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Norwegian Students' Comprehension of Idioms in English

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Abstract

A quantitative experimental study was conducted with two Norwegian high school classes with a total of forty-six 16 years old students as participants. The participants were divided into two groups identical to their original school classes, one that would function as the experiment group and the other as the control group. The proficiency level and idiom comprehension level of both groups were tested before the experiment group received systematic instruction and practice on the topic idioms twice a week for a month. A week after the instruction part in the experiment group was completed, both groups were tested a second time. The study was designed to investigate if systematic instruction would have a positive effect on the students' comprehension of idioms in their second language, English. And secondly, to explore if the systematic instruction provided would have a positive effect on the students' overall proficiency in their second language. The results showed that instruction does have a positive effect on one's comprehension of idioms. The experiment group achieved significantly better scores on the second idiom comprehension questionnaire than the control group. In terms of effect on the students' overall proficiency, the results are inconclusive.

Preface

I still remember the 8 o'clock morning class when my high school teacher in English, Mr. Mecsei, entered the classroom and started the day with the phrase 'Oh, aren't you all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed this morning!' I looked at my classmates; they were just as confused as me. Mr. Mecsei had our attention.

Figurative language, idioms in particular, has always been a favorite topic of mine. Idioms are fun as their double meaning make it possible to play around with them by making idiomatic puns, but also in terms of discovering the greater context of a language as the few words in the expression can conceal an explanation of some cultural or historic aspect of the language. In terms of second language acquisition, Norwegians' idiom comprehension in English has not been subject to much linguistic research. As a student of NTNU's teacher training program, my goal was to write a master's thesis that would be relevant to the subject of my profession. Since most of the students I am likely to teach in the subject English will have Norwegian as their first language and because it is my mother tongue, Norwegian was a natural starting point for this study. I am grateful for the opportunity given to write a thesis in which my enjoyment of idioms could be combined with my interest for second language acquisition and passion for teaching.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Mila Vulchanova for supporting my ideas for the research design, for sharing her knowledge and putting me in contact with key persons for the progress of this study. One of the persons cannot be mentioned by name due to the anonymity of the participants, but I would like to thank her for taking her time to answer my e-mails, distribute information, and for trusting me with her class. In the work with processing the data and providing analyses of the results in SPSS, my gratitude goes to Camilla Hellum Foyen. Even though the analyses and results were provided the challenge of using SPSS, a statistical program I had no previous knowledge of, has at times felt insurmountable. A special thanks to Lasse Aleksander Karlsen for statistic guidance, long lunches, and for believing and encouraging me every step of the way. I also wish to mention and thank Mary Kathleen Lilleness for proofreading the idiom comprehension questionnaires, and for giving a native speaker's comment on the contexts created for the idioms included in the tests. And last, I would like to express my gratitude to my friends and fellow students, Bente Fossvold and Lisa Marie Grøn Aurstad, for proofreading the thesis.

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1. Introduction

Idioms' frequent occurrence in everyday language makes the comprehension of idioms for a Norwegian second language student of English essential. First, idioms have an important pragmatic function in language (Collins Cobuild, 1995). Learning a language is not simply acquiring a linguistic system and knowing the meaning of each lexical item. Language always occurs in a context. Together with a speaker's metalinguistic competence, cultural background and knowledge of the world will constantly serve as a backdrop to a speaker's understanding of language (Nippold, 2006). Second, English as a global language affects education and working life in Norway, as its use in these domains of society increases. According to the purpose of the English subject curriculum postulated by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, it is stated that "[t]o succeed in a world where English is used for international interpersonal communication, it is necessary to master the English language" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2010).

To give a definition of what it means to master a language is, as a result of its complexity, an ongoing question within the field of language acquisition. However, the Directorate has given some guidelines in how to achieve this. In order to master English the students "need to develop [their] vocabulary and [their] skills in using the systems of the English language; its phonology, grammar and text structuring. When using the language in communication, [the students] must also be able to take cultural norms and conventions into consideration" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2010). I think that teaching idioms aligns with this, as the second language learner can be introduced to new words, different grammatical structures and culture through different idioms. Due to the special features of idioms which cover more than one language aspect, teaching idioms would be an important part of enabling the students to master the English language. However, the term idiom is not mentioned anywhere in the English subject curricula for the Norwegian first year students in upper secondary school. Yet, this does not imply that idioms are not taught, but rather that it is up to the individual teacher to decide to what degree, according to how he chooses to interpret the Aims of Competence defined for the subject. Based on the importance of idioms as a part of a speaker's language competence I question the fact that the aims listed in these students' curricula are broad and somewhat vague in terms of capturing this phenomenon. The result could be that students do not get enough input. There is no statistical evidence which shows a lack of teaching on the topic in the Norwegian classroom, simply because no research has been done, and my question should not be mistaken for critique of my profession's colleagues. It is rather a quest for what to me seems like a field of research much needed in the absence of evidence of the effect of teaching L2 idioms to Norwegian students.

Research by Gass and Selinker (2001) shows the importance of competence in a language area, such as idioms, given that native speakers tend to find lexical errors more disruptive than grammatical ones in communication with L2 speakers. In addition, research points to the importance of the school's role when it comes to metalinguistic input. Metalinguistic skills, among other factors, such as exposure to input, inferences from context, and text comprehension in general, are suggested to play a role in idiom acquisition and comprehension (Vulchanova, Vulchanov and Stankova, 2011). A study by Aukrust (2004) shows that talking about language itself was not common in Norwegian households and that exposure of metalinguistic input was more likely available at school. Next, figurative language is by the majority of researchers acknowledged as "the most powerful source for linguistic innovation" (Levorato & Cacciari, 1992, p. 130). This evidence is of great importance. However, there are many unresolved questions in terms of how metalinguistic input, cultural knowledge and vocabulary actually are taught to students, so that they can achieve this important skill to communicating efficiently. In communication, both comprehension and production is included. In this study, the focus will be to map the comprehension of Norwegian students as the ability to comprehend figurative expressions precedes the production in language acquisition (Levorato & Cacciari, 1992).

