 different idioms. The findings of the study revealed that idioms were transferrable. Specifically, at recognition level, it appeared that subjects were able to generalize from the meaning in their first language to the meaning in the second language if the form was identical or similar. There was no evidence of language transfer in the case of different idioms. Regarding recall competence, positive transfer was likely to occur when students produced identical idioms. Producing similar idioms was as difficult as producing different idioms. Negative transfer was evident for similar idioms when students tended to use those in L1 to produce equivalent forms in L2. Little transfer would occur when students produced different idioms. The findings from the study hopefully would benefit not only researchers but teachers and readers who are interested in the same topic as well.

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CAE	Certificate in Advanced English
CAH	Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis
CLT	Communicative Language teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FELTE	Faculty of English Language Teacher Education
L1	First language
L2	Second language
ULIS	University of Languages and International Studies
VNU	Vietnam National University

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

This initial chapter outlines the research problem and rationale for the study together with its scope and significance. Above all, the aims and objectives are identified with two research questions which serve as guidelines for the whole research. Finally, the chapter concludes with a sketch of the organization of the paper to orientate the readers throughout the paper.

1.1. Statement of the problem and rationale for the study

Vocabulary and grammar are two important elements of language. Traditionally, more emphasis was put on grammar rather than vocabulary as stated by Hsu and Chiu (2008). Recently, the role of vocabulary in English as a foreign language (EFL) education has been redefined. Some scholars began to emphasize the instruction of vocabulary in classroom practices (Channell, 1981; McCarthy, 1984; Nation, 1990; Nattinger, 1980). Among them was the groundbreaking teaching method named "The Lexical Approach" proposed by Lewis (1993). He examined the nature of lexis in second language acquisition. According to him, "language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar" (Lewis, 1993, p.vi).

Within vocabulary, idioms play an important role in language learning. An idiom, in its simplest definition, is a group of words that have different meaning from the meaning of its constituent words. Idioms are so popular among native speakers that "it is impossible to speak, read, or listen to English without meeting idiomatic language" (Wright, 1999, p.9). Whereas idiomaticity makes native speakers fast and fluent, it tends to make non-native speakers slow and ponderous (Prodromou, 2003). Although it is nearly impossible for EFL learners to master all English idioms, it is a must for advanced learners to have an efficient competence of idioms. "Since, the language at

higher level is mostly operated on idiom choice principle, the knowledge of idioms in learning a new language is essential for second language learners as they go up higher levels of learning" (Guduru, 2011, p.540).

As communicative language teaching (CLT) approach with its aim to create "communicative competence" (Hymes, 1972) is becoming more popular, real life language like idioms draws more attention from educationalists. Since CLT was first introduced in Vietnam in the early 1990s, it has quickly gained popularity when universities and schools have encouraged teachers of English to employ the method in their daily teaching. However, to the best knowledge of the researcher, in the context of the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education (FELTE) at University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS), no study has been conducted so far on the idiom mastery of ULIS students.

Furthermore, according to Gass (1979), the forms and patterns of the native language affect second language learning. If these two elements in the two languages are identical, positive transfer occurs. If they are different, negative transfer occurs. Despite some claims of some scholars in the 1970s that transfer does not play an important role in second language acquisition (Richards, 1974; Dulay & Burt, 1975), researchers continued to find evidence proving a significant influence of the first language on the second one (James, 1980; Sheen, 1980 and Fisiak, 1981). Some empirical studies on the role of transfer in the acquisition of idioms of Venezuelan (Irujo, 1986), Syrian Arabic (Abdullah & Jackson, 1998), Arabic (Hussein, Khanji and Makhzoomy, 2000) learners of English indicated that both positive and negative transfer occurred depending on whether idioms in two languages are identical, similar or different in their form and meaning. To the best knowledge of the researcher, little has been reported on the role of L1 on idiom acquisition of Vietnamese learners of English regarding their ability to comprehend and produce idioms.

For all the aforementioned reasons, the researcher wishes to conduct this study as an attempt to make a contribution to English learning and teaching at ULIS.

1.2. Research questions

This paper is a study on language transfer in the acquisition of idioms in a second language, specifically English. In other words, this study is conducted to seek answers to the following questions:

i.   To what extent is Ss' recognition competence of identical, similar and different idioms different? In what ways does Ss' recognition competence show evidence of language transfer?

ii.   To what extent is Ss' recall competence of identical, similar and different idioms different? In what ways does Ss' recall competence show evidence of language transfer?

1.3. Significance of the study

First, to the best knowledge of the researcher, this research is the pioneer in specifically investigating the role of transfer on idiom acquisition of Vietnamese learners of English at FELTE, ULIS, VNU.

Second, conducting this study, the researcher hopes to raise students' awareness of real-life language to proficiently achieve communicative skills, including idioms as well as of the role of transfer in foreign language learning.

Third, this study is expected to provide certain findings for EFL Fast-track lecturers to choose appropriate teaching materials and strategies for Fast-track students to best acquire idioms.

Last but not least, the findings of this study may serve as a reliable source for other researchers who share the same interest.

1.4. Scope of the study

First, in this study, the researcher aimed at investigating students' knowledge of English idioms. More specifically, it focused on students' recognition and recall competence.

Second, this study just looked at students' competence as a reflection of transfer in second language acquisition. Therefore, idioms in two tests are classified into: identical, similar and different idioms.

Finally, participants of this study were students in class QH2008.1.E1, fourth-year Fast-track students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU; whose English level is supposed to be advanced level.

1.5. Organization

This graduation paper covers three main parts as follows:

Part 1 – (Introduction) provides readers with overall information about the research regarding rationale for the study, research questions, significance, scope as well as organization of the study.

Part 2 – Main text. In this part, there are three main chapters:

Chapter 1: Literature review: provides the theoretical background of the study, including discussions of the key concepts and some related issues.

Chapter 2: Methodology: describes the participants and data collection instruments of the study, the procedure employed to conduct the research as well as procedure of data analysis.

Chapter 3: Findings and discussion: presents, analyzes and discusses the results that the researcher found out from the collected data and puts forward several pedagogical recommendations concerning the research topic.

Part 3 - (Conclusion) summarizes the main issues discussed in the paper, the contributions and limitations of the research as well as some suggestions for further studies.

Following this chapter are the References and Appendices.

PART 2: MAIN TEXT

CHAPTER 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter, as the name says it, sheds light on the literature of the study, specifically different views concerning the research field of the study. To begin with, definition, frequency and importance as well as classification of idioms are discussed. Next, it presents the concept, the role together with the manifestations of transfer in second language acquisition. Finally, this part reviews the role of transfer in the acquisition of second language idioms together with some empirical studies on this field.

1.1. Idiom
1.1.1. Definition

Traditionally, one typical feature that almost every scholar mentioned when defining idioms is that the meaning of one idiom is different from the meanings of words that constitute it. It is called the non-compositionality feature of idioms.

According to Seidl and McMordie (1988, p. 13), idiom was defined as "a number of words which, when taken together, have a different meaning from the individual meanings of each word."

Also, in Rowe's view, "an idiom does not mean what one would expect it to mean in a literal sense". Besides, he also stated that it was not always easy to translate an idiom from one language into another because of its non-literal sense (2004; p. 428). Therefore, in his book "Idiom Organizer", Wright (2002) reminded English learners that when translating an idiom, there was a need to translate the whole expression, not word-by-word.

