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**The Effect of Intercultural Communicative Competence on  
Students' Comprehension of Idioms**

**The case of second year EFL students at the Department of  
English, Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillments of the requirements for the degree of Master in  
didactics of foreign languages

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “**The Effect of Intercultural Communicative Competence on Students’ Comprehension of Idioms**” is my own work and all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by means of references. I also certify that I have not copied or plagiarized the work of other students or researchers partially or fully. In case any material is not documented, I shall be responsible for the consequences.

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## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this work:*

*To my parents which words cannot capture the depth of my love and gratitude for them ,my lovely mother “**Djahida**” and my dear father “**Rachid**” . I am truly thankful for your unwavering support and the sacrifices you have made for my education and well-being.*

*To my wonderful sisters “**Sara & Manal**”, source of love, inspiration,  
and laughter.*

*To me to my dear brother “**Fawzi**”. Your laughter, kindness, and unwavering support make the life brighter.*

*To my dear sister-in-law “**Rayane**” and the little miracle in her arms “**Nihal**” the newest addition to our family.*

*I would like to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to **someone** who has played an invaluable role in my journey.*

*I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my friend “**Aida**”, who has been my invaluable partner in the completion of this work.*

*Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to **all my friends** with whom I have shared the best moments.*

**Selma**

*I dedicate this work to:*

*To memory of my dearest mother, **Nadia**, who I have done all this way for her. And I wished she could be here today seeing her little daughter graduating. Allah bless her soul in heaven.*

*To my beloved father, **Abdelmadjid** for his constant prayers, endless support, encouragement, care, and patience. May Allah bless him*

*To my treasured sisters, **Meriem** and **Amina** who encouraged me with their priceless advices. Thank you for lending an ear when nobody else would, and for the bond we share.*

*To my adorable, precious brothers, **Anis, Amine, Djawad***

*To my dear nephew **Younes** and nieces, **Djihane** and **youssra***

*To my life support who never let me down **Amine***

*To my aunt **Radia***

*To my **grandmother** my Allah bless her*

*To all my **uncles, aunts** and **cousins***

*To all my **best friends***

*To my wonderful friend and partner **Selma** whom I share this work*

*To everyone who helped me, and the ones I love*

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## **Abstract**

Idioms are part of both language and culture. The present research work examined the influence of intercultural communicative competence on the comprehension of English idioms among second-year English students. Specifically, it aimed to determine the source of difficulties in understanding idioms, provide insights into which aspects pose a greater challenge for English students, and examine the effect of the existing intercultural communicative competence on the process of idiom comprehension. Theoretically, it was hypothesized that there is a correlation between students' intercultural communicative competence and their idiom comprehension process. It was also hypothesized that the different types of idioms may influence the understanding of idioms among second-year students. To achieve the study's objectives and test the hypotheses, a mixed-methods approach was utilized. A test was administered to sixty second-year License students at the English department at Mohamed Seddik BenYahia's university in Jijel to assess their comprehension level of English idioms. Additionally, a questionnaire was administered to fifty-four second-year license students of English to gather their perspectives on idiom comprehension and intercultural communicative competence. The findings of the study revealed that students encountered difficulties in understanding idioms, particularly pure idioms that are closely related to the target culture. However, the study did not find a significant influence of intercultural communicative on students' comprehension of English idioms. And that Students have a surface level of intercultural communicative competence . Based on the results obtained, some recommendations for future research and for pedagogical practices were suggested.

**Keywords:** Second-year Students, Idiom comprehension, Idiom comprehension difficulties, Intercultural Communicative Competence.

## **List of Abbreviations and Symbols**

- 1. %:** Percentage
- 2. Big ‘C’:** Big Culture
- 3. E.g.:** Example
- 4. EFL:** English as a Foreign Language
- 5. i.e.:** That is
- 6. ICC:** Intercultural Communicative Competence
- 7. L1 :**First Language
- 8. L2:** Second Language
- 9. Q:** Question
- 10. Small “c”:** Small Culture

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Résumé

ملخص

## **General Introduction**

### **Introduction**

English is regarded as a global language due to its wide usage in global transactions, science in addition to its being the official language in numerous countries. Proficiency in English entails not only understanding its grammar and vocabulary but also learning its figurative language such as idioms, metaphors and similes. Idioms, as defined by the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Richards and Schmidt (2013), are expressions whose meaning cannot be deduced from the individual words composing them if taken separately. For example, the expression 'pull someone's leg' figuratively means to tease someone, this meaning cannot be inferred from its literal meaning, only if taken as one unit can the meaning be understood(p.12).

Idiomatic expressions can be found in all languages and they occupy a significant role in second language acquisition. It is essential for learners who wish to achieve a native-like proficiency and improve communication skills to master idiomatic expression as well. Belousova (2015) argued that understanding and using idiomatic expressions fluently could be seen as a sign of language proficiency, as it could be an effective way to help students improve their communication skills (p10). Moreover, according to Ellis (1997), possessing adequate knowledge of idioms in the second language and using them appropriately are crucial measures of a language learners' communicative competence. (p.20). In fact, Hashim and Fallatah (2010) stated that EFL learners encounter idioms in use frequently in different aspects of their daily lives, including interaction with native speakers, watching TV, listening to the radio, and reading materials such as newspapers, magazines, textbooks, poetry, short stories, and plays (p 147 ).

However, idioms pose a challenge for non-native speakers as noted by many researchers such as Cedar, 2008; Cooper, 1998; Comell,199; Grant & Bauer, 2004 ;Moon, 1998; Sparado , 2013 ( as cited in Al-Houtiand Aldaihani, 2020, p.8).During the process of English language learning, EFL learners often struggle to comprehend and use idioms correctly in context (Fatah and Karim, 2023, p. 6). This difficulty can hinder their ability to communicate effectively. Therefore, Vasiljevic (2015) stated that it is important for second language learners to be prepared to tackle the task of learning L2 idioms because they are fundamental aspects of all natural languages and are commonly used in both written and spoken English (p. 20). Consequently, it is crucial to investigate the role of intercultural communicative competence in understanding idioms. ICC is comprised of knowledge, skills, and motivation needed to interact effectively and appropriately with persons from different cultures.

## **1. Background of the Study**

Numerous studies have investigated the difficulties encountered by EFL learners in understanding and using idioms in various countries. For instance, Hashim and Fallatah (2010) conducted a study to investigate Saudi female students' ability to recognize and comprehend English idioms within specific contexts. The sample consisted of 60 senior female learners of English from Taibah University. To assess the learners' recognition and comprehension of English pure idioms, the researchers employed translation and multiple-choice tests. The results indicated that context played a crucial role in facilitating the recognition and comprehension of English idioms. Additionally, idioms that were commonly used, transparent in meaning (simple figurative meaning), and had simple



vocabulary and structure were more easily recognized and comprehended by the participants.

Additionally, Derrouche and Adjadj (2015) aimed in their study at assessing the effectiveness of context in enhancing EFL learners' comprehension of idioms. The study was conducted on first-year) students of English at Larbi Ben M'hidi University in and applied a quasi-experimental research designs with pre-test, a treatment phase, and a post-test. The results indicated that context had a positive impact on students' comprehension of idioms. Students' demonstrated considerable development in linking the context of stories to the meanings of given idioms. The students preferred learning idioms in context, as it facilitated their understanding by narrowing down the possible interpretations.

Orfan (2021) explored the attitudes of Afghan undergraduate students towards the importance of learning English idioms. The study also investigated the difficulties faced by students in acquiring and understanding idiomatic expressions in addition to the strategies they employed to enhance their understanding. Data for the study were collected through a questionnaire distributed to 337 undergraduate students majoring in English language and literature. The findings revealed that the participants held a positive attitude towards learning idioms but faced difficulties due to a lack of cultural knowledge associated with idioms, the absence of English idiom counterparts in their first language, and a lack of context. The study also highlighted the different strategies used by students to understand idioms.

Most studied conducted on idioms' comprehension focused more on the difficulties and the strategies involved in the process of understanding idiom. However, There have been insufficient discussions about the role of ICC on idioms' comprehension.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Learning idioms is an integral part of acquiring English language vocabulary, achieving language proficiency and facilitating the process of communication for EFL learners. In spite of their importance, they are often neglected in EFL classes. Second-year EFL students at the University of Mohamed Seddik Benyahia in Jijel do not receive sufficient instruction on idioms, resulting in lack of awareness and difficulties in comprehending them. This leads to decrease of confidence, motivation, and communication obstacles when interacting with English-speaking individuals. Therefore, the present research aims to explore the role of ICC on idioms comprehension.

## **3. Research Questions**

Many EFL students encounter difficulties in comprehending idioms. In light of this, the study aims to address the following research questions:

1. Do second-year EFL students have difficulties understanding English idioms?
2. Can different types of idioms influence the comprehension of second-year EFL students?
3. Which idioms pose more difficulties for second-year EFL students?
4. To what extent ICC help EFL learners in understanding English idioms?

## **4. Research Assumptions:**

Based on the research questions raised above, the following assumptions are proposed:

1. Second-year EFL learners have varying levels of comprehension of idioms.
2. Second-year EFL students will encounter more difficulties with pure idioms compared to semi-literal and literal idioms.

3. The different types of idioms may influence the understanding of idioms among second-year EFL students.
4. Students' intercultural communicative competence is positively correlated with their idiom comprehension.

## **5. Aim of the Research**

The aim of this study is to explore the influence of intercultural communicative competence on the comprehension of English idioms for second-year EFL learners in the University of Mohamed Seddik Benyahia in Jijel. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the source of difficulties in understanding idioms, providing insights into which poses a greater challenge for second-year EFL students, and the effect of existing intercultural competence on the process of idioms comprehension.

## **6. Research Methodology**

In order to test the hypotheses, address the research questions, and achieve the proposed aims two data collection instruments were used: a written test and a questionnaire. The test was administered to a volunteering sample from the whole population of second-year EFL students at the Department of English at Mohammed Seddik Benyahia's university, Jijel. Students were requested to provide explanations of idioms in English. Additionally, a questionnaire was distributed to explore students' perceptions about ICC and its significance in comprehending idioms. The questionnaire also explored students' views on what plays a more important role in understanding idioms. Due to the nature of the research subject, a mixed-method approach was employed as it is the most suitable approach to verify the hypotheses, answer the research questions, and

arrive at the main objective behind this study; inspecting the role of intercultural communicative competence on the comprehension of idioms.