In the following, I will present the theoretical framework of language acquisition, idioms and instruction before the methods and procedures of the study are explained. Next, the results will be presented applying descriptive and inferential statistic. Lastly, a discussion of the findings will take place before coming to a conclusion. The literature referred to in the theoretical framework points toward the discussion of the results and the conclusion, but also toward the description of the instruction part and the eight sessions provided as input to the experimental group. All sessions were carefully planned, applying theories of language acquisition, pedagogical principles adopted through the teaching program completed at NTNU and my work experience as a teacher. Several of the competency aims of the Vg1 curriculum in English were intentional included in the sessions but is, due to limited space, not discussed.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Second Language Acquisition

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to an individual's process of acquiring an additional language after his or her native language(s). A native language, also referred to as first language (L1) or mother tongue, is the language acquired from birth or during early childhood (Saville-Troike, 2006). The distinction set between L1 and L2 acquisition is due to the fundamental difference in the outcome of the two. The success rate of ultimate attainment in L1 acquisition compared to the figures of the success rate in a second language seems to be reversed. Selinker (1972 and Selinker & Lamendella, 1978 in Han, 2004) estimates that absolute success in second language learning affects approximately five percent of the learners, opposed to the ninety-five percent of the L1 learners. The remaining five percent fail to succeed based exclusively on specific language impairments. As an attempt to explain the discrepancy in the end result of L1 and L2 acquisition, a hypothesis about a critical period based on the onset of age was formulated.

The critical period hypothesis has been widely debated by language researchers since the 1960's, first in relation to SLA, but later also to first language acquisition (Ruben, 1997). The hypothesis introduced by Penfield and Roberts in 1959, postulated that the brain of a child has a special capacity for acquiring language. Despite Penfield and Roberts' first postulation, Lenneberg was the one who popularized the hypothesis with his book *Biological foundations of language* (1967), where it was stated that the loss of predisposition by the completion of the hemispherical lateralization would co-occur with puberty. Current research, however, agrees that if there is a critical period, puberty sets the age limit too high, and that it might not be an abrupt drop in preparedness for language, but a gradual drop or a general decline from birth (Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2003). According to researchers supporting the theory of innateness, this lack of preparedness for language indicates a great difference between L1 and L2 acquisition. As a consequence, other cognitive, social and psychological factors have to compensate for the loss when acquiring a new language. Researchers who dismiss that language is innate, on the other hand, would claim that the process of acquiring a language is the same. Whether it is a first language or a second language it is the individual's environment that is essential to the acquisition of language (Ryen, 2005). In an attempt to suggest an additional or alternative reason to the age and the biological account for the different end results of L2, one could suggest a social explanation. As a L1 speaker, the purpose of language acquisition is communication. For a L2 speaker it is the same goal, however, the communicative need and purpose of use can be different. What purpose the L2 will play in a L2 learner's life is a factor that can determine the

outcome of the language acquisition (Selinker, 1992). Based on the difference of opinion when it comes to the emphasis of an individual innate language qualities or the environment of the individual, two main approaches to how languages are acquired emerge.

The two main approaches to how language is acquired are reflected in the nature-nurture debate. According to Chomsky and the generative tradition, human beings are innately equipped with a language faculty which is specifically dedicated to the knowledge and use of language (Chomsky, 1980). Based on Chomsky's theory about Universal Grammar (UG), grammatical structures are formed and established during the child's L1 acquisition. In learning a second language, the structures previously established in the L1 can explain some of the difficulties in ultimate attainment of a L2 (Ryen, 2005). According to cognitive approaches, an individual's ability to acquire language is explained based on general learning mechanisms and cognitive processes. The child is utilizing his general cognitive abilities to acquire linguistic competence (Sveen, 2005). Regardless of how language is believed to be acquired and whether it is the structures set for a speaker's L1 that explains the difficulty of ultimate attainment or not, both camps acknowledge the importance of the interface with the L2 and the notion of transfer.

The transfer of prior knowledge of an individual's L1 is said to influence the development of his or her L2 either through positive or negative transfer. Positive transfer is when an L1 structure is applied in an L2 utterance and the use provides a correct L2 utterance. In the case of negative transfer, the use of L1 as a model fails to provide an appropriate utterance in the speaker's L2 (Saville-Troike, 2006). Whereas some researches emphasize the L2's similarities with the L1 others stress the differences found in the two languages. Ringbom (2007) represents the first position and states that "if you learn a language closely related to your L1, prior knowledge will be consistently useful, but if the languages are very distant, not much prior knowledge is relevant" (p. 1). Kellerman (1977), on the other hand, suggests that language distance prevents negative transfer. He claims that the differences that follow the distance between two languages, triggers or constrains transfer (Kellerman, 1977 in Ellis, 1994).

2.2 Grammar and Vocabulary

Language explained in its simplest form is a set of lexical items and a set of rules to combine the items into phrases and sentences, namely vocabulary and grammar (Cruse, 2001). The lexicon and the grammar are two major components of language in which a speaker's linguistic competence, the underlying knowledge of a language learner, can be described (Saville-Troike, 2006). According to Chomsky and the generative tradition, grammar is the starting point of

language, and is, in agreement with Universal Grammar (UG), what all languages have in common. The thought that language is based on a system of rules, and ultimately the essential role of grammar, is emphasized by Wilhelm von Humbolt's statement in which language "makes infinite use of finite means" (Chomsky, 1965, p. v). Grammar generates language (Chomsky, 1980). According to the generativists, the language faculty is organized in terms of Principles and Parameters, where the set of principles refers to properties all languages shares and parameters to the language specific settings of the principles. Based on these principles and parameters, the speaker has an unconsciously endowed knowledge of grammar; the speaker knows the conditions of his language and when a sentence is appropriate (Chomsky, 1980). Grammatical competence is the knowledge of form and meaning and the relation between the two and other underlying structures in the mind that relates to representations of form and meaning (Chomsky, 1980).