Cooper (1999) used an example of "to kick the bucket" and "to bite the dust", both of which mean "to die" to illustrate his idea that the meaning of an idiom could not always be derived from the literal meanings of its constituent words (p. 233).

In her definition, Irujo (1986) also pointed out that people could not base on the meaning of "pull" and "leg" individually to understand the idiomatic meaning of "I was pulling your leg." Not only that, she distinguished idioms from other types of figurative expressions like similes and metaphor in the sense that idioms had conventionalized meaning; which was understood immediately among native speakers of English without having to deducing their own meaning as in the case of similes and metaphors. In addition, she added that some literal expressions like "I beg your pardon" or "just between you and me" were not idioms because their meanings could be inferred from the words which comprised them. In other words, the relationship between an idiom and its constituent words were "at best indirect, if there is any relation at all" as suggested by Sprenger, Levelt and Kempen (2006, p. 161).

Cain, Oakhill and Lemmon viewed idioms in a quite different way when they put idioms in context. According to them, in isolation an idiom could be interpreted literally but in a specific context, it took a non-literal meaning (2005, p. 66). In other words, they put emphasis on the communicative intent of the speakers.

Some other scholars used the term "multiword expression" or "multiword unit" to define idioms. Fernando (1996, p. 38) defined idioms as "conventionalized multiword expressions often, but not always nonliteral". Saberian and Fotovatnia (2011) made Fernando's viewpoint clearer by giving the definition of "multiword units" (MWUs) in detail: "MWUs are vocabulary items which consist of a sequence of two or more words. These words form a meaningful and inseparable unit" (p.1232). Moon (1997, cited in Saberian and Fotovatnia, 2011, p.1232), in her description of idioms, argued that the term "idiom" occurred in the literature with a variety of different meanings. She used the term in the narrow sense to refer to MWUs which were not the sum of their parts: their meaning could not be retrieved from the individual meanings of the component words.

On the other hand, there is another view (which is called "compositional" view) proposing that the relation between the literal and the idiomatic meaning is not

entirely arbitrary. Many researchers agreed that the comprehension of one idiom to some extent rely on the existence of a relationship between the meanings of the constituent words and its idiomatic meaning (Cacciari and Tabossi, 1993; Everaet, Linden, Schenk and Schreuder, 1995; Gibbs, 1994; Glucksberg, 2001; Nunberg 1978, Nunberg, Sag & Wasow, 1994). This approach did not focus on idioms that were opaque but on "transparent" ones. There were some "transparent" idioms that the individual components of those ones contributed to their idiomatic meaning (Doroodi & Hashemian, 2011). Cain et al. (2005) named this characteristic as "transparency". According to them, "transparency refers to the degree of agreement between the literal and figurative meaning of an idiom" (p.67). If this relationship was close, that was transparent idiom (Gibbs, 1991; Levorato & Cacciari. 1999; Nippold & Taylor, 2002). In Cacciari and Glucksberg's words, there was little difference between an image of the literal meaning and its figurative meaning (as cited in Everaet, Linde, Schenk & Schreuder, 1995). It was easier for learners to understand the meaning of this type of idioms.

In the scope of this research, the researcher will employ the classification of both views that some idioms are considered as compositional ones with their parts contributing to their figurative meaning while others are non-compositional with parts that do not contribute to their meaning.

1.1.2. The frequency and importance of idiom usage

Idioms play an important role in both written (novels, books, newspapers, magazines, etc.) and spoken language (conversations, lectures, movies, etc.) among native speakers. In their study, Pollio, Barlow, Fine, and Pollio (1977) figured that one

typical English speaker uttered about 20 million idioms in his life time, that meant 7000 idioms per week (these numbers was calculated based on their analysis of political debates, psychology texts, novels, and psychotherapy sessions (p. 140). In another study, Cooper (1998) transcribed the idioms from 3 hours of taped television programs. He concluded that idioms occurred at the rate of about 3 per minute and understanding those idioms was crucial to understanding the plot. In daily life, idiom usage can be easily detected through observation. Wright (1999) claimed that "[i]t is impossible to speak, read, or listen to English without meeting idiomatic language" to emphasize the pervasiveness of idioms (p. 9).

A variety of reasons can be given to explain why idioms play such an important role in life. Gillett (2004) maintained that idioms added color to the language. Therefore, as Gibbs (1980) claimed, that speakers could express their feelings and experiences better through uttering idiom resulted in the vital role of idioms in every human language. According to Johson-Laird (1993, cited in Elkilic, 2008, p.28), "it is difficult to speak spontaneously without lapsing into idiomatic usage". Native speakers spoke fast and fluently thanks to idioms (Prodromou, 2003). Idioms could be used as an indicator of one's language competency.

One Johnson-Laird's comment was to "… [t]ry with a foreigner, and you will see that you are often aware of using idiom only after the event" (as cited in Elkilic, 2008, p. 28). Therefore, in English language learning, idioms play a crucial role. Many researchers proposed that a good control of collocations, including idioms could help language learners to speak more fluently (Brown, 1974; Ellis & Schmidt, 1997; Nation, 2001; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Richards & Schmidt, 1983; Schmitt, 2000; Sung, 2003). Gillett (2004) emphasized the importance of idiom learning regarding both input and output. Good understanding of idioms greatly facilitates English learners' ability to listen to and read authentic passages. Moreover, mastering English idioms can help to make one's language more native-like and less "awkward". Social communication is one point that some scholars mentioned when they discussed

the role of idioms. To integrate into the culture of the foreign language, it is necessary to learn not only grammatical structures and vocabulary but also idioms. According to Hussein, Khanj and Makhzoomy (2000, p. 25), idioms were used in a variety of daily situations; therefore, idiom was a necessary feature of the concept of communicative competence. However, idioms are culture-bound. He (1990) took the idiom "carry coals to Newcastle" as an example. In his opinion, knowledge of idiom is not only about linguistic analysis but also "cultural awareness". For that reason, to fully understand and appropriately use idioms, learners should take culture-related characteristic of idioms into consideration.

Accordingly, Liontas (2001) argued that idioms should be introduced to learners as early as possible along with other aspects of semantics, pragmatics, sociolinguistic, culture and conventions of discourse. Idioms should play a crucial role in language teaching programme. Irujo (1986) added students, even at beginning level, should be taught to produce some idioms if they are "carefully chosen on the basis of frequency, need, transparency, and syntactic and semantic simplicity" (p. 300).

1.1.3. Idiom classification

It can be seen that there is no agreement among linguists on the definition of idioms. Hence, there are different ways of classifying idioms. Despite various categories, they fall into either of the three following schools.

Nunberg (1978) classified idioms into three classes: normally decomposable idioms, abnormally decomposable idioms and semantically non-decomposable idioms. Normally decomposable idioms were expressions in which a part of the idiom was used literally (e.g., *the question* in *pop the question*). Abnormally decomposable idioms were expressions where the referent of an idiom's parts could be identified metaphorically (e.g., *buck* in the idiom *pass the buck*). Finally, semantically nondecomposable idioms fitted the traditional definition because the idiom meaning

was less likely to be derived compositionally from the words that comprised the string (e.g., *chew the fat*).

Some scholars classified idioms based on their semantic characteristics. Table 1 below is the summary of semantic classification of idioms.