## **7. Organization of the Dissertation**

This study consists of two main chapters: a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part is a review of relevant literature of the concepts covered in the dissertation. Whereas, the practical part involves the fieldwork where descriptions, discussions, and analyses of the tools implemented appears.

The first chapter i.e., the theoretical chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section presents an overview on culture, including its definition, characteristics, and types. Additionally, it focuses on intercultural communicative competence. A definition of the latter is provided alongside its importance in idioms understanding. The second section provides a comprehensive overview about idioms, including their definition, characteristics, classification and importance. Moreover, it explores the factors that influence the comprehension of idioms and the difficulties involved.

The second chapter i.e., comprising the fieldwork, is dedicated throughout its two sections to the research design and data analysis and discussion. The research design starts with a description of the research approach, design and methodology. Then, it sheds light on the study's population, sample, instruments of data collection and their detailed procedures.

The second section of the practical part is devoted to data analysis and discussion of both the test and the questionnaire. The findings and the results are then analyzed and

discussed. Suggestions, recommendations to teachers and future researchers, as well as limitations of the study are provided.

## **Section One: Culture, Intercultural Communicative Competence**

### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the different perspectives on culture provided by different scholars, emphasizing its characteristics, types, and the specific relationship it has with language and idioms. Furthermore, an in-depth discussion of intercultural communicative competence and its importance in understanding idioms is provided since it is related to culture and language. Finally, the present chapter also sheds light on the factors affecting idioms comprehension and the various difficulties associated with understanding idioms.

### **1.1. Definition of Culture**

Culture is a multifaceted and complex concept that cannot be reduced to a singular and simple definition as Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel rightfully points (2013, p. 38). Its ubiquity and complexity make it challenging to encapsulate in a concise manner, leading to numerous and often intricate definitions (Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel, 2012, p. 10). Harrison and Huntington (2000, p.15) further emphasize that the term “culture” carries different meanings across disciplines and contexts. It is frequently employed to encompass a society’s intellectual, artistic, musical, and literary creations, commonly known as “high culture.” Hofstede (1994, p. 6) offers a definition that characterizes culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”. Additionally, Matsumoto (1996) highlights that culture comprises “the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different from each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.”(As

cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2012, p. 2) Furthermore, Spencer-Oatey (2008, as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2012, p. 2) describes culture as a

fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioral conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each members behavior and his/ her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behavior.

Thompson (1990), holds another perspective on culture, defining it as “... the pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic form, including actions, utterances, and meaningful objects of various kinds, by virtue of which individuals communicate with one another and share their experiences, conceptions and beliefs” (p. 132). This notion of culture had previously been championed by Geertz (1973) in his definition of culture as denoting “a historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols. A system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitudes towards life” (p. 89).

In summary, culture lacks a universally agreed-upon definition among scholars due to its intricate nature. It encompasses shared values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that distinguish one group from another. Culture exerts an influence on individuals’ conduct and their interpretations of others’ actions. Additionally, culture is a system of codes utilized in communication, consisting of shared symbols that foster meaning creation and facilitate successful interpersonal relationships.

## **1.2. Characteristics of Culture**

According to Spencer-Oatey (2012), there is general agreement on the major characteristics that constitute culture. He emphasizes that culture is learned, transmitted intergenerationally, symbolic, and dynamic (pp. 12-13).

### **1.2.1. Culture Is Learnt**

In the moment of birth, humans enter the world as blank slates, lacking knowledge of the societal rules necessary to function and thrive within their respective culture. However, as individuals grow and develop, they quickly begin to absorb and internalize information through various means, including interactions, observations, and imitations. This process of acquiring culture from diverse sources such as art, history, religion, and proverbs is referred to as enculturation. The latter involves both conscious and subconscious learning, shaping the understanding of societal norms, values, and behaviors of individuals. Indeed, through enculturation, members of a given culture acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to function effectively and appropriately within the cultural milieu.

### **1.2.2. Culture Is Transmitted Intergenerationally**

Culture is transmitted intergenerationally, encompassing not only the appropriate ways to act and the values held by individuals, but also what individuals communicate and learn. The transmission occurs through diverse means, including family members, teachers, peers, books, personal observations, and media sources. As individuals comprise a given society, they not only receive cultural expectations but also pass them on to others. In this way, culture serves as a link with the past and the promise of a better future through subsequent generations.



### **1.2.3. Culture Is Symbolic**

Words, gestures, and images are crucial symbols used to convey meaning. Individuals' ability to proficiently use these symbols enables the engagement in diverse forms of social interaction, which in turn contributes to the construction and communication of culture. Furthermore, the ability to create and understand symbols facilitates learning and enables the transmission of between individuals, groups, and across generations. Additionally, the portability of symbols allows for the storage of information, serving as a means for culture to preserve what is considered important and create a history.

### **1.2.4. Culture Is Dynamic**

Culture is not a static entity but rather a dynamic and ever-evolving phenomenon. It is perpetually shaped by a number of factors, including the innovation of new ideas, inventions, exposure to other cultures, technological advancements, cultural diffusion or cultural borrowing, and the impact of significant events like war, political upheaval, and immigration. While certain aspects of culture that relate to specific topics such as food preferences, modes of transportation, or housing may readily undergo change, the deep structures of culture like values, morals, and ethics, tend to persist over time and endure from one generation to the next.

## **1.3. Types of Culture**

In order to provide a clearer definition of culture, it is useful to differentiate between two types: "Big 'C' culture" and "small 'c' culture." According to Chlopek, the "Big 'C' culture" primarily encompasses factual knowledge about the fine arts, such as literature, music, dance, painting, sculpture, theater, and film. This aspect of culture is usually easily

studied and readily apparent (2008, p. 11). Similarly, Lee argues that the Big ‘c’ domain refers to a collection of facts and statistics pertaining to the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals, and customs of a specific society. It is visible and can be easily observed and memorized by learners (2008, p. 78).

On the other hand, “‘small-c culture’ comprises a wide range of interconnected aspects, including attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, perceptions, norms and values, social relationships, customs, celebrations, rituals, politeness conventions, patterns of interaction and discourse organization, the use of time in communication, and the use of physical space and body language” (Chlopek, 2008, p. 11). Additionally, Lee states that “the small ‘c’ domain refers to the invisible and deeper essence of a target culture (that is, the mainstream socio-cultural values, norms and beliefs, taking into consideration such socio-cultural variables as age, gender, and social status)” (2009, p. 78).

#### **1.4. The Synergy of Language and Culture**

Brown (2000) asserts that: “A language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language: the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.” (p. 171). Similarly, Goa (2006) argues that language and culture are intertwined, and treating language independently from culture disregards its inherent nature. Language cannot be isolated from the culture it represents, as the interconnectedness between language learning and cultural learning is evident. Thus, learning a language is closely tied to learning its associated culture, making language teaching inherently cultural teaching (p. 59). Furthermore, Ter-Minasova (2000) contends that language serves as a medium for preserving and expressing cultural values. This suggests that language acts as a coating material for culture,

manifesting cultural values through vocabulary, grammar rules, idioms, proverbs, interpretation, folklore, literature, and scientific discourse(As cited in YagizIzadpanah, 2013 p.955).

According to Kramersch (2000), when language is used for communication, it becomes intertwined with culture in multiple complex ways. She mentions three ways in which language is related to culture. Initially, language expresses cultural reality in the sense that, the words people speak reflect common and shared experiences. This means that facts, ideas, events, author's attitudes, beliefs and perspectives people express can be easily understood by those who share the same stock of knowledge about the world (cultural background). Secondly, language embodies cultural reality, meaning that members of a community or social group express and create experiences through language. Meaning is given to their experiences through the medium they choose to communicate with one another .The various forms of communication (written, spoken and visual mediums) people use create meaning that is understood by those who belong to the same groups. Briefly, people, through language in both verbal and non-verbal forms, reflect and express their cultural experiences and identities. Finally, language symbolizes cultural reality, in which language is considered as a system of signs that holds cultural values and a symbol of a group's social and cultural identities (p. 7).

From the aforementioned sources, it is evident that language and culture are inseparable and interconnected. Idioms, being a part of both language and culture, play a crucial role in preserving, maintaining, and reflecting cultural reality, values, beliefs, and identities. Additionally, idioms are influenced by and shape culture. Therefore, understanding idioms deeply rooted in specific cultural contexts requires an understanding

of both language and culture. Conversely, lacking competence in a given culture could negatively affect understanding that culture's idioms.

## **2.1 Definition of Intercultural Communicative Competence**

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), particularly in the context of foreign language teaching, is of particular relevance to our study. Before delving into the various definitions of intercultural communicative competence, it is essential to distinguish between intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence.

Byram (1997) defines intercultural competence as the “individuals ability to interact in their own language with people from another country and culture, drawing upon their knowledge about intercultural communication, their attitudes of interest in otherness and their skills in interpreting, relating and discovering, i.e., of overcoming cultural difference and enjoying intercultural contact.”(p.70). On the other hand, “someone ICC is able to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language. They are able to negotiate a mode of communication and interaction which is satisfactory to them and the other, and they are able to act as mediators between people of different cultural origins.” Their knowledge of another culture is closely linked to their language competence, including sociolinguistic and discourse competence, as well as their awareness of specific meanings, values, and connotations associated with language. These learnt skills form the basic foundation for acquiring new languages and expanding their cultural understanding(p.71).