The term *lexicon* was introduced in Chomsky's *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965) as the storehouse of all the words a speaker knows. While some researchers, such as Elman (2004) would dismiss the very idea of a lexicon, at least in the usual sense, Jackendoff (2002) claims the existence of a mental lexicon. However, Jackendoff restricts and further defines the lexicon as "the store of words in long-time memory from which the grammar constructs phrases and sentences" (Jackendoff, 2002 in Elman, 2004, p. 301). In this context a distinction between words and lexical items are made. Given that lexical items can be bigger or smaller than grammatical words, not all grammatical words are lexical items, and last, the existence of complex lexical items with no phonological material the term *word* is not sufficient to describe the units stored in the long-term memory. Idioms, for instance, exemplify the need for this distinction. Idiomatic expressions are units larger than grammatical words, but need to be stored in long-term memory because the unit means something different than meaning of the constituent's separate parts (Jackendoff, 2002). This non-compositionality of meaning challenges the theories of syntax. In regards to idioms and other fixed expressions, Jackendoff (1997; Culicover & Jackendoff, 2005) criticizes Chomsky and the generative tradition for dealing with them outside the lexicon and opts for a more inclusive view of linguistic knowledge and a constructional approach to grammar.

In the light of the theory of lexicon and grammar, idioms seem to have a "double" nature. In the way idioms are acquired and stored similarly to lexical items, they appear to belong to the lexicon. At the same time, however, with their size and structure being above the word level, the processing of this language phenomenon is similar to structures generated by grammar

(Vulchanova, Vulcanov and Stankova, 2011). The unique role of idioms in language structure and organization will be further explained in the following.

2.3 The Nature and Processing of Idiomatic Expressions

2.3.1 The Peculiar Nature of Idiomatic Expressions

The term *idiom* originates from the Greek word ἰδίωμα (*idioma*) which means peculiarity, separate, distinct (Liddell and Scott, 1891; Taule, 2003). Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Idioms defines an idiom as “a special kind of phrase. It is a group of words which have a different meaning when used together from the one it would have if the meaning of each word were taken individually” (1995, p. v). That is, the expression has both a literal and a figurative meaning. The nature of idioms is fascinating for several reasons. First, it is a phenomenon that requires a speaker’s lexical knowledge to be beyond the word level since meaning is deduced from the phrase as a whole, rather than the individual words (Baker, 2006). Further, the processing of an idiom presents the addressee with two possible interpretations due to the difference between the literal and figurative reading (Collins Cobuild, 1995; Vega-Moreno, 2001). In those cases linguistic context will most likely provide the addressee with the information needed to retrieve the correct interpretation (Nippold, 2006). However, linguistic contextual clues are not always sufficient to capture the meanings of all idioms. This points to a third reason, namely the importance of culture-specific knowledge involved in comprehension and production of idioms (Nippold, 2006). Hence, acquiring a language is not only about learning what is coded in language but also learning about the culture that these codes have been created and exist in. However, to give one definite definition of what the phenomenon of idioms holds is rather challenging. In the following, a brief discussion of the degrees of flexibility, compositionality and transparency will shed some light on the complexity of idioms nature before the difference of familiar and novel figurative expressions are presented in relation to conventionality.

Idioms have further been defined as “[f]rozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form [...]” (Baker, 2006, p. 63), and the classic example of fossilized idioms in research is the idiom *kick the bucket*. However, to give a single definition of the term idiom to capture the phenomenon is quite complicated. In contrast to the highly fossilized idiom *kick the bucket*, there are idioms that are highly flexible and acceptability of variation in form. This shows that this feature of idioms must be placed along a continuum with the feature of being fossilized or flexible as two extremities (Vulchanova, Vulchanov and Stankova, 2011). In the discussion of compositionality, Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994) point out yet another way to categorize idioms and their features. Their claim is that idioms are not always non-decomposable

and that the individual constituents of the idiom actually do carry some meaning. This contrasts with the traditional view, which for many years has been that the meaning of an idiom cannot possibly be retrieved based on the meanings of the individual lexical items (Vega-Moreno, 2001). The extent of compositional interpretation can be ranging on a scale from non-transparent to transparent (Vulchanova, Vulchanov and Stankova, 2011).

In addition to inflexibility, Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994) discuss features such as figuration, proverbiality, informality, affect and conventionality in an attempt to define the multifaceted nature of idioms. Their conclusion is however, that conventionality is the only property obligatory to all idioms. In saying that idioms are conventionalized lies the feature that the expressions' meaning or usage predictability is not possible, or at least not entirely possible, based on the constituents alone (Nunberg, Sag and Wasow, 1994). Based on the philosophical study in David Lewis book *Convention*, conventionality has been explained by Nunberg et al. (1994, p. 492) as “a relation among a linguistic regularity, a situation of use, and a population that has implicitly agreed to conform to that regularity in that situation out of a preference for general uniformity”. In the sense of conventionality, clichés can be included in the category of idioms. Clichés are often a result of idioms which in time have been overused (Harmer, 2007). Jakendoff (2002) argues that there is no principled dividing line between clichés and idioms. In addition to be similar to idiomatic phrases in being conventionalized, clichés are also thought to be stored in the lexicon (Jakendoff, 1997). Despite the conventionality of idioms, the knowledge of which lexical items that belong in the expressions is demanding because of the high number of idioms and their various patterns (Ellis, 2002).