Table 1: Semantic classification of idioms

	Transparent (not idioms): your face looks familiar	Semi-transparent (expressions or idioms): shake hands, bumper to bumper, skyscraper	Figurative idioms: catch fire, close ranks, beat one's breast, bleed someone white	Opaque/ True idioms: by and large, take a leek, knock on wood, be on the wagon
Yorio (1980)				
Cowie, Mackin & McCaig (1983/9)	Open collocation: fill the sink, a broken window, in the raw	Restricted-collocation/ Semi-idiom: jog one's memory, a blind alley, catch someone red-handed	Metaphorical idiom: hit the jackpot Figurative idiom: hit list	Pure idiom: blow the gaff, kick the bucket, in a nutshell
Alexander(1987)	Literal phrase: hit the ball	Semi-idiom: hit a six	Quasi-metaphorical: giving up the ship, count your chickens before they are	Opaque/ Pure idiom: hit the sack

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			hatched, carry coals to New Castle	
Cacciari and Glucksberg (1991)	Analysable transparent: break the ice, spill the beans	Non-analysable: by and large	Figurative idiom: under the microscope	Analysable-opaque: kick the bucket
Howarth (1998)	Free combination: under the table	Restricted collocation: under attack		Pure idiom: under the weather
Moon (1998)	Transparent metaphor: alarm bells ring, behind someone's back	Semi-transparent metaphor: on an even keel, grasp the nettle, the pecking order	Metaphor/ Semi-opaque: burn one's boats, tarred with the same brush, off the top of one's head	Opaque metaphor/ Pure idiom: bite the bullet, over the moon, red herring, kick the bucket
Fernando and Flavell (1991)	Literal and/ or transparent: cut wood, break eggs, rely on, add fuel to the fire	Metaphor/ Semi-transparent: skate on thin ice, kill two birds with one stone, the boot/ shoe is on the other foot		Full idiom/ Opaque: pull someone's leg, pass the buck, trip the light fantasy
Fernando (1996)	Literal idiom [sic]: tall,	Semi-literal idiom: kith and		Pure idioms: spill the

	dark and handsome, on foot, for example	kin, drop names Semi-idiom: catch your breath, foot the bill		beans, chill wag, red herring, take 40 winks, have cold feet

By Grant & Bauer (2004, p. 43)

In Yoshisaka's classification (2008), idioms were classified into five different types: A, B, C1, C2 and D. The degree of L1-L2 structural and semantic similarity was taken as the primary criterion in classifying English idioms. An L2 idiom was structurally similar to an L1 idiom if the major content words could be literally translated to L1 and it was semantically similar to an L1 idiom when they shared the same central concept, and could be used in the same contexts. Idioms type A were English idioms with both structural and semantic similarity to L1 idioms, type B were idioms with "partly" structural similarity and semantic similarity to L1 idioms. Idioms type C1 were idioms with structural "similarity" but semantic "dissimilarity" to L1 idioms. Type C2 were idioms with both structural and semantic "dissimilarity" to L1 idioms while idiom type D were idioms with structural "dissimilarity" but semantic similarity to L1 idioms. They could not be translated literally into L1 because literal translation did not make sense in L1, yet their literal translation may give learners clue for guessing the idiomatic meaning.

In this study, the researcher employed Irujo's classification in her study (1986) on the issue of transfer in the acquisition of idioms in a second language. Idioms were classified into: identical, similar and different idioms. Identical idioms were English idioms that had exact counterparts in Vietnamese. Similar idioms were the ones that had semantic counterparts in Vietnamese but were differently worded. Different idioms were the ones that did not have counterparts in Vietnamese and their

meaning could not be derived from the meaning of constituent words. To the best knowledge of the researcher, this classification would serve best for the objectives of this study.

1.2. Transfer in second language acquisition

1.2.1. The concept of transfer in second language learning

In general, transfer was "the application in one field of study or effort of knowledge, skill, power, or ability acquired in another" (Gove, 1981). The concept of transfer, in linguistic learning, was based on the idea that subsequent learning is affected by previous learning. In other words, transfer was the application of prior knowledge to new learning situations (McKeough, 1995). Gass (1979) stated that in second language learning, transfer meant the forms and patterns of the native language were imposed on the second language. If these two elements in the two languages were identical, a correct second language pattern was formed. If they were different, learners could commit errors by using those in native language to produce the equivalent form or pattern in the second language.

Kellerman and Sharwood (1986) differentiated between transfer and influence. They suggested the term "crosslinguistic influence". To them, transfer referred to those linguistic behaviors incorporated from L1 into interlanguage without capturing other interlingual effects while cross-linguistic influence, referred to those L1 effects such as avoidance, L1 constraints on L2 learning and performance, and borrowing.

Jarvis's concept of language transfer was that: "[l]1influence refers to any instance of learner data where a statistically significant correlation (or probability-based relation) is shown to exist between some features of learners' interlanguage performance and their Ll background (2000, p.252).

In this study, the researcher employed the definition of Odlin that "[t]ransfer is the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired" (1989, p. 27).

1.2.2. The role of transfer in second language learning

L1-L2 transfer was first discussed in Selinker (1969). According to him, some of the components of the interlanguage system may result from transfer of specific elements via which the learner was taught the second language.

Generally speaking, there are two views on the importance of transfer in second language acquisition. There has been a debate on the role of transfer in second language acquisition. Extremes ranged from Lado (1957) who suggested that second language learners relied completely on their native language in the acquisition of the target language, to Dulay and Burt (1974; 1975) who maintained that transfer was largely unimportant in this process.

On the one hand, from the view of the Behaviorists, during the 1950s and early 1960s, learning was a process of habit forming. Hence, when there were differences between two languages, error was likely to happen because "the habits of the L1 were believed to be 'transferred', and regarded as 'interfering with' the newly-acquired habits of the L2" (Benson, 2002, p.68). In Behaviorist theories, the degree of difficulty was believed to depend primarily in the extent to which the target language was similar to or different from a native-language pattern. If these two elements in the two languages were identical, positive transfer was likely to occur. If they were different, negative transfer occurred when learners used those in native language to produce the equivalent form or pattern in the second language. This was called interference error.

Lado (1957) formulated the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) (a way of comparing two languages to predict difficulties that L2 learners may encounter) that:

… that student who comes into contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult. (Lado, 1957, p. 2)

In CAH's strongest form, all L2 errors were believed to be predictable by analyzing the differences between the learners' native and target language. However, some empirical studies of L2 English grammar pointed out that the percentage of interference errors varied greatly among speakers of different native languages. The data is presented as follows:

Table 2: Percentage of interference errors reported by various studies of L2 English grammar

Study	% of interference errors	Type of learner
Grauberg 1971	36	First language German-adult, advanced
George 1972	33 (approx)	Mixed first languages-adult, graduate
Dulay and Burt 1973	3	First language Spanish-children, mixed level
Tran-Thi-Chau 1975	51	First language Chinese-adult, mixed level
Mukkatesh 1977	23	First language Arabic-adult
Flick 1980	31	First language Spanish-adult, mixed level
Lott 1983	50 (approx)	First language Italian-adult, university

By Ellis (1985, p.29)

As can be seen from that table, not all errors were the result of transfer. Wardhaugh (1970) as cited in Ellis (1993, p. 310) proposed a weaker form of this hypothesis that transfer was not the cause of all errors; thus, Ellis suggested that contrastive analysis should be used together with error analysis. In short, there were still some shortcomings in CAH. Nevertheless, the role of this hypothesis in second language acquisition study could not be denied.