Furthermore, ICC is “the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviors that recognize the interactants' multiple

identities in a specific environment”. This definition highlights that individuals who are competent in intercultural communication should be skilled not only in interacting appropriately and effectively with others and their environment, but also have the ability to fulfill their communicative objectives while understanding and respecting the identities of those with whom they interact (Chen and Starosta 1996, pp. 358-359). Similarly, Wiseman (2001) suggests “that ICC is comprised of knowledge, skills, and motivation needed to interact effectively and appropriately with persons from different cultures. In this definition, motivation is a unique element not included in some of the other definitions of intercultural competence and is further defined as the set of feelings, intentions, needs and drives associated with the anticipation of or actual engagement in intercultural communication” (As cited in Ahnagari, and Zamanian, 2014, p.10).

### **2.1.2. Importance of ICC on Idiom Understanding**

“The main component of having cultural awareness is having tenderness of the differences between individuals and people from other countries or backgrounds. So the ICC encloses cultural awareness and the consciousness of the language in use” (Santana and Betancourt, 202, p. 64). Meaning that intercultural communicative competence encompasses both cultural awareness and conscious understanding of the language in use, which enables individuals to have an understanding of the cultural diversity (costumes and background) of people from various countries. Byram (1998) highlights that as learners acquire language skills, they also learn about the associated culture, and as they learn to use a new language, they develop the ability to communicate with individuals from that culture. Language and culture are deeply intertwined in this regard (p. 22).

Moreover, Ter-Minasova (2000) contends that since idioms are part of language and language is a vehicle to maintain culture, someone with ICC will possess the ability to understand and recognize idioms that are rooted in specific cultural contexts. Language, including vocabulary, grammar rules, idioms, proverbs, interpretation, folklore, literature, science, written and oral discourse, plays a role in maintaining cultural values (As cited in YagizIzadpanah, 2013, p. 955).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, providing a comprehensive overview of various definitions of culture, highlighting its characteristics and types while acknowledging its inherent connection to language, is crucial. Additionally, emphasizing the role of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in understanding idioms is important. EFL learners with ICC possess the necessary cultural background knowledge to comprehend idioms appropriately.

## **Section Two Idioms**

### **Introduction**

Idioms constitute a crucial component of any language and can be regarded as an indicator of an individual's proficiency in that language, as stated by McDevitt (1993, p. 4). In fact, idiomatic expressions are a unique aspect of every language; they build up some distinctive features which differ from one language into another. Idiomatic expressions make language more fun and vibrant to learn. Nonetheless, due to their nature, non-native speakers find them difficult to comprehend. This section deals with an overview about idioms, their definitions, characteristics, classifications, importance. The factors influencing idioms comprehension and the difficulties involved.

#### **1. Definition of Idioms**

In literature, various terms are used to refer to idioms, for example, complex unit, fixed expression, fixed phrase, phraseme, and phrase lexeme (Everaert et al., 2014). There are several definitions that attempt to describe what an idiom is, and most of these definitions share similar characteristics.

Loelene and Maureen (2003) defines idiom as non-literal phrases whose figurative interpretations cannot be deduced from their literal meanings (p.188). Similarly, Richards and Schmidt (1990) explains idioms, saying that “it is an expression which functions as a single unit and whose meaning cannot be worked out from separate parts” (p. 246). Moreover, Ifill (2002) states that “idiom is a fixed expression whose meaning cannot be taken as a combination of the meanings of its component parts”(p. 2). Simpson and Mendis (2003), for instance, define idioms as “a group of words that occur in a more or less fixed phrase and

whose overall meaning cannot be predicted by analyzing the meanings of its constituent parts”(p. 423).

Mona Baker (1992) in her book *In Other Words* defines idioms as “frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and often carry meanings which cannot be detected from their individual components”( as cited in Djedjai and Mezouar, 2016,p. 6) .i.e. Idioms cannot be interpreted by the literal meanings of their individual words. For example, the phrase "kick the bucket" does not mean to actually kick a bucket; it is a figurative expression that means to die. This means that idioms have their own unique meanings that cannot be deduced from the meanings of their individual parts.

These definitions have one thing in common; the meaning of idioms cannot be worked out from their constituent parts. So far, it has been shown that there are a lot of similar definitions used to describe the same language phenomenon.

## **2. Characteristics of Idioms**

As there have been various definitions provided by different scholars concerning the term of idiom, again there are different views on what exactly characterizes idioms.

### **2.1.Fernando Characteristics**

To start with, Fernando (1996), as cited in Bc. Martina , 2013 p. 11) presents compositeness institutionalization , semantic opacity as the most frequently mentioned features of idioms . Fernando attributes the feature of compositeness to the multiword nature of idiomatic expressions. That is, idioms consist of two or more lexical constituents that functions like a single word expression. While institutionalization implies that idioms are conventionalized expressions, resulting from what were once an ad hoc phrases. That is,



idioms first gain acceptance as temporary expressions and then become integrated into society's normal cultural usage through continued usage. In fact, according to Leah (2014) idioms are expressions that are widely recognized and accepted by members of a specific community, often possessing a unique and figurative meaning (p. 3). Semantic opacity reflects the non-literalness of idioms. That is, the meaning of an idiom is not the sum of its constituents. For example, according to Spears (2005) 'on fire' means 'very enthusiastic' which has nothing to do with fire (p. 466).

## **2.2.Mentayla Characteristics**

Mäntylä (2004) mentions five features that are generally considered when characterizing idioms: metaphoracity/figurativeness (they are used as synonyms), non-compositionality, fixedness of form, level of formality and multi-wordiness (P.28-35).

### **2.2.1. Metphoracity or Figurativeness**

It is considered a fundamental characteristic of idioms and also the most commonly mentioned one. It refers to the fact that idioms are expressions that are figurative or metaphorical in nature. i.e., idioms have a meaning cannot be deduced from the literal meaning of the words used. Instead the meaning of an idiom is derived from the figurative or the metaphorical interpretation of the phrase. For example, the idiom 'break a leg' is commonly used to wish someone good luck before a performance or presentation. The literal meaning of the phrase is nonsensical, but the figurative meaning is that the person is being encouraged to perform well.

### **2.2.2. Non-compositeness**

“Non-compositionality has often been interpreted as a sign of idioms being dead, that, is their meaning being arbitrary rather than figurative.” (Mäntylä, 2004, p.31).

### **2.2.3. Fixedness of form**

Is another basic feature of idioms. It means that idioms cannot be changed or varied. They are frozen and invariance in appearance.

### **2.2.4. Level of formality**

It has been frequently asserted that idioms are more commonly used in informal, spoken language rather than in written or formal language.

### **2.2.5. Multi-wordiness**

Idiom consists of more than one word. Therefore, they are multiword expressions.

M. El Batal (2000) says that there is an agreement on the common features shared by idioms, which are figurativeness, compositeness, semantic opacity, institutionalization and fixedness in form and order (as cited in Boukhenfirand Bourbia, 2017 p. 30).

## **3. Classification of Idioms**

As there are different characteristics of idioms, the scope of classifying them is also way broader. Based on Grant & Bauer (2004), researchers have categorized idioms in various manners depending on their semantic, syntactic, and functional (as cited in Saberian and Fotovatnia, 2011 p. 1232).

### **3.1. Moon classification of Idioms**

To start with, Moon (1998, pp. 22-23) classifies idioms depending on the degree of transparency. That is the extent to which the meaning of an idiom can be derived from the meaning of its particular constituents, into a set of classes spanning the continuum from transparent idioms to opaque idioms (as cited in Salah, S, M.2007, p. 23).

#### **3.1.1. Transparent Metaphors**

These are idioms where the figurative meaning can be understood through the literal meaning of the words and the hearer/reader's real-world knowledge. For example, 'head over heels' means to be very excited or in love, and the literal meaning of the words can be related to this figurative meaning.

#### **3.1.2-Semi-Transparent Metaphors**

These are idioms where the figurative meaning can only be understood through some special knowledge, and there may be two or more possible interpretations if the idiomatic meaning is unknown. For example, 'let the cat out of the bag' means to reveal a secret, but the literal meaning of the words does not provide a clear indication of this meaning.

#### **3.1.3. Opaque Metaphors / Pure Idioms**

These are idioms where the figurative meaning cannot be understood without knowledge of the historical origins of the expression. For example, 'kick the bucket' means to die, but the literal meaning of the words does not provide any indication of this meaning, and the origin of the expression is unknown.

## **3.2. Fernando Classification**

Among the various classifications of idioms, Fernando (1996) classification goes along with the aims of this study. According to Fernando (1996, p. 35) there are three sub-classes of idioms (As cited in Strakšiene 2009, p.14).

### **3.2.1. Pure Idioms**

‘They are conventionalized, non-literal multiword expressions .They are always nonliteral; they may be either invariable or may have little variation.’ In addition, these idioms are considered as the most difficult type of idioms , because their meaning has nothing to do with the sum of the literal meaning of its constituents .they are also known as opaque idioms.

E.g. ‘out of the blue’ = to show unexpectedly

‘Spill the beans’ = to reveal a secret (it has nothing to do with the beans) .

### **3.2.2. Semi –Idioms**

These idioms may have one or more literal components and one or more non-literal components. Therefore, this type of idiom is considered partially opaque.

E. g ‘foot the bill,’ which means ‘pay for something ’.

### **3.2.3. Literal Idioms**

They are either invariable or allow little variation .They are considered to be transparent because they can be interpreted based on their parts. That is, there is a close relationship between the idiom’s meaning, figurative meaning and the literal meaning.

E.g. ‘In the twink of an eye’

‘Matter of life and death’

#### **4. Importance of Idioms**

it is necessary to address why it is important to know idioms, or perhaps even absolutely necessary, for language learners to learn and understand idioms in the target language.

Idioms are a form of figurative language that are used to add color and richness to language; making it more expressive and interesting. They are commonly used in both written and spoken language. Lundblom and Woods (2012) write that idioms “appear in conversation, print (magazines and newspapers), and media (movies, radio, and television)”(p. 203).Cooper(1998) asserts that idioms occur, for example, on TV-shows or soap operas; therefore, understanding them was crucial to comprehend the plot(p. 256).Also, He (1990) claims that “of the four kinds of non-literal expressions, idioms are the most frequently encountered in discourse” (p. 239). Burke (1998) claims that “if nonnative speakers do not understand idioms, they will never be able to completely integrate and, instead, they will always be outsiders” (p. 23).