In relation to figurative language, and with language as a dynamic system, novel expressions have to be taken into consideration as well. In contrast to the set meaning and frequent occurrence in everyday communication of conventionalized expressions, novel expressions communicate newly created meanings (Kempner et al., 1999). According to research by Levorato & Cacciari (1992), novelty is shown to have an effect on comprehensibility. Even though novel expressions conform to the regular grammatical rules, they are rare in conversation compared to conventionalized expressions such as idioms. However, “although idioms in general are common, there are wide differences in the frequency with which individual idioms occur” (Nippold and Taylor, 1995, p. 427). Nippold and Taylor (1995) apply the term *familiarity* as a measurement of how frequent an idiomatic expression occurs in language, and emphasize its role in the comprehension of idioms. The importance of familiarity will be further discussed in relation to input.

2.3.2 The Representation and Processing of Idioms

One of the major issues in the research is the processing of idioms. Different theoretical proposals have been developed for both L1 and L2. In the article *Representing and Processing Idioms*, Rosa Elena Vega-Moreno (2001) presents five different hypotheses of L1 idiom processing: the literal first hypothesis, the simultaneous processing hypothesis, the figurative first hypothesis, the conceptual metaphor hypothesis and the configuration hypothesis and phrase-induced polysemy model. The first three hypotheses are based on the traditional view of non-decomposition whereas the two latter present a compositional view.

According to the literal first hypothesis, Bobrow & Bell (1973) argue that idioms are stored and processed as lexical items. However, idioms are stored in a separate lexicon. This view's comprehension model consists of three steps; the speaker processes the literal meaning, the interpretation is rejected, and then, the idiom lexicon is hence checked to find the correct interpretation. The supporters of the simultaneous processing hypothesis presented by Swinney & Cutler (1979) agree with the latter position in that idioms are represented and processed as lexical items. However, idioms are stored in the one and same mental lexicon. According to this view both interpretations run parallel but the figurative is often favored (Vega-Moreno, 2001). The last hypothesis with a non-compositional view is the figurative first hypothesis. This position, represented by Gibbs (1980), claims that "idioms are to be considered lexical items whose idiomatic meaning is retrieved directly from the mental lexicon as soon as the string starts to be heard" (Vega-Moreno, 2001, p. 76). These hypotheses have been criticized due to their controversial experimental evidence for the flexibility of idioms and the fact that they are stored as lexical items. In addition, it cannot be said that the relation between the meaning of the idiom and its linguistic form is completely arbitrary. The current views point out that the idiomatic meaning in many cases can be retrieved from the different constituents of the expression and hence, support a compositional view (Vega-Moreno, 2001). The first of the two current positions is the conceptual metaphor hypothesis which introduces quite a different approach compared to the previous hypothesis. The second position, however, builds on elements from the simultaneous processing hypothesis.

The conceptual metaphor hypothesis is based on a more recent account by Gibbs (1994; Gibbs et al. 1997) where the comprehension of idiomatic expression is based on the assumption that "language use is constrained and motivated by pre-existing metaphorical schemes in our mind, which are grounded in our bodily experience", and that the comprehension of the expression relies on mapping the metaphors (Vega-Moreno, 2001, p. 78). The configuration hypothesis and

phrase-induced polysemy model support a parallel processing for a short span of time due to context. However, the addressee usually recognizes the first or second word in the string of lexical items as a part of an idiomatic expression. Idioms are not stored as lexical items but with memorized strings such as poems and lyrics. It is this account that is currently favored (Vega-Moreno, 2001).

In the light of second language acquisition research, the processing of idioms does not necessarily suggest that the approach is exactly the same for L2 speakers. In the study of online processing of idiomatic expressions by second language learners, Cieslicka (2006) argues that none of the processing models above would be able to account for all the added aspects that have to be included in a L2 speaker's performance. The study supports the claim of an obligatory processing of the literal meaning of the idiom and the expression's lexical items separately. The primacy of the literal over the figurative meaning is accordingly not affected by the L2 speaker's familiarity with the context and the figurative interpretation.

To a second language learner, idioms can be a challenging to comprehend and master due to the fact that knowing the meaning of the individual words is not sufficient to know the meaning of the phrase, and that the cultural aspects of the target language intertwined in these linguistic strings can be unfamiliar to the L2 speaker. In the production of idioms in a second language, avoidance as a communication strategy among L2 speakers has been discussed (Gass and Selinker, 2001), and favored by researchers such as Kellerman (1978 in Laufer, 2000). However, others would argue that L2 idioms as a category is not avoided, but that certain expressions are avoided. This avoidance is a result of the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon, the speaker's proficiency level and the degree of similarities between the speaker's native language and the target language. Hence, the avoidance is not due to ignorance but a strategy utilized to overcome obstacles in certain communicative situations (Laufer, 2000).

2.4 The Role of Input and Accessibility of Input

Exposure is the fundamental factor of language acquisition, and the point all researchers agree upon; in order to acquire language, exposure to primary linguistic data is required. The process cannot take place in a vacuum (Saville-Troike, 2006). According to Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1981), the L2 is acquired if the learner is provided with comprehensive input. The formula to describe this process is $i+1$, where i stand for the already acquired linguistic competence and extra-linguistic knowledge, and $+1$ represents the new knowledge, which the learner should be able to acquire as it is slightly above the learner's existing competency level.

Krashen's hypothesis echoes the essence of Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory and his thoughts on the zone of proximal development (ZPD) in which the existing level of the learner has to be considered for the new input to be within reach. The ZPD is the area of potential development the learner can achieve if assisted. Through interpersonal interaction, either by the guidance of an expert or in collaboration with peers, the individual(s) can achieve results beyond independent means. In this process of language development, termed *scaffolding*, the learner is an active participant. "Social interaction facilitates SLA because [the modification and collaborative efforts] contribute to the accessibility of input for mental processing" (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 111). The learner as an active participant and the activation of mental processes is what distinguishes input and intake.