On the other hand, in the 1970s, some scholars offered arguments against this view (Richards, 1974; Dulay and Burt, 1975). These scholars diminished the importance of L1 and put emphasis on developmental processes, learning strategies, and the structures of the target language as sources of errors (Richards, 1974). From this view, L2 was learnt independently, like the process of learning L1. L2 learners made errors were compared with those made by children when they were learning their mother tongue.

Despite some claims that transfer did not play an important role in second language acquisition, researchers continued to find evidence proving the significant influence of the first language on the second (James, 1980; Sheen, 1980). It is now generally accepted that transfer does occur. The question of what is transferred, when transfer occurs, and how much is transferred is now being discussed.

1.2.3. The manifestations of transfer

Ellis (1985) proposed four manifestations of transfer, including errors (negative transfer), facilitation (positive transfer), avoidance and overuse.

According to him, due to the transfer of native language patterns into the learners' L2 learning process, errors arose. He put emphasis on the differences between errors as a result of language transfer (named interference errors) and errors as the result of general language learning process, similar to those observed in L1 acquisition (intralingual errors). Similarly, Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991) divided L2 learners'

errors into two types: *interlingual errors* (errors occurred due to L1 interference) and *intralingual errors* (errors which were committed regardless of L1). On the other hand, L1 could facilitate L2 learning. The third manifestation of transfer was avoidance. In Ellis's opinion, linguistic structures that were different between learners' native language and the target language were avoided by learners. In this case, the effect of L1 did not lie in what learners did (errors) but lay in what they did not do (omission). Over-use (over-indulgence) was the last manifestation of transfer. In Ellis's school of thought, over-use, as a result of transfer, was the consequence of the avoidance or underproduction of some difficult L2 structures.

In the scope of this research, only errors (negative transfer) and facilitation (positive transfer) are examined.

1.3.   Transfer in the acquisition of idioms in a second language

There has been little work focusing on the role of L1 on the acquisition of second language idioms.

In Kabakchy's article (1980), the use of idioms by Russian students was taken into account. According to him, English idioms could be classified into four groups. The first group including idioms which had exact Russian counterparts was the easiest for learners. Idioms which had semantic counterparts in Russian but were differently worded belonged to the second group. Language interference was expected in this group. Third were idioms which had no counterparts in Russian although their meaning could be derived from the meaning of the constituent words. Idioms in the third group were easier than the ones in the second group. Final group was comprised of idioms which had no counterparts in Russian and their meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of its constituent words. This was the most difficult group.

Differently, Awwad (1990, p. 66) established a theoretical framework that predicted the level of difficulty when translating idioms from one language into another. The frame is presented below, in a descending order of difficulty:

1. Idioms with no correspondence between expression and functions; expressions and functions are language specific.

2. Idioms with corresponding functions in both language but with completely different expressions.

3. Idioms with corresponding functions in both language, but with slightly different expressions.

4. Idioms with corresponding functions and expressions in both languages.

(as cited in Hussein, Khanj and Makhzoomy, 2000, p. 25)

In short, identical idioms were the easiest and different idioms were the most difficult ones to translate.

The above section presents only theories about the acquisition of L2 idioms. To gain a deep insight, a literature of some empirical studies will be presented in the next part.

1.4. Empirical studies on testing the role of L1 on L2 idiom acquisition

Idiom tests were used by various researchers to provide understanding about the role of L1 on L2 idiom acquisition.

Hussein, Khanj, and Makhzoomy's study (2000) focused on students' recall competence of idioms. In their study, 60 Arabic students (30 were in the M.A. translation program and the others were 30 English seniors) were asked to translate 45 idioms from Arabic to English. These 45 items included 15 identical, 15 similar and 15 different idioms chosen by the researcher. It was concluded that in the translation of idioms, negative transfer played a significant role, especially for the case of similar

idioms. Identical idioms were the easiest to translate thanks to positive transfer. For different idioms, no conclusion was drawn.

In Irujo's study (1986), 12 Venezuelan advanced students of English were chosen randomly as participants. She used both comprehension and production tests. They were scored on four tests, including: two comprehension tests (multiple-choice test and definition test) and two production tests (translation and discourse-completion tests). Each test contained 45 English items (15 identical, 15 similar and 15 different as idioms from Spanish idioms). These idioms were chosen based on three criteria: they had been defined unambiguously by all of the correspondents of the questionnaire, had equivalent figurative meanings in both languages and had received a median of at least 3 on the frequency-of-use scale. In the discourse-completion test, for each idiom, one paragraph was supplied with the idiom missing. Students had to fill in that blank. In the translation test, each item consisted of a paragraph in Spanish containing the idiom and an English translation of the paragraph with the idiom omitted. Subjects would supply the English idiom which they would use in that situation. The definition test required students to write a definition of the idiom in either English or Spanish. In the multiple-choice test, there were four choices for each item, including the correct paraphrase of the idiom, a sentence related to the correct paraphrase, a sentence related to the literal interpretation, and an unrelated sentence. Students were asked to do the four tests in the following order: discourse-completion, translation, definition, multiple-choice. Only the two tests of productive ability were scored for interference. The results of the study revealed that English idioms that were identical to their Spanish equivalents were the easiest to comprehend and produce. Similar idioms in the two languages were as high as identical ones at recognition level, but in the production tests interference from Spanish was prevalent. The idioms that were different in the two languages were the most difficult for the students to comprehend and produce, but there was little evidence of positive or negative transfer from Spanish.

Abdullah & Jackson (1998) investigated idioms of 120 Syrian Arabic learners of English. They were tested for both comprehension and production as in Irujo's study (1986). The comprehension of 80 English idioms was tested by a multiple-choice test and an English-into-Syrian Arabic translation test. Those idioms were also tested for production by a Syrian Arabic-into-English translation test. Results showed that learners got higher marks in the comprehension and production test of cognate idioms because of positive language transfer, negative transfer occurred in production of the false cognate group. For the last two types of idioms (idioms with pragmatic equivalents, and idioms with no Syrian equivalents) they found no evidence of transfer. The study concluded that L1-L2 similarity may be the factor that contributed most to idiom learning, but it did not necessarily facilitate idiom comprehension or production, and the differences between mother tongue and target language did not crucially impede L2 idiom comprehension.

In this study, the researcher attempted to employ two tests: a multiple-choice test and a gap-filling test to measure students' recall and recognition competence as a reflection of language transfer. Each test contained 30 items (10 identical, 10 similar, 10 different idioms). These items were the same in two tests. Participants took the gap-filling test first, followed by the multiple-choice test.

Summary:

In conclusion, this review has examined different views concerning the research field of the study. Transfer plays a crucial role in second language acquisitions. Idiom acquisition is not an exception. This study investigates the role of

transfer of advanced students in a small language learning community to see whether they share the same characteristics with others in the previous studies.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology employed to answer the research questions is described in detail. The participants, data collection instruments, the procedures of data collection and analysis are justified in this chapter.

2.1. Participants & sampling method

The target population of this study was fourth-year Fast-track students at the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, Universities of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University. Students from Fast-track group QH2008.1.E1 were chosen to be participants of this research. Their native language was Vietnamese. Their years of learning English were 11 years and above. After seven semesters learning English in Fast-track group, they are supposed to achieve advanced English level. By the end of the sixth semester, students took part in Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)[1]and all of them passed that exam.