Moreover, understanding figurative expressions, including idioms, is crucial in participating fully in a conversation in a language. As Liontas (2002) states, one cannot “participate fully” in a conversation without having the ability to understand the figurative expressions used (p. 289). Additionally, Elkilic (2008) states that English is a language that is particularly rich in idioms, and learning these idioms can be said to constitute the soul of the language (p. 27). In fact, according to Samani & Hashemian (2012), learning idioms can be very helpful for second language learners for better communication and understanding of the target language's culture and society(p. 249). Thus, learning idioms, according to Bachman

(1990); Glucksberg & McGlone (2001); Ovando and Collier(1985), is crucial for attaining efficient communication. This is particularly true given that learning idioms involves learning a culture since idioms often reflect cultural aspects (As cited in Al-Houti, Aldaihani, and Alenezi, 2021, p. 69). In fact, learning and understanding idioms will enhance students' ICC.

Furthermore, it is believed by researchers that having a strong understanding of idioms is crucial for achieving proficiency and fluency in the English language. (Boers et al., 2006, p. 257; Shirazi and Talebinezhad, 2013; Wray, 2002). Indeed, idiomatic competence is considered as one of the essential features of native proficiency. In addition to that, learning and understanding idioms is essential for achieving fluency in the target language .As McDevitt (1993) states, idioms are an important part of any language and they are considered as indicator of one's fluency in that language(p. 4). Thyab (2016) resumes the importance of idioms in few lines.

The usage of idiomatic expressions by those speakers is considered as an important issue and is regarded as an essential part of the English language competence. It is a necessity that all speakers of the English language become aware and proficient in using English idiomatic expressions. It is essential and is considered a big part of English language proficiency to be able to use idiomatic expression when communicating in the English language (p. 106).

## **5. Factors Affecting Idiom Comprehension**

Studies on idiom comprehension highlight three key factors: transparency, familiarity, and context. These factors play a significant role in determining the difficulty and speed at which a learner comprehends an idiom.

## 5.1. Transparency

According to Gibbs (1987) in idioms with high transparency, such as ‘keep a straight face,’ the non-literal meaning of ‘show no emotion’ is closely connected to the literal meaning. On the other hand, in opaque idioms like ‘talk through one's hat,’ the figurative meaning of ‘not knowing the fact’ is unrelated to the literal meaning (as cited in Nippold & Taylor, 1995, p. 427).

Nippold and Rudzinski (1993) conducted a study examining the relationship between transparency and idiom understanding. In the second experiment, each idiom in the explanation task was assigned a transparency level, ranging from high to low. The results demonstrated that more transparent idioms were easier to explain compared to more opaque idioms. Additionally, they proposed that idioms are learned through an active analysis of their constituent words (p. 736). This implies that learners try to infer the figurative meaning from the literal meaning of the expression. Consequently, to fully grasp the meaning of an idiom, learners need to engage in active analysis. According to this perspective, high-transparency idioms are easier to understand than low-transparency idioms. Furthermore, Gibbs, Nayak, and Cutting (1989) assert that semantically non-decomposable or opaque idioms pose a greater challenge in comprehension compared to decomposable or transparent idioms. This is because the figurative meanings of non-decomposable idioms cannot be deduced by analyzing their individual components (p. 587). The transparency of idioms significantly influences how learners process and comprehend them.

## 5.2. Familiarity

In addition to transparency, familiarity has been mentioned as a potential factor affecting the comprehension of idioms. Nippold and Taylor (1995), Familiarity is a measure of how frequently an idiom occurs in a language. For example, the idiom ‘beat around the bush’, a highly familiar idiom, it is used very often in the English language. While the idiom ‘take a powder’, a less-familiar idiom, is rarely used (p. 427). Popiel and McRae (1988) state that, although idioms are considered a common part of figurative language, their frequency of occurrence varies. (p. 486).

Studies on the effect of familiarity suggest that familiar idioms are easier to understand than less familiar ones. Nippold, Taylor, & Baker (1996) conducted cross-cultural investigation to explore the development of idiom comprehension among Australian adolescents and the correlation between their familiarity with idioms and their understanding of them. The study involved 100 students, with 50 of them in the fifth-grade and the other 50 in the eighth-grade. These students were given a forced-choice task to examine their understanding of 24 idioms ranging in familiarity from high to low. The results revealed that students’ understanding of idioms was connected to their familiarity with them.

Norbury (2004), exposure may play an important role in idiom comprehension since having more experience with idioms may make those idioms more salient (p.1180). Research demonstrated that familiar idioms are processed quicker and more accurately than unfamiliar idioms (Nippold & Rudzinski, 1993; Nippold and Taylor, 1995; Qualls and Harris 1999).



### 5.3. Context

The third major factor affecting idiom comprehension is context. Idioms are well understood in relation to the context in which they are used. Cain et al. (2005) state that idioms that are presented in context are easier to understand than those presented in isolation. They also maintain that “context might facilitate the interpretation of figurative language by providing the necessary semantic information from which the reader (or listener) can extract or infer the appropriate sense of the expression” (p. 67). For them, context is important for less common idioms whose meaning is not fully known, particularly unfamiliar opaque idioms whose meaning is not fully derivable through semantic analysis of the phrase (p. 67).

In her study Fatemeh (2013), investigated the effect of context on learning idiomatic expressions. 60 upper-intermediate Iranian EFL learners participated in the study. The study involved three groups of participants, with twenty individuals in each group. The first group, known as the extended-context group, was introduced to idiomatic expressions through the use of brief stories. The second group, called the limited–context group, learned the same idioms through exposure to individual sentences. The control group, known as the decontextualized group, underwent the same process of learning idioms but with only simple definitions provided. The data analysis demonstrated that the participants in the extended-context group outperformed those in the limited and decontextualized groups on both the immediate and delayed post-tests. These findings suggest that context has a positive effect on learning idioms.

## **6. Difficulties in Understanding English Idioms**

Mastering English idioms is a key component in expanding one's English vocabulary and achieving language competency. However, EFL learners encounter various types of difficulties in learning and understanding idioms. Some of these will be explored below.

### **6.1. Lack of Comparable Idiom in L1**

The absence of comparable idiomatic equivalents in the student's native language is one of the major aspects that make English idioms difficult to understand (Pimenova, 2011, p. 117-119). Meaning that the absence of an exact counterpart between Arabic and English poses a high level of difficulty for Arab learners; the idioms in Arabic and English are different. McPartland (2000) argues that the easiest idioms to learn and understand are those that have a direct equivalent in the learner's native language, while the most challenging idioms are those that have no analogue in the learner's first language and whose meaning cannot be deduced from the combined meaning of their constituent words (as cited in Alhaysony, 2017p. 72). Further, according to Mantayla (2004), L2 learners encounter difficulty recognizing unfamiliar idioms. (p.15). To conclude, second language learners finds it difficult to understand idioms that they do not have an equivalent in their first language.

### **6.2. Lack of Cultural Awareness of English Idioms**

The lack of cultural and historical knowledge of English idioms presents a unique challenge for EFL learners to recognize, comprehend and produce idioms accurately.

Hajjaj and Kharma(1989) discovered that Arab learners encounter challenges in understanding and using English idioms due to the fact that the majority of idioms are culturally specific, making it difficult for them to fully understand and utilize them.(as cited in

Noor and Fallatah, 2010, p. 151). That is, idioms can be a source of misunderstanding when they contain cultural references that are not easily understood by those who are not familiar with the culture. Sometimes idioms reflect themes and idioms that are not present in the learner's own culture, which would hinder understanding (Al-Houti, Aldaihani, and Alenezi, 2021, p. 70). Elkilic (2008) argues that idioms are culture-bound, and thus they may not be understood even if they are transparent (p. 31). He (1990) further claims that "knowledge about idiomacity is not based on linguistic analysis but is essentially a matter of cultural awareness." (p. 31). For example, the idiom carry coals to New Castle in British culture means to take something to a place where it is not needed (Al-Houti, Aldaihani, and Alenezi, 2021, p. 70). Moreover, many idioms are derived from morals, motifs, and tales that second language learners (L2) may not have the chance to encounter or be exposed to. Furthermore, Cakir (2011) argues that because of the cultural specificity of idioms, it may not always be feasible to find equivalents in all languages. Therefore, in order to understand the meaning of idioms, it is essential to learn about the target culture as well as intercultural disparities (Taki and Soghady, 2013, p. 825). To sum up, idioms are deeply rooted in culture as they contain cultural references that are not easily understood by those who are not familiar with the culture. Hence, non-native speakers find them difficult to understand. Therefore, in order to understand idioms effectively it is essential for learners to learn about the target culture differences.

### **6.3. Arbitrariness**

According to Hussein, Khanji, and Makhzoomy (2000), the challenge of comprehending and acquiring idioms stems from their arbitrary and non-literal nature (p. 24). "Idioms are incomprehensible based on the meaning of their constituents because of their arbitrariness, and

thus they cannot be taught systematically” (Nguyen et al., 2022, p. 101). Similarly, Buckingham (2006) claims that “idioms’ arbitrary language-specific nature makes them difficult for learners to understand and acquire, resistant to translation” (p. 35). Additionally, Saleh and Zakaria (2013), mention that one of the main challenges faced in learning a second language is that idioms are often unpredictable in terms of meaning (as cited in Alhaysony, 2017, p.72). Moreover, most idioms have literal counterparts, which further complicate their understanding. “A native speaker quickly realizes which meaning is intended, while the L2 learner is left trying to find out the intended meaning” (Irujo, 1986, p. 236). Besides, Mäntylä (2004) mentions that students frequently struggle to decide whether to consider the idiomatic or literal meaning of the idiom in specific contexts (p. 142). According to Almashikhi (2018), it has been shown that EFL and ESL learners face challenges in learning and understanding English idioms due to the disparities between the literal meaning of the words and the figurative meaning of the idiom (p. 21). To sum up, idioms have arbitrary meaning that is simply deduced through analyzing their individual words, this impedes students’ understanding especially those who are unfamiliar with idioms and lack cultural awareness.