In second language acquisition, the distinction between input and intake is important. Input is "whatever sample of L2 that learners are exposed to, but it is not available for processing unless learners actually notice it..." (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 74). The distinction between input and intake was first proposed by Corder (1967). He claims that

"[t]he simple fact of presenting a certain linguistic form to a learner in the classroom does not necessarily qualify it for the status of input, for the reason that input is 'what goes in' not what is *available* for going in, and we may reasonably suppose that it is the learner who controls this input, or more properly his intake". (p. 165)

With such a distinction, attention to input is highly emphasized due to its necessity in order for input to become intake (Schmidt, 1990; Tomlin & Villa, 1994 in Ito 2001, pp. 101-103).

Salience and frequency are two structural qualities in which attention to input is provided, and hence, processing facilitated (Berggreen and Tenfjord, 1999).

Salience can be described as the availability of input (Gass and Selinker, 2001), and has to do with to what extent elements of the language draws attention to itself (Berggreen and Tenfjord, 1999). One way to increase salience is the frequency of input. According to Ellis (2002), how often a specific word or phrase appears in the input determines the growth of this lexical item or phrase. Lexical items frequently occurring have a higher probability of being recognized and processed in general due to what could be a more accessible storage in the lexicon or due to strengthened connections within the network of the lexicon and organization of language (Berggreen and Tenfjord, 1999). The comprehension of idioms with a frequent occurrence compared to less familiar ones is easier since their figurative meanings are known, and therefore more salient, than their literal meaning. In this process practice is also emphasized (Nippold & Rudzinski, 1993). However, as suggested in relation to transfer, Gass and Selinker (2001) point out that salience does not necessarily occur exclusively with the high-frequent items or

structures, but possibly with highly infrequent items or structures as well. L1-L2 differences could sometimes make it easier to learn due to their saliency in the L2, whereas other times, similarities could make the process of learning more difficult, since the learner does not get the sense that there is something to learn. In addition, as noted by Berggreen and Tenfjord (1999), there are some features of frequency which lowers the effect of frequency in terms of acquisition. A high number of the most frequent lexical items are actually of low salience since they are function words. Function words occur more frequently than content words, but are often less prominent. Researchers suggest that frequency might not have a cumulative effect, in which the more frequent an item occurs, the faster it is acquired. But that the speaker has a register of occurrences. In order for the input to be registered, it has to occur with a certain frequency (Berggreen and Tenfjord, 1999).

In terms of input processing, attention is considered to be an important aspect in SLA. For input to become intake, researchers such as Krashen emphasize attention to linguistic content, whereas researchers such as Sharwood Smith and Schmidt stipulate that form also needs to be taken into consideration (Berggreen and Tenfjord 1999, p. 99). With reference to the psychological literature, Schmidt (1990) suggests that expectation is significant for noticeability. He states that “instruction may have a priming effect, increasing the likelihood of noticing features in input through the establishment of expectations” (Schmidt, 1990, p. 143). Based on this, the role of instruction is to influence and channel the learner’s attention in such a way that the result is a noticing of low salience feature (Berggreen and Tenfjord, 1999). Schmidt (1990, p. 135) applies the term *noticing* in order to describe what the language learner becomes aware of or perceives. In contrast to Chomsky’s (1986) rejection of conscious attention in a learner’s L1, Schmidt argues that there is a close relation between the availability for noticing and L2 development (1990). Frequency and perpetual salience are two vital factors influencing a learner’s noticing. In teaching the input can be manipulated, by the frequency of certain input or, for instance, the high lighting of the input in bold. In this way a certain feature of the input has its character of salience. Attention can also be focused without changing the input’s character of salience as a result of previous practice (Berggreen and Tenfjord, 1999). Third, the learner’s comprehension can be enhanced and attention to a specific lexical feature can be gained, by the modifications proficient speakers make when addressing less proficient speakers (Ellis, 1990). However, there are no studies that can account for the learner’s transition process. Some researchers state that these modifications may only be influencing the rate of acquisition (Piske and Young-Scholten, 2009).

The amount of input L2 learners actually get, or how much exposure a learner requires, is not known (Carroll, 2001 and Wode, 1994 in Piske and Young-Scholten, 2009). According to linguists operating within the generative linguistic framework the importance of input is questioned due to the logical problem known as the poverty of stimulus. The innate universal structure is a possible answer to why a speaker can attain a linguistic competence that is far more complex than the input available should allow. In line with the theory, the role of input is minimized to merely a trigger for the syntactic development (Piske and Young-Scholten, 2009). In terms of acquiring figurative language, some findings imply that the underlying processes are “scarcely affected by exposure, even though the rate of acquisition may be” (Levorato & Cacciari, 1992, p. 128). Other researchers’ studies in support of the ‘language experience’ hypothesis, however, point to the amount of exposure to figurative expressions as a depending factor in the development of figurative language (Nippold and Taylor, 1995, p. 426).

2.5 Theories of Instruction and the Importance of Metalinguistic Competence

2.5.1 Theories of Instruction

A second language can be learnt formally or informally. In this study the object of inquiry is the formal learning in which the learners receive instruction that takes place in a classroom (Saville-Troike, 2006). An important issue in the discussion of formal instruction is the use of the students’ L1 in the L2 classroom. According to, and as a result of, the Direct method, which emerged at the end of the 19th century, the target language should be the only language used in the classroom. As a result, the Grammar-translation method, which translated sentences from the target language (L2) to the students’ first language and vice versa, was abandoned. A few centuries later, under the influence of the behaviorists, the Direct method were transformed into the Audiolingual method. By applying a stimulus-response-reinforcement model where small fractions of the L2 were drilled, the learners were shield from making mistakes (Harmer, 2007). In addition to the result of the Direct method, the thought of the classroom being an English-only environment was influenced by teachers from the English-speaking countries traveling to teach students with whom they did not share a first language. Additionally, in a multicultural society where the students in a classroom may represent a mixture of first languages such an environment is of great advantage. Even though the main opinion is that the classroom should be an English-only environment, the use of the first language in the L2 classroom is a subject for debate (Harmer, 2007).