Sampling size of this research was 9 students in group QH2008.1.E1. It took quite a lot of time for participants to do two tests. Hence this sampling size was chosen to make it most convenient for the researcher to collect data. These 9 students were selected based on simple random sampling. By using this sampling strategy, each member of the population had an equal probability of being selected. Hence the sample could guarantee its representativeness of the population. To select these 9 samples, 9 numbers from 1 to 24 were chosen randomly (the total number of students in group QH2008.1.E1 was 24 students). From the student list of this, students with the same order numbers chosen previously were selected to be subjects of this study.

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[1] CAE C*ertificate in Advanced English*, or *CAE-Cambridge English: Advanced* has been developed by University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL), a department of the University of Cambridge. It is internationally accepted as an in-depth high-level test of English language.

2.2. Data collection instruments

In order to obtain a sufficient collection of both reliable and valid data for the study, testing was employed as data collection instrument. According to Abbas & Charles (2003), testing is a good method used in quantitative research to measure performance of research participants. In this study, proficiency tests were employed to test participants' ability in language. There were two tests: a recognition test and a recall test. Data collected from a recognition test was used to answer the first research question about students' idiom recognition competence as well as the manifestation of language transfer. A recall test helped to answer the second research question about students' idiom recall competence as well as the manifestation of language transfer.

There were 30 English idioms selected for the two tests, including 10 identical, 10 similar and 10 different idioms. Identical idioms were the ones that had exact counterparts in Vietnamese. Similar idioms were the ones that had semantic counterparts in Vietnamese but were differently worded. Different idioms were the ones that did not have counterparts in Vietnamese and their meaning could not be derived from the meaning of constituent words.

These idioms were selected from Irujo (1986), Cooper (1990), Elkilic (2008), Shan-fang (2008) and some on-line sites on the Internet. It was the researcher's attempt to design these two tests. However due to the fact that the researcher is not a professional test designer and subjectively chose these idioms, it must be admitted that there must be re-assessment of these idioms. Nevertheless, it was noticed that these idioms were employed in widely-published research. (see Appendix 1 for a list of 30 idioms).

The recognition test was a multiple-choice test. In this test, students had to choose one option that best conveyed the meaning of the underlined idiom. Each item had three options: the correct paraphrase of the item, a sentence that was related to the

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literal interpretation, and an unrelated sentence (see Appendix 3A). An item from the multiple-choice test is presented below:

He tries to <u>pull my leg</u>.
A.   He tries to make me happy. (an unrelated sentence)
B.   He tries to draw my leg with force. (a sentence which conveys the literal interpretation)
C.   He tries to tease me. (the correct paraphrase – correct answer)

The recall test was a gap-filling one consisting of a sentence/ some sentences containing the idiom with no more than three words missing; subject had to supply the missing word(s) (see Appendix 2A). The following item is an example:

She told me that she was going to attend Ms. World. But I don't believe her, I think that she pulled my ………………

2.3. Data collection procedure

The procedure of data collection consisted of three main stages.

Stage 1: Test design

The researcher designed two tests which consisted of one idiom recognition test and one idiom recall test.

Stage 2: Test piloting

Recognition and recall idioms tests were piloted with a group of 4 students who were seniors and majored in English. Participants did the two tests in the following order: the gap-filling test, followed by the multiple-choice test. To limit memory

effects, the multiple choice test was delivered to participants one week after the gap-filling test was taken. Some revision had been made after this piloting process.

Stage 3: Official administration

9 students from group QH2008.1.E1 were asked for permission to take part in this study. Before doing the tests, they were asked to read information sheet so that they could be fully aware of some basic information of this study and instructions to do two tests. It was emphasized that any kind of references should not be used during the tests to guarantee the validity of the data. Participants did the two tests in the following order: the gap-filling test, followed by the multiple-choice test. The multiple-choice test was delivered to participants one week after they took the gap-filling test to limit memory effects.

2.4. Data analysis procedure

The scores of two tests were recorded separately. One-way analysis of variance was used to test for differences among the three types of idioms on total number of idioms correct.

To answer the first research question, in the multiple-choice test, each question was scored as correct or incorrect. Mean and standard deviation of correct answers of each type of idioms then were calculated. Where there were significant differences, Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference test was used to ascertain which type of idiom had significantly higher or lower scores than the others.

To answer the second question, each item in the gap-filling test was scored as correct, incorrect or incorrect with interference. In this test, interference was the incorrect use of English due to the transfer of Vietnamese idioms. After that, mean and

standard deviation of correct answers of each type of idioms were calculated and compared with each other. Analysis of variance was not used to test for differences in interference scores because the mean scores for identical idioms were zero. Therefore, paired two-tailed t tests were used to test for differences between two types of idioms: similar and different idioms on number of interference errors. Some further explanation regarding participants' mis-production of language patterns was given as well.

Summary

So far, this chapter has justified the methodology applied in this paper. First, simple random sampling was chosen as sampling strategy. A description of test as data collection instrument followed after that. This chapter was concluded with data analysis procedure.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter, the methodology applied to conduct this study has been thoroughly presented with descriptions and justifications of the choice of participants, research instruments as well as the process of data collection and data analysis. In this

chapter, all collected data from the test papers is analyzed and discussed to provide answer to two research questions as well as pedagogical implication.

3.1. Findings

Research question 1: To what extent is Ss' recognition competence of identical, similar and different idioms different? In what ways does Ss' recognition competence show evidence of language transfer?

To answer this question, one-way analysis variance was used to test for differences among three types of idioms on total number of idioms correct in recognition test (Appendix 2A). As can be seen from the table below (Table 3), subjects performed differently with the three types of idioms.

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations for Idiom Recognition Test

Idiom type Measure	Identical Idioms	Similar idioms	Different Idioms
Mean	9.78	9.44	7.89
Standard Deviation	0.44	0.73	1.27

Specifically, the number of correct answers of identical and similar idioms was high and relatively equal. More than three-quarters got absolute mark (10/10) for identical idioms (only 2/9 students got mark 9/10). For similar idioms, more than half of the participants got mark 10. These numbers were much higher in comparison with

those of different idioms. Mark 7/10 and 8/10 constituted a significant proportion of 56% of the whole sample size. It could be concluded that in this recognition test, participants did extremely well with identical and similar idioms but had significantly more difficulty with different idioms. Differences among means of types of idioms were calculated to make this point clearer. (see Table 4)

Table 4: Differences among means of types of idioms in Recognition test
(Turkey's Honestly significant Difference)

Idiom Type	Similar	Different
Identical	0.34	1.89
Similar	x	1.55

For identical and similar idioms, standard deviation (a number that tells approximately how far the values in a data set deviate from the mean) was low compared with the other, which proved that students' competence of identical and similar idioms did not vary greatly. However, it was not the case for English idioms that did not have equivalents in Vietnamese. Standard deviation of correct answers of different idioms was relatively high in comparison with the maximum score 10 for each type of idiom. For different idioms, some students performed much better than others. The lowest number of correct different idioms was 6/10 while the highest was 10/10. It could be implied that the dispersion was big and students' recognition competence of different idioms varied. Although participants in this study were supposed to be at the same level, their competence of different idioms varied greatly.

It appears that when the task was to recognize the meaning of an idiom, subjects were able to generalize from the meaning in their first language to the meaning in the

second language if the form was identical or similar; slight difference in forms did not affect this process. Students' competence of different idioms was lower compared with that of the other two types. There is no evidence of language transfer in the case of different idioms.