#### **6.4. Lack of Exposure**

In his paper, Irujo (1986) investigated the many sorts of difficulties and reasons why it is difficult to learn idioms in a second language. One of these challenges is a lack of exposure. This includes excluding idioms from communication directed to second language learners, as they can be confusing and difficult to grasp without previous knowledge or explanation. In this situation native speakers tend to use simpler vocabulary and sentence structures to facilitate communication with non-native speakers (Irujo, 1986, p. 236,237). While idioms are commonly used in movies and television shows, this type of exposure to language may not be

as effective for language learning as interactive situations where learners can receive feedback and clarification on their understanding and use of idiomatic expressions (Long, 1982, cited in Irujo, 1986, p. 237). Without interaction, learners may not have the opportunity to negotiate meaning or ask questions about the idioms they encounter, which can limit their ability to acquire and use them effectively in real-life situations.

## **Conclusion**

The section provides a comprehensive overview of idioms, including their definitions, characteristics, classifications, and importance. This section discusses how scholars have defined idioms in different ways. Some have defined them as fixed expressions whose meanings cannot be inferred from the meanings of their individual words. Others have emphasized the figurative or metaphorical nature of idioms. Also the section outlines some of the key characteristics of idioms, in addition to their classifications that can be based on various criteria. Moreover, the section highlights the importance of idioms in language and communication. It concludes by providing the factors that influence idioms comprehension and the difficulties involved.

## **Chapter two :Filedwork**

### **Introduction**

The present chapter is an investigation on the effects ICC on EFL students' comprehension of idioms. The second part of this research focuses mainly on the practical aspects. Its primary objective is to examine the impact of ICC on the comprehension of idioms among second-year English students at Mohamed Seddik Ben yahia University, Jijel, Furthermore; it explores students' opinions on the difficulties they encounter understanding idioms and the possible role they perceive ICC as playing in their comprehension process. Thus, the research sheds light on the method used to tackle the subject, define the population, the sample, and the analytical procedures to be followed. The results gathered by means of both research tools are described and a subsequent discussion is offered. Finally, the chapter includes some pedagogical recommendations in addition to the limitations encountered in conducting this study.

### **1. Research Design**

#### **1.1. Population and Sampling**

The participants of this study were second year EFL students at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel during the academic year 2022-2023. The sample of sixty EFL students was selected using random sampling procedures. The choice of this population has been made according to the fact that they have been studying English for two years, which makes them more experienced and knowledgeable. They are also supposed to be familiar with English idioms as they had encountered them during oral expression sessions in both their first and second years of study.

## **1. 2. Research Instrument**

In order to test the research hypothesis and to answer the research question a mixed-method approach was employed, in which two data collection tools were used: a written test and a written questionnaire. The test served as the primary research instrument as it allowed for the assessment of students' level in understanding idioms. A questionnaire alone would not be sufficient since it mainly focuses on subjective perceptions and attitudes. By using a test, a greater level of objectivity can be achieved, leading to enhanced validity in understanding students' comprehension of English idioms. The questionnaire was used as supplementary tool to gain further insight into students' perceptions of their ICC and how it aids their comprehension of idioms.

## **1.3. Description and Administration of the test**

The test designed for this study is composed of thirteen (13) idioms marked out of twenty points. It includes 8 pure idioms, 2 semi-literal idioms, and 3 literal idioms. The students are asked to explain the idioms. The aim is to check whether students are able to comprehend the figurative meaning of the idioms or not.

## **1.4. Description and administration of student's questionnaire:**

A questionnaire was distributed to 54 second-year students studying English at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia. The questionnaire contained 8 questions, including a mix of close-ended, open-ended, and multiple-choice questions

The questionnaire was divided into several sections. The first section consisted of a single question with two parts (Q1). The first part was a close-ended question that asked whether students faced difficulties in understanding idioms. The second part was a multiple-

choice question that aimed to identify the factors contributing to their difficulties in understanding idioms.

The second section focused on ICC and included four questions. Three of these questions (Q2, Q3, Q4) were multiple-choice, while the fifth question (Q5) consisted of a close-ended part followed by an open-ended question. The purpose of this section was to assess students' cultural knowledge and their intercultural communicative competence. Additionally, it aimed to explore the benefits of ICC for EFL students and examine the correlation between intercultural communicative competence and understanding idioms.

The objective of the third section was to obtain insights regarding student's recognition of the commonalities between their native culture and the target culture, as these commonalities play an important role in their ICC. Students who possess this awareness are more likely to engage effectively in different cultural contexts. Furthermore, the section aimed to determine if these cultural similarities played a role in their understanding of idioms. Both questions 6 and 7 had two parts: a close-ended question in the first part and an open-ended question in the second part.

The final section consisted of a multiple-choice question (Q8) that aimed to assess which aspect students considered to be of greater importance: knowledge about culture or understanding the context.

## **2.Data analysis and Discussion**

### **2.1.Students' Test**

#### **2.1.1Analysis of Students' Test**



**Table 01:** Students' Overall Score

Scale	Students' scores	Number of students	Percentages
Poor	[ 0 – 10 [	33	55 %
Average	[ 10 – 13[	13	21.66%
Good	[ 13– 17[	12	20%
Excellent	[ 17– 20]	2	3.33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table 01, display the varying test results of participants when assessing their idiom comprehension. The sum of the grades can be summarized as follows: (55%) of the participants receive poor scores between [0 – 10[. (21.66%) of the participants scores are average ranging between [10 – 13[. In addition, (20%) of students score good, ranging between [13– 17[. However, 3.33% of the participants obtain excellent scores in the range of [17– 20]. To sum up, a good number of students scored below average, indicating that they encounter difficulties. These challenges can be attributed to their limited understanding of English idioms, their lack of cultural knowledge of the target language, their limited exposure to idioms in their learning material.

**Table 02:** Students' Understanding of Pure Idioms

<b>Pure idioms</b>	Frequency of correct answers	Percentage of correct answers	Frequency of incorrect answers	Percentage of incorrect answers
<b>Butterflies in my stomach</b>	22	36.66%	38	63.33%
<b>Give someone the cold shoulder</b>	31	51.66%	29	48.33%
<b>Kick the bucket</b>	7	11.66%	53	88.33%
<b>One in a blue moon</b>	42	70%	18	30%
<b>In hot water</b>	31	51.66%	29	48.33%
<b>Under the weather</b>	13	21.66 %	47	78.33%
<b>Spill the beans</b>	28	46.66%	32	53.33%
<b>Hold your horses</b>	20	33.33%	40	66.66%
<b>Total</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>40.41%</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>59.83%</b>

Table 02 demonstrates students' scores in pure idioms. As it evident in the table, the first idiom 'butterflies in my stomach' only (36.66%) of students have answered correctly. While, significance number of students (63.33%) didn't score the correct answers.

However, in the second idiom 'give someone the cold shoulder', (51.66%) of the participants were able to explain it, while (48.33%) of them failed to give the appropriate explanation as its meaning cannot be understood through its constituent words. Moreover, the

idiom 'kick the bucket', only (11.66%) of the respondents answered correctly. While the majority of students (88.33%) found difficulty explaining the idiom since it is a less commonly used idiom.

In the idiom 'once in a blue moon' a significant percentage of students (70%) answered it successfully. In contrast, the rest (30%) failed to explain it. Whereas, in the case of the idiom 'in hot water' approximately half of the number of students (51.66%), representing 31 participants, provided a relatively correct variety of the answers. While the remaining 29 students, comprising (48.33%), provides incorrect answers.

Table 02 also shows that the majority of respondents (78.33%), representing 47 students, failed to explain the idiom 'under the weather'. However, only (21.66%) were able to do so. Less than half of the participants, 28 students representing (46.66%), were able to explain the idiom 'spill the beans'. While slightly above half (53.33%) representing 32 students failed to explain it. This failure can be attributed to students' overreliance on literal interpretation, which impedes their ability to grasp the figurative meaning. In the final idiom 'hold your horses', a significance number of students, (66.66%) representing 40 students, did not answer correctly. However, the remaining 20 students representing (33.33%) successfully provided correct answers.

In summary, a significance number of students (59.83%) find difficulty in understanding pure idioms as they are connected directly to the culture itself. However, (40.41%) of students were able to understand pure idioms, which can be attributed to their possession of cultural knowledge.

**Table 03:** Students' Understanding of Semi-Literal Idioms

<b>Semi literal idioms</b>	<b>Frequency of correct answers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Frequency of incorrect answers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Foot the bill</b>	28	46.66%	32	<b>53.33%</b>
<b>Cost an arm and leg</b>	35	58.33%	25	<b>41.66%</b>
<b>Total</b>	/	<b>52.49%</b>	/	<b>47.49%</b>

The results of the above table 03 present students' scores in answering semi literal idioms. These types of idioms may consist of both literal and figurative meaning. In the case of the idiom 'foot the bill' 28 participants, representing (46.66%), have answered correctly. The remaining 32 participants representing (53.33%) have failed to give the appropriate answer. On the contrary, the idiom "Cost and arm and leg" more than half of the respondents (58.33%), representing 35 of the participants, have provided correct answers. While (41.66%) of them representing 25 participants were not able to give the appropriate answer. In few words (52.49%) of students demonstrated the ability to comprehend these idioms. This can be attributed to factors such as exposure and interaction with native speakers in EFL classes, as well as prior knowledge acquired from various sources such as television, social media.