In the classroom there are three sources of input, the teacher, the materials utilized and the other learners (Gass and Selinker, 2001). An English-only environment have the benefits of inviting

teachers with English as their native language to teach in the L2 classroom and including a group of students where more than one L1 is represented (Harmer, 2007). However, the most important benefit is the amount of exposure. As mentioned, this is the fundamental factor in language acquisition (Saville-Troike, 2006), and restricting the L2 students' exposure to English is a vital reason for objecting the use of the students' L1 (Harmer, 2007). According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1981), L2 is acquired if the learner is provided with input slightly above the learner's existing competency level. The main provider of this comprehensible input is the teacher (Harmer, 2007). However, the teacher is not the only source of input. No matter the teacher's stand in the issue, students' use of their first language in the L2 classroom is inevitable. They may use it to communicate with their fellow students, or they may be translating the L2 into their L1 in their heads (Harmer, 2007). The use of the students' L1 could have positive effects in terms of identity, group dynamics, and the noticing of differences and comparisons between their L1 and L2. However, the students must be challenged to speak and produce their L2 in order to practice (Harmer, 2007).

Learning success is closely related to the learner's age and personality, and method of teaching (Harmer, 2007). Considering the critical period hypothesis, the assumption for language development and the ultimate attainment of a speaker is the younger the better. The rapid language development in infants and preschool children is a rather amazing accomplishment. Until recently, the linguistic growth of an individual was believed to be a feat largely completed around the age of five or six. Recent research shows that the growth continues into adulthood and does not have a certain point of completion. This assumption is supported by the importance of metalinguistic, cognitive, and social development. In terms of age and the competency of the linguistic feature of idioms, these factors make the semantic development of idioms special, for both L1 and L2 acquisition (Nippold, 1999; Nippold, 2006). Personality is one of factors that have to be taken into consideration in instruction. Gass and Selinker (2001) describe personality types such as the extrovert versus introvert, and the risk-taker who is willing to risk the possibility of failure in the process of learning to show how influences the second language learning process differently. The students' different response to the same stimuli, tasks and methods acquires a variation of methods in order to include, challenge and motivate the students (Gass and Selinker, 2001; Harmer, 2007).

Motivation is a strong predictor of language learning success (Gass and Selinker, 2001). In this context, the student's sense of achievement is important. Success is a motivating factor. However, success without effort does not give a real sense of achievement. The appropriate level

of challenge for the students is therefore an important part of a teacher's work (Harmer, 2007). A second motivating factor is *affect* (Harmer, 2007). Students are more likely to stay motivated if they feel and think that the teacher cares about them, which in turn could strengthen their self-esteem. This points to a third factor, namely praise. Praise for work well done motivates progression (Harmer, 2007). According to the fifth hypothesis of Krashen's Monitor Model (1982), factors such as motivation, attitude, self-confidence, and anxiety, are involved in the acceptance of input coined the Affective Filter. Even though the learner is provided with comprehensive input, input could be prevented from passing through to the Language Acquisition Device because the Filter is up. The reason for this could be due to a problem with one, or a combination, of the factors mentioned. The Affective Filter hypothesis and the Monitor Model have been subject to criticism (Gass and Selinker, 2001). However, Krashen contributes to the field of research by shedding some light on the importance of the social psychological aspect as a part of the acquisition process is included.

In *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, Jeremy Harmer (2007) writes about four language skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing. Reading and listening are categorized as receptive skills, and speaking and writing are categorized as productive skills. Reading and listening serve as input, and provide an opportunity of producing an output in the form of speaking or writing. These receptive skills and productive skills interact. According to the circle of input and output (Harmer, 2007, p. 266), a student's production and output gives him or her, the chance to see how it turns out, to get feedback from the peers or the teacher and to modify his or her understanding of some input. The output produced by second language learners has in research been used to predict errors based on the distinction between the learners' first and second language by the approach of Error Analysis. With the publication of the article *The significance of learners' errors*, Corder (1967) underlined that second language learners' errors was to be seen as a source of insight into the learning process for three groups. For the learner, errors could serve a mean to discover rules of the target language. For the teacher, the errors could give information about how much the learner had learnt. For the researchers, errors made could provide evidence of how language was acquired. One of the motivation factors of this approach was to improve pedagogy (Ellis, 1994). Collection of samples, identifying, describing, explaining and evaluation of errors are the five steps includes in the analyzing of the approach's research (Corder, 1974 in Ellis, 1994).

Engage, activate, study are three important parts of a lesson procedure (Harmer, 2007, pp. 66-67). Bell-ringer is a pedagogic term used to describe the first two steps in the procedure. The

purpose of the bell-ringer is to get the students' attention and get them focused on the subject immediately as they enter the classroom. This can be done with the means of a song, a YouTube-clip or a question on the whiteboard or repetition from last class. Even though songs and videos are used to engage the students, its purpose as an academic activity, is to add to the content of what is being taught (Morris, 2013). Similar to the bell-ringer activities, most textbooks will have a question related to the topic for a text or a listening task. The aim is to get the pupils thinking and to provoke them to get in touch with their schema. The term *schema* is the pre-existent knowledge that everybody has and in which will color the way various topics are encountered. If the textbook or the topic does not have a lead in, it will be the receptive skills teacher's job to find a statement or a question. This kind of predictions can be provoked by giving the students various clues, such as pictures, headlines or book jacket descriptions (Harmer, 2007). An active student is also emphasized in relation to their ZPD and the process of scaffolding. The social interactions between the students can be of importance in terms of the input created by the peers. In cases where students do not find the teacher's input comprehensible, fellow students who accessed the input can help by explaining the input differently and at a level that is within reach. In this sense, students as a source of input are of great value. In terms of teaching methods is illustration a way to activate the students. Illustration is assumed to help language acquisition through imaging and the physical movement, and may facilitate learning. Ramberg (2007) claims that input that stimulates the imagination and catches the students' attention are easier to store in memory. In addition it provides variation in teaching.