Research question 2: To what extent is Ss' recall competence of identical, similar and different idioms different? In what ways does Ss' recall competence show evidence of language transfer?

To answer this question, each item in the gap-filling test was scored as correct, incorrect or incorrect with interference. In this test, interference was the incorrect use of English due to the transfer of Vietnamese idioms. It should be noted that when marking those test papers, the researcher did not count grammatical mistakes and spelling mistakes as mistakes. As long as subject provided correct word(s) to fill the gap, it would be marked as a correct answer. For example, on the one hand, instead of providing the correct word "apron string" in the English idiom "to be tied to one's mother's apron string", the participant filled the blank with "dress". On the other hand, "to be tied to one's mother's dress" was the translation of the Vietnamese equivalent of that English idiom. This error was counted as interference error in this test. In addition, there was a case that the participant filled the gap with "tummy" to make a complete idiom "to be tied to one's mother's tummy". Such idiom did not originate from the use of a Vietnamese idiom, hence it was not counted as interference error.

One-way analysis variance was used to test for differences among three types of idioms on total number of idioms correct in recall test (Appendix 3A). As can be seen from the table below (Table 5), subjects performed differently with the three types of idioms.

Table 5: Means, Standard Deviations and for Idiom Recall Test

Idiom type Measure	Identical Idioms	Similar idioms	Different Idioms
Mean	6.22	2.22	1.67
Standard Deviation	0.44	1.86	1.5

It is clear from the table that subjects could produce many more identical idioms in comparison with similar and different idioms. For identical idioms, more than three-quarters got mark 6/10. As for similar idioms, mark 0, 1 and 4/10 made up precisely two-quarters of the whole sample size. Scores of different idioms were a little lower than those of similar idioms. Two-thirds of the students got mark 0, 1, and 3/10. Differences among means of types of idioms were calculated to make this point clearer. (see Table 6)

Table 6: Differences among means of types of idioms in Recognition test (Turkey's Honestly significant Difference)

Idiom Type	Similar	Different
Identical	4	4.55
Similar	x	0.55

For identical idioms, 6/10 and 7/10 were the only two score values. As for similar and different idioms, the number of correct answers was quite low and relatively equal. For similar idioms, students' competence differed quite greatly. Standard deviation of correct answers was the highest among three types. In addition, the lowest mark was 0/10 (2 students got mark 0). Only one student got 5/10 – the highest mark. This was quite similar for those of different idioms. One-third of the students got mark 0/10 for different idioms while only one student got the highest mark 4/10. Students' recall competence of different idioms was as diverse as that of similar idioms. It could be concluded that in this recall test, participants did perform better with identical idioms while their scores of similar and different idioms were much lower and relatively equal.

Language transfer was also reflected through interference errors. The table below (table 7) demonstrated some statistical measurements of interference errors in the recall test.

Table 7: Means, Standard deviations and t Scores for Interference Errors

Idiom type	
Identical	
Mean	0
Standard Deviation	0
Similar	
Mean	3.67
Standard Deviation	1.22
Different	
Mean	0.33
Standard Deviation	0.5
t-scores	
$t_{16}(0.05)$	1.81

The table revealed that there was no interference error on identical idioms, but paired t-test showed that the hypothesis: H: EX = EY was rejected and EX > EY was

accepted ($1.81 > t_{16}(0.05)$) (EX: mean of interference errors of similar idioms, EY: mean of interference errors of different idioms). In other words, interference errors of similar idioms were more than those of different idioms and this difference was statistically meaningful. In other words, negative transfer was more in evidence with similar idioms than with different idioms. Students may recognize the similarities between English and Vietnamese idioms and assumed that they could transfer. Standard deviation of similar idioms was rather high, which meant some students had a greater tendency to use their first language to produce idioms in a second language than others.

It appears that when the task was to supply part of an idiom, positive transfer occurred when students produced identical idioms. There was no big difference between students' recall competence of similar and different idioms. Producing similar idioms was as difficult as producing different idioms. However, production of similar idioms showed interference from first language whereas there was little evidence of transfer in the case of different idioms.

3.2. Pedagogical Implication & Application

3.2.1. Pedagogical implications:

Following is the recapitulation of teaching implications made out of the findings of this study. The results of this study revealed that within the scope of the specific participants and idiom tasks in this study, idioms are transferrable. In the context of EFL teaching and learning, teachers can take advantage of the fact that students use their knowledge of idioms in their first language to comprehend as well as to produce idioms in a second language.

The issue of teaching for recognition versus for production of idioms is important, too because interference seems to be more obvious in the production of idioms. Generally speaking, for recognition as well as production of identical idioms,

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cross-cultural comparison can help students to positively transfer their knowledge of L1 into L2. Students' acquisition of second language idioms can be accelerated thanks to their awareness of factors like language or culture that share similarities in both languages. For similar idioms, students can also make use of L1 to comprehend L2 idioms; however, they tend to those in L1 to produce equivalent L2 idioms, which causes errors.

In short, when teaching idioms for recognition and production purpose, teachers can encourage students to discover themselves which second language idioms can be transferred from their first language and which idioms need more attention due to their likelihood to cause interference.

3.2.2. Application:

In the current English teaching context in Viet Nam, insufficient care is given to idiom teaching and learning. Normally only until students reach advanced level do they pay attention to idioms. However, idioms are so common in English that teaching and learning idiom are critical in EFL setting, especially under the light of CLT when much emphasis is put on learners' communicative competence. Students, even at beginning levels, should be taught to understand and produce some idioms. It is recommended that high frequency identical idioms should be taught to beginning students. They can make use of their knowledge of idioms in their first language to learn second language idioms.

In addition, comparing literal and figurative meanings of identical and similar idioms is not important. Students have already acquired the link between literal words and their non-literal meaning when they learn their native language. However, it is highly recommended that students be provided with activities comparing literal and figurative meanings of idioms that do not have equivalents in L1. As suggested by Irujo (1986), these activities might include matching pictures showing literal and non-literal meanings of an idiom, drawing or acting out literal meanings, and making up

stories/ dialogues in which the literal use of an idiom creates misunderstanding or a humorous situation (for students at intermediate level and above).

Additionally, students' self-selection of idioms of their favorite topics may get students more involved in idiom learning. When selecting idioms, students had better compare and contrast them with ones in their native language to utilize positive transfer and avoid interference.

Activities for the purpose of teaching for recognition should provide learners with opportunities to decipher idiom meaning from context (for different idioms) or from their L1 knowledge (for identical and similar idioms). Teachers can use entertaining stories that have often been used to teach idioms to stimulate learners as well as to provide them with contextual information to facilitate their guessing process. Moreover, learners may become more aware of situational appropriateness of using idioms. It is suggested that students should be guided to know which hints they may base on so that they can actually guess the meaning of a new idiom. Instead of providing students with a complete idiom, teachers can show students one short paragraph containing an idiom which is omitted. Students' task is to complete that paragraph with a word or a phrase that fits the context. When this is finished, teachers tell them what the idiom is and show them how they actually inferred the meaning of the omitted idiom. This can be followed by teachers' guidance to help learners to discover whether the idioms are identical, similar or different with ones in their native language. Not only that, students can become more active learners through group discussion before teachers' explanation of idiom meaning. Through group discussion, students' social and linguistic knowledge can be broadened.