**Table 04:** Students' Comprehension of Literal Idioms

Literal idioms	Frequency of		Frequency of	
	students answers	Percentage	incorrect answers	Percentage
<b>Actions speak louder than words</b>	36	60%	24	40%
<b>Better late than never</b>	37	61.66%	23	38.33%
<b>Crocodile tears</b>	45	75%	15	25%
Total	/	<b>65.55%</b>	/	<b>34.44%</b>

Table 04 manifests that more than half of the students were able to provide correct answers in the three literal idioms: actions speak louder than words (significance number of participants 60%), better late than never (61.66% of the participants) and crocodile tears (the majority 75% of the participants). In contrast, less than half of the students were unable to provide accurate explanations of these idioms. Specifically, 40% of the participants could not provide clear answers to the idiom 'actions speak louder than words', (38.33%) of the respondents found difficulty with the idiom 'better late than never' and only (25%) of the respondents could not provide sufficient explanation for the idiom "crocodile tears". Based on the results it can be concluded that a significance number of students (65.55%) were familiar with these idioms and were able to comprehend them. This can be attributed to the fact that

these idioms have a transparent nature and can be interpreted based on their constituent words (Fernando). Consequently literal idioms can be easier for EFL students to understand in comparison to pure and semi literal idioms. Furthermore, the similarities between literal idioms and the students' first language facilitate their comprehension.

### **2.1.2. Interpretation of Student's Test**

According to the findings of the English idiom test administered to students, it was observed that a significant number of students (55%) encountered difficulties in comprehending the figurative meanings of idioms. Specifically, the first 8 idioms included in the test were classified as pure idioms, which proved to be more challenging to understand, with a score of (40.41%) of correct answers, compared to semi-literal and literal idioms. The difficulty associated with comprehending pure idioms stems from the fact that their figurative meanings cannot be deduced from their literal components alone. Furthermore, pure idioms are deeply rooted in the cultural context of a language. Thus, EFL learners who are not familiar with the cultural nuances of the target language may lack the necessary background information to understand the underlying cultural references or the shared experiences that the idiom represents. Additionally, certain idioms like "spill the beans" have both literal and figurative meaning. Thus, learners usually consider their literal meanings.

Semi literal-idioms are observed to be comparatively less challenging to understand than pure idiom, with a score of (52.49%) of correct answers. This is because semi-literal idioms have denotative meaning which may assist learners to speculate the intended meaning of the idiom. For example, in the idiom 'foot the bill' the word bill is related directly to the intended meaning of the idiom. As results, the presence of these literal components may assist learners in grasping the intended meaning of the given idiom.

Finally, literal idioms were found to be the easiest ones to understand with an average of (65.55%) of correct answers. The key aspect that contributes to the ease in understanding literal idioms is that their figurative interpretation can often be deduced through analyzing the literal meaning of their constituent words. Which reduces the need of extensive cultural knowledge For example; in the literal idiom ‘better late than never’ students were able to explain it correctly with a percentage of (61.66%). In contrast, pure idioms are deeply rooted in culture and they require cultural knowledge to understand their intended meanings. They include specific cultural references, historical events, traditions, beliefs, and social customs. Without this cultural background, comprehending pure idioms can be difficult. For example, in the pure idiom ‘Kick the bucket’, only (11.66%) of students explain it correctly. In few words, pure idioms which require cultural knowledge to be understood were found to be the most difficult one in comparison to literal and semi literal idioms.

## 2.2. Students’ Questionnaire

### 2.2.1. Analysis of Students’ Questionnaire

#### Q1. Do you encounter difficulties in understanding idioms?

**Table 05:** Students’ Difficulties in Understanding Idioms

Options	Number of students	Percentage
Yes	46	85.18%
No	8	14.81%
Total	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table 05 demonstrate that the majority of students (46 students), accounting for (85.18%) from the total sample stated that they encounter difficulties, in understanding

idioms. These difficulties can be attributed to the inherent nature of idioms as they are figurative expression whose meaning cannot be deduced from their literal constituents. Also as they are second year EFL learners, they may still do not have enough knowledge about English language. Conversely, the remaining 8 students (14.18%) express that they do not experience any challenges when it comes to comprehending idioms, possibly due to their familiarity with these expressions.

**Q1.2. if yes, to what you attribute this difficulty?**

**Table 06:** Factors Contributing to Difficulty in Understanding Idioms

Options	Number of students	Percentage
<b>a- Lack of cultural/ intercultural knowledge</b>	10	<b>21.73%</b>
<b>b- Insufficient vocabulary</b>	9	<b>19.56%</b>
<b>c- Lack of context</b>	6	<b>13.04%</b>
<b>d- Absence of an equivalent idiom in Arabic culture/ language</b>	6	<b>13.04%</b>
<b>a+b</b>	2	<b>4.34%</b>
<b>a+c</b>	3	<b>6.52%</b>
<b>a+d</b>	1	<b>2.17%</b>
<b>b+c</b>	3	<b>6.52%</b>
<b>b+d</b>	2	<b>4.34%</b>
<b>c+d</b>	1	<b>2.17%</b>
<b>a+c+d</b>	2	<b>4.34%</b>
<b>b+c+d</b>	1	<b>2.17%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>86.9%</b>



As demonstrated in table 06, students choose multiple choices for the reason behind the difficulties they encounter in understanding idioms. These difficulties can be ascribed to various factors. Students' views, regarding the reasons that affect their comprehension of idioms, ranged between lack of intercultural cultural knowledge, which represents the highest percentage (21.73%), insufficient vocabulary with a percentage of (19.56%), the absence of context with a percentage of (13.04%), and the lack of equivalent idioms in Arabic culture or language with a percentage of (13.04%). Moreover, there are some students who ticked more than one answer. (6.52%) of students ascribe their difficulties to both the lack of cultural or intercultural knowledge and the lack of context. Similarly, (6.52%) attribute their difficulties to both insufficient vocabulary and the lack of context. Additionally, (4.34%) of participants attributed their difficulties to both the lack of cultural or intercultural knowledge and insufficient vocabulary. Likewise, (4.34%) of the participants opted for insufficient vocabulary and the absence of an equivalent idiom in Arabic. Moreover, only one student opted for lack of cultural / intercultural knowledge and the absence of an equivalent idiom in Arabic culture / language. Similarly, another one opted for both lack of context and the absence of an equivalent idiom in Arabic culture/ language. Furthermore, in a smaller scale two students ticked more than two reasons for their difficulty with comprehending idioms. Similarly, two students choose lack of cultural or intercultural knowledge, lack of context, and the absence of an equivalent idiom in Arabic culture or language. Finally, (2.17%) of the respondents ticked insufficient vocabulary, lack of context, and the absence of an equivalent idiom in Arabic culture/language.

In summary, the repeated mention of ICC in students' responses underscores their recognition of its crucial role in facilitating the comprehension of idioms. This suggest that

students are aware of the importance of having a strong understanding of different cultural context, norms, linguistic nuances to effectively grasp the meaning behind idiomatic expressions.

**Q2.How do you describe your cultural knowledge of English speaking countries?**

**Table 07:** Assessment of Students’ Cultural Knowledge of English Speaking Countries

<b>Options</b>	<b>Students number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	3	5.55%
<b>Very good</b>	13	24.07%
<b>Mediocre</b>	37	68.51%
<b>Poor</b>	1	1.85%
<b>Non existent</b>	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

The aim of this question is to gain insight into how students’ assesstheir understanding of cultural knowledge of English speaking countries.Out of the total respondents, the results show in table 07 that 3 of the students representing (5.55%) described theircultural knowledge as excellent. This indicates that a small group of students believed that they have a sufficient cultural knowledge of English speaking countries, possibly due to their exposure to theses cultures.

A significant portion of students, comprising (24.07%) of the respondents, rated their cultural knowledge as very good. This suggests that a considerable number of students perceive themselves as having a decent amount of understanding of cultural aspects related to English-speaking countries. Aside from their exposure in the classroom, they may be also engaged in other activities where they become more exposed to culture. Half of the sample of students, representing 50.62% of the respondents, considered their cultural knowledge as mediocre. This implies that half of the participants acknowledged having an average level of cultural understanding regarding English-speaking countries. Just one student representing 1.85% responded negatively saying he/she lacks cultural knowledge. Indicating that, a small number of respondents' perceived themselves as having an insufficient cultural knowledge of English speaking countries.

### **Q3. How would you assess your ICC?**

**Table 08:** Students' Assessment of their Intercultural Communicative Competence

<b>Options</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	2	3.70%
<b>Very good</b>	15	27.77%
<b>Mediocre</b>	32	59.25%
<b>Poor</b>	5	9.25%
<b>Non existent</b>	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 08 shows that a small percentage of students, comprising (3.70%), rated their intercultural communicative competence as excellent. Moreover, a considerable number of

students, accounting for (27.78%) of the respondents, assessed their ICC as very good. This indicates that these students have a strong grasp of intercultural communicative competence and perceive it more than good. It can be understood that these students would be comfortable and would not be intimidated by dealing with people from different cultural background especially English culture. Moreover, they are equipped with the cultural knowledge that helps them understand idioms that are not easily understood.

The majority of students, representing 59.26% of the respondents, described their ICC as mediocre. This suggests that a significant portion of students perceive their ability to navigate cultural differences and communicate effectively in intercultural context as average. A small portion, comprising 9.26% of the respondents, rated their ICC as poor. This indicates that a minority of students would not be able to communicate across different culture and to understand idioms that require cultural knowledge.

**Q4. In what areas you feel intercultural communicative competence helped you as an EFL student?**

**Table 09:** Students’ Perceptions of the Benefits of Intercultural Communicative Competence for EFL Students

Options	Students number	Percentage
a- Understanding idioms	8	15.09%
b- Appreciating differences in culture	17	32.07%
c- Expanding my worldview	20	37.73%
a+b	1	1.88%
a+c	3	5.66%
b+c	3	5.66%
a+b+c	1	1.88%
No response	1	1.88%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

The main objective of the question was to gather students’ opinions on the areas where they perceive their ICC helps them in. Table 09 presents the results from the question. A significant number of students, representing (37.73%), believe that intercultural communicative competence contributes to expanding their worldview through exposure to cultural that are largely different from their own native culture. Furthermore, (32.07%) of students, stated that it aids them in appreciating differences in their own culture and the target culture, while (15.09%) of students believe that ICC helps them in understanding idioms.

Additionally, a total of (15.08%) of students, selected a combination of answers. Among them, (5.66%) of students identified that intercultural communicative competence helps them in both understanding idioms and expanding their worldview. Similarly, (5.66%) of students acknowledged its influence in both appreciating differences in culture and expanding their worldview. However, only one student, representing (1.88%), opted for all three choices: understanding idioms, appreciating differences in culture, and expanding their worldview. It is worth noting that only one student, comprising (1.88%), of the respondents did not provide any answer.