Repetition has an important role in instruction as it is assumed to increase the chance of remembering, since the knowledge is transferred from the students' short-term memory to their long-term memory. However, the effect of repetition on memory is not firmly established (Harmer, 2007). Considering the matter in the context of input frequency, pointed out by Berggreen and Tenfjord (1999), repetition was in this study recognized as a pedagogical principle with the purpose to increase the odds for input to be registered. The development of students' conceptual understanding and cognitive skills is one of the fundamental purposes of language education (Harmer, 2007). In the process of acquiring figurative language these skills are greatly emphasized. Nippold (2006), Levorato and Cacciari (2002), Vulchanova, Vulchanov and Stankova (2011) all argue that metalinguistic awareness, together with the ability to infer from context, is essential in the comprehension and production of figurative language.

2.5.2 Metalinguistic Awareness and Competence

Gass and Selinker (2001, p. 302) define metalinguistic awareness as “one’s ability to consider language not just as a means of expressing ideas or communicating with others, but also as an object of inquiry”. The ability to think about language and reflect upon its nature can for instance be analyzed in terms of word awareness, syntactic awareness and pragmatic awareness (Benelli et al., 2006). As pointed out previously, language always occurs in a context, and is not simply about acquiring a linguistic system and knowing the meaning of its lexical item. Together with the linguistic competence, metalinguistic competence, cultural background and knowledge of the world will serve as a backdrop to a speaker’s comprehension of language (Nippold, 2006). According to Nippold (2006), figurative expressions, such as idioms, are learnt through metalinguistic strategies. Nippold points out three metalinguistic strategies important to the process of learning a language: ‘contextual abstraction’, ‘metalexical analysis’, and ‘world experience’. The contextual abstraction is the strategy applied when the learner makes use of the linguistic context surrounding the expression in order to infer meaning, whereas the learner applying the metalinguistic analysis only uses the lexical items of the expression to infer meaning. The learner’s amount of exposure to figurative expressions in a meaningful communicative context shows the importance of the third metalinguistic strategy, ‘world experience’ (Nippold, 2006).

Gass and Selinker (2001, p. 302) state that “the ability to *think* about language is often associated with an increased ability to *learn* language”. Harmer agrees, and elaborates by stating that, in encountering language with some ‘cognitive depth’ students are more likely to comprehend and store the information than if encountering the information passively (Harmer, 2007). Research shows that the metalinguistic ability becomes more developed during school-age and adolescent years (Nippold and Taylor, 1995). In a study by Bialystok (2001), metalinguistic awareness has been identified as something that differentiates bilingual children and their monolingual peers. Research shows that competence in two languages and the need and knowledge to separate the two languages boost the metalinguistic awareness in which bilinguals are given an advantage.

Some methods applied to develop metalinguistic skills or test the development of metalinguistic skills of L2 learner’s in the literature, are translation tasks and definition tasks. In discussing the teacher’s choice of language in the L2 classroom, Harmer (2007) states that the L1 students will, consciously or subconsciously, make comparisons between their L1 and L2. The comparisons and translations made, whether consciously or subconsciously, are considered a contribution to the development of a learner’s metalinguistic competence (Gass and Selinker, 2001). As a

teaching method, translation of L2 idioms into L1 can reveal the variety of idiomatic ways of saying things to the learner (Harmer, 2007). In terms of the ability to define words, Benelli, Belacchi and Gini (2006) argue that metalinguistic skills have an effect. There is a general agreement that definitional skills is in close relation to a speaker's metalinguistic competency. However, the empirical evidences available are few (Benelli et al., 2006).

2.6 Hypotheses and Predictions

If it is correct that salience can occur by focusing a learner's attention on a particular language feature, as suggested in Gass and Selinker (2001), the experimental group would be expected to identify a higher number of idiomatic expressions than the control group after instruction. With the ability to recognize idioms in discourse, one can hypothesize that as the amount of exposure increases and more of the input becomes intake (Corder, 1967), Norwegian L2 learners' comprehension of idioms in English will be further advanced. The prediction was that the experimental group would be able to define a higher number of idioms in comparison to the control group. Based on the theory presented the two hypotheses in relation to the study of idiom comprehension were:

1. If made aware of the lexical phenomenon of idioms through systematic instruction and practice, such expressions will become easier to recognize.
2. The ease of recognizing idiomatic expressions as a result of systematic instruction and practice will increase the amount of exposure of input into intake and, hence, comprehension will be further enhanced.

As a result of the "double" nature of idiomatic expressions (Vulchanova, Vulcanov and Stankova, 2011), it could additionally be hypothesized that the instruction would affect the experimental group overall proficiency in English. This results in a third prediction.

3. The experimental group will not only advance in the knowledge of idioms, but the input will affect their overall proficiency in English.

3. Methods

The aim of this study was to investigate students' comprehension of idioms in their second language, and the effect of systematical instruction and practice in second language acquisition. Forty-six Norwegian 16-year-olds were given tests to measure their comprehension of idioms and their overall proficiency in English. In order to control the grounds of comparison between the two groups, idioms as aim of study were not mentioned to any of the participants or the teacher of the control group. Only the teacher of the class I was allowed to teach together with knew the specific topic. After the first idiom comprehension questionnaire, one of the groups received instruction on the topic in their English classes for four weeks, whereas the other group did not receive any instruction on the topic. When the period of instruction was completed both groups responded to a second idiom comprehension questionnaire. The approach of the study was quantitative and experimental, and the statistical analysis of the data collected was completed using SPSS.