Regarding teaching activities for production purpose, it is essential that students be encouraged to practise using idioms in contextualized situations. Learning idioms in a meaningful and authentic context enhances students' communicative competence in their daily life. In addition to effective learning, students need to apply idioms practically. Additionally, the production of similar idioms should be more emphasized

because interference is rather obvious with this type. Students should be taught to compare and contrast idioms in two languages L1 and L2 to avoid interference. Some students have a greater tendency to use their first language to produce idioms in a second language than others. Hence, teachers are advised to take this learning characteristic of students into consideration when teaching idioms, especially similar ones.

Some of Irujo's suggested teaching activities for production purpose includes retelling a story students heard that contained idioms, writing and presenting short plays with idioms in them, and role-play situations that lend themselves to production of idioms, etc. Students can apply linguistic knowledge that they have learnt to make their learning more meaningful. Additionally, these activities allow teachers to know how much new knowledge that students have acquired. Besides, teaching idioms on the idea of theme-based may facilitate students' learning. It is easier for students to remember the meanings of these idioms.

Summary

In this chapter, the answers for two research questions, which were obtained from the data in two tests of the study were clearly presented and explained. Based on the research findings, the latter part suggested some pedagogical implications and application.

PART 3: CONCLUSION

The previous chapters have thoroughly elaborated on the introduction, the literature, the methodology, the results of the research as well as pedagogical implications. Finally, this concluding chapter will summarize major findings of the study. Afterwards, it will pinpoint some limitations of the study, based on which suggestions for further study will be offered.

3.1. Major findings of the study

At recognition level, it appeared that subjects were able to generalize from the meaning in their first language to the meaning in the second language if the form was

identical or similar; slight difference in forms did not affect this process. Students' competence of different idioms was lower compared with that of the other two types There was no evidence of language transfer in the case of different idioms.

Regarding recall competence, positive transfer was likely to occur when students produced identical idioms. There was no big difference between students' recall competence of similar and different idioms. Producing similar idioms was as difficult as producing different idioms. Negative transfer was evident for similar idioms when students tended to use those in L1 to produce equivalent forms in L2. Little transfer would occur when students produced different idioms.

3.2. Limitations of the study

Despite the researcher's efforts in justifying the methodology as well as collecting and analyzing data with careful consideration, shortcomings and mistakes are unavoidable due to time constraint and lack of resources.

First of all is the researcher's restricted access to a wide range of studies related to the main concern of this study: transfer in the acquisition of second language idioms. Consequently, literature review may not provide the researcher with a complete overview of related issues.

Second is the limited sampling size. Only 9 students from group QH2008.1.E1 could participate in this study. The more participants the study could involve, the more applicable the findings could be.

Next, the drawback of this study may lie on the selection of idioms used in two tests: recognition and recall tests. Although these idioms were picked up from some widely published research, it cannot be denied that the researcher subjectively chose these idioms based on the criteria of appropriateness of the study as well as their high frequency in use. The researcher did attempt to find a reliable list of high frequency idioms but it did not succeed.

Finally, due to the limit of the researcher's knowledge, it is not certain that the two tests were reliable and valid enough to measure learners' idiom competence. In order to design test with a high degree of reliability and validity, we may need years of corpus-based study to build it.

3.3. Suggestions for further research

Several significant results were identified in the current study; however, since there are not many studies investigating transfer in the acquisition of second language idioms, it has offered other researchers various approaches to this issue.

Researchers can also investigate into the role of transfer in the acquisition of second language idioms with a large number of participants to provide a more comprehensive view of this issue.

Moreover, a suggestion for further study of designing idiom tests with a high degree of reliability and validity is put forward. These studies may serve as a reliable source to measure students' idiom competence.

Further study comparing learners' of different levels would be of interest to see whether their strategies of using their native language to comprehend and produce L2 idioms are different.

In addition, it is suggested that researchers may carry out research on subjects from other language and different backgrounds.

Last but not least, researchers are recommended to do research on designing activities for teaching comprehension and production of idioms to make use of the role of language transfer in students' acquisition of L2 idioms.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: **List of idioms**

Identical Idioms:

1.   To play with fire
Đùa với lửa (to play with fire)
2.   To lead sb by the nose
Dắt mũi ai (to lead sb's nose)
3.   (To fight) Like cat and dog
Như chó với mèo (like dog with cat)
4.   To be on cloud nine
Trên 9 tầng mây (to be on cloud nine)
5.   To stick/ poke your nose into something
dính mũi vào chuyện gì (to stick your nose into something)
6.   In one ear and out the other
vào tai này ra tai kia (in one ear and out the other ear)
7.   Lose face
mất mặt (lose face)
8.   To give sb/ sth the green light
bật đèn xanh (to turn on the green light for sb/ sth)
9.   To be in the same boat
(cùng hội) cùng thuyền (to be in the same group and the same boat)
10.   Over my dead body

bước qua xác tôi (go over my dead body)

Similar Idioms:

1.   To be tied to one's mother's apron string

Bám váy mẹ (be tied to one's mother's dress)

2.   to kill two birds with one stone

Một mũi tên trúng hai con chim (to kill two birds with one arrow)

3.   to sleep like a log/ top
ngủ say như chết (to sleep as if being dead)
4.   like water off a duck's back
nước đổ đầu vịt (water over a duck's head/taro leaf)
5.   to add fuel to the fire/ flames
Thêm dầu vào lửa (to add petrol/ oil to the fire)
6.   Sweat like a pig
Vã mồ hôi như tắm (sweat like bathing)
7.   To look for a needle in the haystack
Mò kim đáy bể (to look for a needle in the seabed)
8.   (build) castles in the air
xây lâu đài trên cát (build castles on sand)
9.   To fit like a glove
vừa như in (to fit like being printed)
10.   To be like chalk and cheese
Trứng chọi đá (eggs versus stones)

Different Idioms:

1.   To pull someone's leg
lừa, trêu chọc ai (to tease sb)
2.   To make a mountain out of a molehill
Chuyện bé xé ra to (to make small issue bigger)
3.   To pass the buck
Ném đá giấu tay (to throw stone, then hide hands)
4.   To burn the midnight oil
thức khuya học tập (làm việc) (to go to bed late to work/ study)
5.   Kick the bucket
Chết (to die)
6.   to make a killing
trúng quả (to hit the jackpot)

7.   have one foot in the grave
gần đất xa trời (to be near the ground and far from the sky)
8.   Once in a blue moon
năm thì mười họa (rarely)

9.   To put one's foot in one's mouth

tự há miệng mắc quai (to self open one's mouth then be stuck by strap)

10.   Wet behind the ears
Non nớt (to be inexperienced)

APPENDIX 2A: Recall idiom test

Instruction: Complete the idiom by filling each blank with no more than two words. In some blanks, article (a/an) is needed and it is counted as one of the missing words.