**Q5. Does intercultural communicative competence help you in understanding idioms?**

**Table 10:** Students’ Perception on the Relationship between Intercultural Communicative Competence and Idioms’ Comprehension

Options	Students number	Percentage
Yes	52	96.30%
No	2	3.70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 10 demonstrates that the majority of students, accounting (96.30%), believe that ICC helps them in understanding idioms. This suggests that these students perceive a positive relationship between their intercultural communicative skills and the process of idiom comprehension. On the other hand, a small percentage, specifically (3.70%) of students responded negatively with ‘NO’, indicating that they do not believe that ICC contributes to their understanding of idioms.

In the second part of question 5, the respondents were asked to justify their answers for either choice 'yes' and 'no'. However, Out of the total of 53 students who answered 'yes', 43 of them provided an explanation to support their answers. Here is a summary for their explanations:

Intercultural communicative competence plays a crucial role in facilitating the understanding of idioms by enriching cultural knowledge and awareness. Also, by exploring cultural differences, gaining insights into the origins of idioms and understanding the context behind them, individuals become able to comprehend the intended meaning of these figurative expressions. Moreover, understanding the cultural background of the target culture and nuances associated with idioms, individuals can more accurately grasp their intended meanings. Additionally, through interaction and communication with individuals from diverse cultures, learners are exposed to a variety of idiomatic expressions. This exposure not only enables them to acquire new idioms but also helps in expanding their vocabulary and familiarizing themselves with the expressions commonly used in the target culture. As a result, learners develop the necessary skills to decipher the figurative meaning embedded within idioms.

**Q6. Have you, as an English major student, ever observed any similarities or commonalities between your native culture and the target culture?**

**Table 11:** Students' Perceptions about Similarities and Commonalities between their Native Culture and Target Culture

<b>Options</b>	<b>Students number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	35	64.81%
<b>No</b>	18	33.33%
<b>No response</b>	1	1.85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table 11 displays that the majority of students, specifically 35 students, have observed similarities and commonalities between their native culture and the target culture. This suggests that these students have recognized connections, shared elements, overlapping aspects between their culture and the target culture as well as differences. Their observations may contribute to their understanding of English idioms by providing background knowledge and insights into the cultural references embedded in idiomatic expressions. On the other hand, 18 representing (33.33%) students responded with 'NO', indicating that they do not critically engage into a comparison between their native culture and the target culture or simply because they are not interested in culture. Only one student did not provide any answer.

In the second part of this question, students were requested to provide examples. Only 15 students out of the total respondents provided examples. Among these 15 students, it was observed that 10 of which failed to provide relevant answers and gave unrelated responses instead. This could be attributed to their limited cultural awareness, which may have hindered



their ability to identify the similarities or commonalities between their native culture and the target culture. On the other hand, the remaining 5 students demonstrated a better understanding of the question and provided idioms that are common in both their native culture and the target culture.

- When it rains, it pours: بعضها مع تأتي المصائب
- Talking to a brick wall: التحدث الى حجر أصم
- Add insult to injury: يزيد الطين بلة
- Birds of feather flock together: الطيور على أشكالها تقع

**Q7. Has your knowledge of these commonalities ever helped you in understanding idioms?**

**Table 12:** Students' Perceptions about the Role of Cultural Similarities in Understanding Idioms

Options	Students number	Percentage
Yes	35	64.81%
No	18	33.33%
No response	1	1.85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to table 12, the majority of students (64.81%) who view themselves as knowledgeable about the commonalities between the native culture and the target culture, believe that it helps them in understanding idioms. They recognize that being aware of these shared elements enhances their ability to interpret idiomatic expressions effectively and gain a

more comprehensive understanding of the target culture. However, 18 students representing (33.33%) do not view these commonalities as having an effect in terms of understanding idiomatic expressions. It is worth noting that only one student representing (1.85%), did not provide any response,

The second part of question 7 focused on students who answered 'yes' to explore the frequency in which the commonalities between their native culture and the target culture help them in understanding idioms. Out of the 35 students who responded 'yes', 24 students provided an answer. The degree of reliance on those commonalities in terms of understanding idioms varies among the students who answered 'yes'.

Two students stated that they rely heavily on these commonalities to understand idiomatic expressions. One student mentioned that they find these commonalities constantly helpful, while two students expressed that these commonalities always play a role in their understanding of idioms. Additionally, one student mentioned he/she mostly relies on these commonalities. However, it is worth noting that the remaining 9 students provided unrelated answers that did not address the frequency of how these commonalities aid in understanding idioms.

**Q8. In your opinion, which holds greater importance: having knowledge about the culture or outlining the context?**

**Table 13:** Students' Perceptions on the Importance of Cultural Knowledge as Opposed to Outlining Context

<b>Options</b>	<b>Students number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Culture</b>	25	46.30%
<b>Context</b>	18	33.33%
<b>Both</b>	8	14.81%
<b>No response</b>	3	5.55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data presented in table13 highlights the opinions of students regarding the importance of having cultural knowledge as opposed to outlining the context when it comes to idioms comprehension. According to the results, roughly half of the total number of students, representing (46.30%), believed that having knowledge about the culture is of greater importance. They may believe that such knowledge enhances their understanding of various aspects of the target culture, including idioms. In contrast, (33.33%) of students prioritized outlining the context. They may think that comprehending the context let them speculating the meaning and interpretation of idioms, ultimately improving their overall comprehension. However, (14.81%) of students recognize the significance of both knowing the culture and understanding the context. They may see the combination of these factors as essential in comprehending idioms effectively. The remaining (5.55%) of students did not provide any response to this question.

### **2.2.2. Interpretation of Students' Questionnaire**

Based on the findings of students' questionnaire, the statistical analysis indicates that second-year EFL students face difficulties in comprehending idioms. Students attributed these challenges to their limited cultural and intercultural knowledge, as well as their insufficient vocabulary. Moreover, the results show that students perceived their cultural knowledge and intercultural communicative competence as ranging average and very good. However, in the test students were not able to explain pure idioms with a percentage of (59.83%) incorrect answers. This indicates that students have surface level of intercultural communicative competence which is not sufficient to understand them.

Additionally, the findings reveal that, according to students' perceptions, intercultural communicative competence plays a significant role in expanding their worldview and fostering appreciation for cultural differences. Students acknowledge the positive impact of intercultural communicative competence on their understanding of idioms. They believe that it helps them by providing cultural context, exploring cultural differences, understanding the origins of idioms, and expanding vocabulary. However, the results shows that despite their appreciation they still need to develop their intercultural communicative competence and expose more to different cultures.

Furthermore, students demonstrate awareness of the shared characteristics between their native and target cultures, recognizing their role in aiding idiom comprehension. As these commonalities are integral to intercultural communicative competence, they enable students to understand idioms and effectively engage in diverse cultural settings. Some students were able to provide some examples about similar idioms between their native and the target culture

hence; their ICC has contributed in their understanding of those idioms. Moreover, a significant portion of students opted for the importance of cultural knowledge over context.

### **3. Overall Analysis of Results**

As mentioned in the general introduction, the purpose of this study is to examine the influence of intercultural communicative competence on the understanding of English idioms among second-year EFL learners at the University of Mohamed Seddik Ben yahia in Jijel. The specific objectives are to identify the underlying challenges in comprehending idioms, determining which types of idioms pose greater difficulties for second-year EFL students, and evaluating the impact of students' existing intercultural communicative competence on understanding idiomatic expressions. These specific objectives were achieved by analyzing the data collected using two instruments. The results obtained from both test and questionnaire answered the following research questions:

#### **1- Do second-year EFL students encounter difficulties understanding English idioms?**

The findings of the study indicate that second-year EFL students indeed encounter challenges in comprehending idioms. This was evident from both the students' performance in the test and their perceptions in the questionnaire. The questionnaire revealed that a significant majority (85.18%) of the respondents acknowledged facing difficulties in understanding idioms (Q1). Also, the results of the test showed that a good number of students scored below average, indicating that they encounter difficulties in understanding English idioms.

## **2-Can different types of idioms influence the comprehension of second-year EFL students?**

The test's results have provided data about students' performance in different types of idioms. It was found that (40.41%) of the students provided correct answers for pure idioms, (52.49%) for semi-literal idioms, and (65.55%) of the respondents answered correctly for literal idioms. These results indicate that the different types of idioms have an influence on their understanding, with higher success rates observed in understanding literal idioms compared to pure and semi-literal idioms. The more closely related the idioms i.e., pure idioms are to the culture, the less scores students obtain.

## **3. Which idioms pose more difficulties for second-year EFL students?**

Based on the analysis of students'; correct and incorrect answers in the three types of idioms, it was evident that pure idioms pose the greatest challenge to understand. Pure idioms accounted for approximately (59.83%) of the total incorrect answers, indicating that they were the most difficult type of idioms for students to comprehend.

## **4. Does intercultural communicative competence help EFL learners in understanding English idioms?**

According to students' perceptions expressing the questionnaire, second-year EFL students believe they possess intercultural communicative competence (ICC). In addition, they perceived it as instrumental in understanding English idioms. However, the test' results indicated that a significant portion (59.83%) of students were unable to comprehend pure idioms. This suggests that, students could possibly not have the required ICC that enables them to comprehend these idioms. Additionally, while their level of ICC may not directly

contribute to their understanding of idioms, it could potentially assist them in areas such as appreciating cultural differences and broadening their perspectives, as indicated in the fourth question of the questionnaire.

#### **4. Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations**

Second year EFL students face difficulties in understanding idiom, especially those related to culture (pure idioms) which necessitates having intercultural communicative competence. Based on the findings, these are some recommendations that can be provided for the sake of raising students and teachers awareness about the importance of intercultural communicative competence and cultural context in understanding idioms effectively:

1. Teachers should teach idioms in their cultural context
2. Students need more exposure to the components of ‘big c’ and ‘small c culture’ equally aside from academic exposure.
3. Students should actively engage in the process of developing their ICC.
4. Teachers should sensitize students about the importance of intercultural communicative competence in understanding idioms
5. Teachers should teach idioms in their cultural context.
6. Teachers should devise more materials and courses to foster students’ intercultural communicative competence.