1. You must know that I refused to admit that I did make a mistake because I didn't

    want to lose ………………

2. I have to cash a check and make a payment on my bank loan. I'll kill two birds with one ……………… by doing them both in one trip to the bank.
3. I was so nervous, I was sweating like ………………
4. Didn't you hear? He kicked the ………………- had a heart attack, I think.
5. Don't you know that you're playing with ………………when you get involved with someone who's already married?
6. He's 30 but he's still tied to his mother's ………………
7. John is too young to take on a job like this! He's still ……………… behind the ears!
8. Why don't you pay attention to what you need to do and not build castles in the ………………?
9. The dress that you bought me fits me like ………………
10. She is waiting for her mother to give her the ………………… to hang out with her friends.
11. "Your daughter says she's going to stay out all night." "Never. She dares? Over my ………………!"
12. She told me that she was going to attend Ms. World. But I don't believe her, I think that she pulled my ………………
13. They simply didn't know what they were doing. They did what they were told to do. In fact, the government led them by the ………………
14. Should the government warn the public of terrorist threats, or is this merely adding ……………… to the fire?
15. I have a big exam tomorrow so I'll be burning the ………………tonight.
16. When I got my promotion, I was on cloud ………………
17. It's not a big problem. Don't make ……………… out of …………………!
18. In order to make ……………….. at the blackjack tables, you need to be a mathematical genius.
19. The teacher felt that everything she told her students was in one ……………… and out the other. They didn't remember anything.
20. That punishment was intended to be a threat to him. However, it turns out to be like water off a duck's ……………… He is not scared at all.
21. When I told Ann that her hair was more beautiful than I had ever seen it, I really put my ……………… in my mouth. It was a wig.
22. "I'm so busy. I don't know how I will get this done."

   "You're not the only one with a lot to do. We are all in the same ……………… "

23. You can't talk about Fred and Ted in the same way! They're like ……………… and ………………

24. Tom cares about all my stuffs, which annoys me. He always sticks his . ……………… into my personal life.

25. Trying to find a white glove in the snow is like looking for a needle in …….. …………

26. Don't try to pass the ………………! It's your fault, and everybody knows it.

27. His grandfather is 101 years old. I think he has one foot in ………………….

28. Once in a ………………., I buy a fashion magazine, just to see what people are wearing.

29. We get on very well as adults but as kids we fought like ……………… and ………………

30. Everyone in our family sleeps like ………………, so no one heard the thunderstorm in the middle of the night.

*APPENDIX 2B: **Recall idiom test key***

Question	Key
1.	face
2.	stone
3.	pig
4.	bucket
5.	fire
6.	apron strings
7.	wet
8.	sand
9.	glove
10.	green light
11.	dead body
12.	leg
13.	nose
14.	fuel
15.	midnight oil
16.	nine
17.	a mountain – a molehill
18.	killing

19.	ear
20.	back
21.	foot
22.	boat
23.	chalk - cheese
24.	nose
25.	haystack
26.	buck
27.	grave
28.	blue moon
29.	cat - dog
30.	log/ top

APPENDIX 3A: Recognition idiom test

Instruction: Please choose only one option A, B or C that **best** conveys the meaning of the underlined idiom.

1. Don't <u>play with fire.</u>
    A. Don't take foolish risks.
    B. Don't amuse yourself by fire.
    C. Don't play too much.

2. You can <u>lose face</u>.
    A. Your face can be taken away.
    B. You can be humiliated.
    C. You cannot live anymore.

3. I think it is <u>like water off a duck's back </u>to her.
    A. I think she is extremely interested in it.
    B. I think she likes pouring water onto a duck's back.
    C. I think it does not have apparent effect on her.

4. You are <u>making a mountain out of a molehill</u>.
    A. You are making a small problem become bigger.
    B. You are making big things from small stuffs.
    C. You are making a lot of troubles.

6. He is very good at <u>passing the buck.</u>

A. He is very good at transferring money.
B. He is very good at shifting responsibility to others.
C. He is very good at persuading others.

7.   I think it is like <u>looking for a needle in the haystack.</u>
   A. I think it is extremely beautiful.
   B. I like hunting for a needle in a large pile of hay.
   C. I think it is a hopeless search.

8.   He tries to <u>pull my leg</u>.
   A. He tries to make me happy.
   B. He tries to draw my leg with force.
   C. He tries to tease me.

8. He is <u>sweating like a pig</u>.
   A. He stinks.
   B. He is sweating a lot.
   C. He is sweating as if he was a pig.

9. What she said to me were <u>in one ear and out the other</u>.
   A. I clearly understood what she said.
   B. What she said to me went in through one ear then went out through the other ear.
   C. I heard what she said but then I quickly forgot it.

10. Your friend is <u>leading you by the nose</u>.
   A. Your friend is totally controlling you.
   B. Your friend is eager to meet you.
   C. Your friend is taking you to somewhere by using his nose.

11. Your action <u>added fuel to the fire</u>.
   A. Your action made things worse.
   B. Your action received a lot of favors.
   C. You did put more fuel on fire.

12. She <u>sleeps like a log</u>.
   A. The way she lies in bed looks like a log.
   B. She works very hard.
   C. She sleeps very soundly.

13. He is <u>tied to his mother's apron strings</u>.
   A. He is too much influenced by his mother.
   B. He loves his mother very much.
   C. He fastens his mother's apron strings.

14. You and your sister are <u>like cat and dog</u>.

A. You are like a cat and your sister is like a dog.
B. You and your sister continually argue with each other.
C. You and your sister look alike.

15. He <u>has one foot in the grave.</u>
    A. He is near death.
    B. He puts one foot on the ground.
    C. He is not realistic.

16. She often <u>burns the midnight oil.</u>
    A. She often goes home late.
    B. She often uses oil to light at midnight.
    C. She often works late into the night.

17. This helps him to <u>kill two birds with one stone</u>.
    A. This helps him to use only one stone to shoot two birds.
    B. This helps him to achieve two aims at once.
    C. This helps him to get promoted.

18. He <u>kicked the bucket</u> last night.
    A. He died last night.
    B. He was very sad last night.
    C. He hit the bucket last night.

19. This <u>fits you like a glove.</u>
     A. This brings you a lot of fun.
     B. This exactly fits you.
     C. This fits you like the way your glove fits you.

20. Why do you always <u>stick your nose into my life</u>?
    A. Why do you sacrifice yourself for my life?
    B. Why do you always take an intrusive interest in my life?
    C. Why do you always place your nose on my life?

21. I have just <u>put my foot in my mouth.</u>
    A. I have just placed my foot in my mouth.
    B. I have just said something embarrassing.
    C. I have just expressed my ideas.

22. He is <u>wet behind the ears</u>.
    A. He is very wet at the back of his ears.
    B. He is a little bit stupid.
    C. He is immature and inexperienced.

23. It is similar to <u>building castles in the air</u>.

A. It is quite daydreaming.
B. It is really interesting.
C. It is the same as building castles outside.

24. They gave her the green light to do it.
    A. They offered her a green light so that she could do it.
    B. They offered her a high salary.
    C. They permitted her to go ahead with it.

25. We are in the same boat.
    A. We are on the same boat.
    B. We think alike.
    C. We are in the same situation.

26. She is on cloud nine.
    A. She is extremely happy.
    B. She lives on the ninth cloud.
    C. She feels tired.

27. They are like apples and oranges.
    A. They are completely different.
    B. They love each other very much.
    C. One looks like an apple, the other looks like an orange.

28. He made a killing yesterday.
    A. He got married yesterday.
    B. He earned a lot of money yesterday, with little effort.
    C. He killed someone yesterday.

29. Once in a blue moon, I clean the house.
    A. Only when the moon is blue do I clean the house.
    B. I don't like cleaning the house.
    C. I rarely clean the house.

30. You can do it, over my dead body.
    A. I strongly oppose to what you do.
    B. I am in great favor of what you do.
    C. You can do it by going over my dead body.

APPENDIX 3B: **Recognition idiom test key**

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