#### **5. Limitations of the Study**

No research is free from imperfections as every research faces some obstacles that may hinder the researchers from collecting and gathering their data. The obstacles the current research will be discussed below:

- 1- Insufficient resources of certain elements which were discussed in the theoretical part.
- 2- The target number of participants (60 students) was not reached as not all students returned the questionnaire.
- 3- Lack of cooperation particularly in the practical part; some students did not provide justification and additional information to some questions.
- 4- Finally, the study started in near the end of the second semester that did not allow us to conduct an experimental study that could have provided more accurate information in ICC.

## **6. Suggestion for Further Research**

It is hoped that this study will encourage future studies to further investigate the connection between intercultural communicative competence and the comprehension of idioms. It is important to explore other factors that may influence students' ability to understand and interpret idiomatic expressions. The researchers' suggest the following areas for further research:

1. Investigate other samples of students from different levels at the department of English or in other universities. The results of these studies could then be compared.
2. Explore how using authentic cultural materials like movies, online resources can help EFL learners to understand better idioms in their cultural context. And evaluating the effect of these materials on learners' cultural awareness and idioms' comprehension.
3. Examine the strategies used by EFL learners to comprehend idioms within their context. Investigate how learners rely on contextual cues to decipher the meaning of the idioms and how these strategies are effective in improving comprehension.



4. Investigate the effectiveness of multimedia resources, such as videos or interactive materials in offering contextual support for the comprehension of idioms.
5. Examine the role of context in the comprehension of idioms. Investigate how cultural, linguistic, situational factors within a particular context impact students' ability to understand and interpret idioms accurately.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter was devoted to the practical part; it involved discussing the research design. The population and sampling, data collection tools, detailed analysis of the test and the questionnaire, as well as, the presentation and interpretation of the results were provided. The results obtained in this study have led to the conclusion that second year EFL learners encounter difficulties in understanding idioms. Moreover, despite the fact that EFL learners perceive themselves as having intercultural communicative competence, they failed in explaining English pure idioms which are deeply rooted in culture.

## **General Conclusion:**

### **Putting it All Together**

This piece of research aims to explore the influence of intercultural communicative competence on the comprehension of English idioms as well as to determine the source of difficulties in understanding idioms. It covers two chapters: theoretical and practical one.

In the theoretical part of this study, the first section focuses on culture and intercultural communicative competence. It starts by defining culture, and highlighting its characteristics and types, while also discussing the interconnectedness of language and culture. Subsequently it provides a definition of intercultural communicative competence. This section concludes by emphasizing the importance of intercultural communicative competence in the comprehension of idioms. The second section, provides comprehensive overview about idioms, including their definition, characteristics, classification, importance. Additionally, it explores the factors that influence the comprehension of idioms and the difficulties involved.

The practical part, is divided into two parts the first part started by introducing the research design which involves identifying the population and the sample, the research instruments, the description and the administration of both the test and the questionnaire. The second part focuses mainly on the analysis and interpretation of both test and questionnaire. Followed by a general discussion of results in which the research questions are answered. It concludes by providing suggestion and recommendations. As well as limitations of the study

After the careful analysis and the discussion of findings, the results show that second year EFL learners experience difficulties in understanding English idioms, specifically pure idioms. Although students have good intercultural communicative competence, they failed in

explaining pure idioms, which indicate that their level of ICC was not sufficient in comprehending these idioms. The explanation of these results is twofold: in the case of literal idioms students' can to a degree predict their meaning due to the simplicity to the figurative meaning implied. Also in cases were students' are aware of shared cultural norms and behaviors students' were able to know the meaning behind the idiom almost immediately.

In conclusion, students are still in need more exposure to the target culture and language to ensure the development of their ICC. In this case sufficient vocabulary cannot compensate for lack of exposure to the culture.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Students' Test

**Task One:** Explain the following expressions (in English)

1. Butterflies in my stomach

.....  
.....

2. Give someone the cold shoulder

.....  
.....

3. Kick the bucket

.....  
.....

4. Once in a blue moon

.....  
.....

5. In hot water

.....  
.....

6. Under the weather

.....  
.....

7. Spill the beans

.....  
.....

8. Hold your horses

.....  
.....

9. Foot the bill

.....  
.....

10. Coast an Arm and leg

.....  
.....

11. Actions speak louder than words

.....  
.....

12. Better late than never

.....  
.....

13. Crocodile tears

.....  
.....

## Appendix B

### Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study aims at exploring intercultural communicative competence which is defined as the knowledge, skills, and motivation required to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures.

Bear in mind, that your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential. And your honest and thoughtful responses are crucial in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the findings.

Before you begin, we kindly request that you carefully answer each question while fill in the questionnaire by putting (✓) in the right box or providing a full statement in the designated space whenever required.

1- Do you encounter any difficulty in understanding idioms?

a- Yes                       b- No

If yes, to what you attribute this difficulty:

a- Lack of cultural / intercultural knowledge

b- Insufficient vocabulary

c- Lack of context

d- Absence of anequivalent idiom in Arabic culture /language

2- How do you describe your cultural knowledge of English speaking countries?

a- Excellent

b- Very good

c- Mediocre

d- Poor

e- Non-existent

3- How would you assess your intercultural communicative competence?

a- Excellent

b- Very good

c- Mediocre

d- Poor

e- Non-existent

4- In what area you feel Intercultural communicative competence helped you as an EFL student:

a- understanding idioms

b- appreciating differences in culture

c- expanding my worldview

5- Does Intercultural communicative competence help you in understanding idioms?

a- Yes

b- No

Explain how?

.....

.....

6- Have you, as an English major student, ever observed any similarities or commonalities between your native culture and the target culture?

a- Yes

b- No

- Provide examples :

.....  
.....

7- Has your knowledge of these commonalities ever helped you understanding idioms?

a- Yes

b-No

If yes – how frequently?

.....  
.....

8- In your opinion, which holds greater importance:

a- Having knowledge about the culture

b- Outlining the context

## **Résumé:**

Cette étude de recherche a examiné l'influence de la compétence communicative et culturelle sur la compréhension des expressions idiomatiques anglaises chez les étudiants de deuxième année d'anglais. Plus précisément, elle visait à déterminer la source des difficultés de compréhension des idiomes, à fournir des perspectives sur les aspects qui posent un défi plus important aux étudiants d'anglais, et à examiner l'effet de la compétence communicative et culturelle existante sur le processus de compréhension des idiomes. Théoriquement, il a été supposé qu'il existe une corrélation entre la compétence communicative et culturelle des étudiants et leur processus de compréhension des idiomes. Il a également été supposé que les différents types d'idiomes peuvent influencer la compréhension des idiomes chez les étudiants de deuxième année. Pour atteindre les objectifs de l'étude et tester les hypothèses, une approche mixte a été utilisée. Un test a été administré à soixante étudiants de deuxième année de licence du département d'anglais à l'université Mohamed Seddik Benyahia à Jijel pour évaluer leur niveau de compréhension des expressions idiomatiques anglaises. De plus, un questionnaire a été administré à cinquante-quatre étudiants de deuxième année de licence en anglais pour recueillir leurs perspectives sur la compréhension des idiomes et la compétence communicative et culturelle. Les résultats de l'étude ont révélé que les étudiants rencontraient des difficultés dans la compréhension des idiomes, en particulier les idiomes purs qui sont étroitement liés à la culture cible. Cependant, l'étude n'a pas trouvé d'influence significative de la compétence communicative et culturelle sur la compréhension des expressions idiomatiques anglaises. Sur la base des résultats obtenus, certaines recommandations pour de futures recherches et pour les pratiques pédagogiques ont été suggérées.

**Mots-clés:** étudiants de deuxième année, compréhension des idiomes, difficultés de compréhension des idiomes, compétence communicative et culturelle.



## تلخيص

قدّمت هذه الدراسة البحثية تحليلاً لتأثير الكفاءة التواصلية و الثقافية على فهم التعابير الاصطلاحية الإنجليزية بين طلاب السنة الثانية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية. تهدف الدراسة تحديد أصل الصعوبات في فهم التعابير الاصطلاحية ، وتوفير نظرة عن الجوانب التي تشكل تحدياً أكبر لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية، وفحص تأتي الكفاءة التواصلية و الثقافية على عملية فهم التعابير الاصطلاحية. من الناحية النظرية، تم افتراض وجود ترابط بين الكفاءة التواصلية و الثقافية وعملية فهمهم للتعابير الاصطلاحية. كما افترضت الدراسة أن أنواع التعابير الاصطلاحية. المختلفة قد تؤثر على فهم طلاب السنة الثانية للتعابير الاصطلاحية.. لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة واختبار الفرضيات، تم استخدام نوعين من وسائل البحث . تم إجراء اختبار لستين طالباً من طلاب السنة الثانية في كلية اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة محمد صديق بن يحيى بحجل لتقييم مستوى فهمهم للتعابير الاصطلاحية الإنجليزية بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تم توزيع استبيان على أربعة وخمسين طالباً من طلاب السنة الثانية في كلية اللغة الإنجليزية لجمع آراءهم حول فهم التعابير الاصطلاحية. والكفاءة التواصلية و الثقافية . أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الطلاب واجهوا صعوبات في فهم التعابير الاصطلاحية، وخاصة التعابير النقية المرتبطة بثقافة الهدف. ومع ذلك، لم تكشف الدراسة عن تأثير ملحوظ للكفاءة التواصلية و الثقافية على فهم التعابير الاصطلاحية الإنجليزية.. بناءً على النتائج المحصلة، تم اقتراح بعض التوصيات للبحوث المستقبلية والممارسات التعليمية .

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** طلاب السنة الثانية فهم التعابير الاصطلاحية صعوبات فهم التعابير الاصطلاحية،الكفاءة التواصلية و الثقافية .