3.1 A Quantitative Experiment

The experimental design is according to naturalist scholars considered to be the ideal method. The naturalist approach assumes that the world is characterized by patterns which can be accessed by the use of particular methods such as control and comparison (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). Due to my goal of writing a thesis that would be relevant to my profession, an experimental design was a natural choice since that would allow me as a researcher to manipulate the actual environment in which the casual relationship was to be tested (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). The aim of the testing was to provide evidence to support or reject the hypotheses. Rasinger (2009, p. 59) describes the two groups of participants involved in an experimental design; "the experimental group (EG), that is, the group that is undergoing the 'treatment' or stimulus, and the control group, which is unaffected by the stimulus".

The design of this study consists of two randomized groups which completed both pre-tests and post-tests. The stimulus is the instruction of idioms, which can be described as the independent variable X. According to the experimental method one can expect that "[w]hen an independent variable (X) is present, then its dependent associate (Y) is present as well; *and* that when X is absent, then Y is also absent" (Moses & Knutsen 2007, p. 53). The dependent associate Y is in this context the improved comprehension of idioms. Considering the hypothesis about the effect of instruction of idioms in terms of overall proficiency, the dependent associate Y will in addition stand for the improved grammar and vocabulary. The experiment was designed to provide quantitative data in order to measure the effect of instruction versus no instruction on the

classes collectively. The participants' individual result was not the objective. To measure the effect, all the collected data was numerically coded and entered into an Excel worksheet before it was converted to SPSS for statistical analysis.

According to Moses and Knutsen (2007), classroom research results in less control, but more contexts. Highly controlled conditions are important for the internal validity of the research design as it is an estimation of the strength of the causal relationship. Testing the actual environment did come with some challenges in terms of control. The first challenge was to find two English classes with a similar starting point. Second, since the experiment was to take place in two classrooms it was hard to predict the exact number of participants when for instance outliers could not be excluded from their course and class. Hence, the outliers' tests would have to be eliminated afterward in order to sustain what is ethically appropriate. Third, there was a possibility that the teacher of the control group could have found out what the specific topic of the study and as a result taught the control group about idioms. However, what may be at the expense of internal validity, due to less control, could be gained in external validity as a result of context (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). Considering the purpose of this design, the extent to which the result of the study could be held to be true for other cases, the external validity priors the internal validity. The result of investigating whether instruction of idioms could have a positive effect or not for other groups precedes the knowledge of to which degree conclusions about the causal relationship can be made.

Even though quantitative research methods were applied to achieve the aims of the study, the subjectivity and interpretations of data related to the qualitative method cannot be entirely excluded. The understanding of the researcher is reflected in how the data collected was processed, the theory presented and the results and analysis interpreted (Johannesen, Tufte and Veiden, 2006).

3.2 Participants

The participants in the study were as mentioned forty-six Norwegian 16-year-olds, 18 males and 28 females. All were attending high school and speakers of Norwegian. As Vg1 students, English was an obligatory subject for the participants, and they were divided in two groups based on their original school classes. All the sixty-one students were encouraged to participate in the project. After finishing the tests and background information and going through the results, a number of the students were, however, excluded as participants in the study. The reason for exclusion was primarily due to them not attending one or more tests, but also due to the

participants not being native speaker of Norwegian and not having Norwegian as the primary language spoken at home. One of the bilingual participants was included in the study, but in this case the primary language spoken at home was Norwegian. Five students, three in the experiment group and two in the control group, reported deficiencies or diagnoses that may affect an individual's learning ability. Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Disorder, epilepsy, chronic fatigue syndrome, and hearing impairment were to account for these reports. However, none of these participants' results deviated from the normal distribution of the tests conducted by the two groups. Except for one case of hearing impairment, all the forty-six participants reported to have normal hearing and normal-to-corrected vision.

Before the study was conducted the participants, according to the guidelines of the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD), submitted a form of consent signed by the parents or guardians approving their participation in the study (Appendix 1). The school board and the teachers affected were also asked and informed before consent was given to conduct the experiment on their students. A notification form about the study was submitted and approved by NSD. In order to protect the privacy of the study's participants, each of the students was given a participant number by their teachers. The lists with these numbers were kept by the teachers, and only available for them, so that the individual participant could not be identified. No information about the participants could in the processing of the data collected be linked to an individual's name but only to the individual's participant number.

Experimental Group – Instruction

In this group there were 22 participants, 9 males and 13 females. The group consisted originally of 31 students and all of the students participated in the study, however, 11 participants had to be excluded from the study due to the absent on one or more tests. One of the remaining 22 participants reported to be bilingual. This group got systematic instruction on the topic of idioms for 15-20 minutes during English class two times a week for four weeks.

Control Group – No Instruction

This group consisted of 24 participants, 9 males and 15 females. The group originally consisted of 30 students but five of them were excluded as participants due to their absence from one or more tests, and one was excluded due to not being a native speaker of Norwegian nor having Norwegian as the primary language spoken at home. This group received no systematic instruction on idioms during their English classes.

3.3 Materials and Procedures

3.3.1 Preparing the Collection of Data

The groups of participants were suggested by my supervisor who had two other MA students conducting experiments in six English classes at this high school. In connection with their research project, the participants had already completed a vocabulary test and a grammar test on the Internet to measure their English proficiency. The results of these tests helped in establishing a baseline and show which two classes that would be eligible for a comparative study. The vocabulary test consisted of 10 tasks in multiple choice formats where each task presented a word and four different definitions (Dictionary.com, 2012). The participants were asked to match and select the correct definition for the word in question. The results of the participants' vocabulary size were estimated and displayed on their screens. The scores were reported by the teacher or I. The test was done twice, and a final score was calculated based on the average of the two rounds of testing. The reason for this was to get a more accurate number and a better overview of the participants' English proficiency. The middle school level was chosen as the appropriate level for the groups in this study as the test is originally intended for native speakers of English. The grammar test applied was the Cambridge Essential Grammar Test (Cambridge University Press, 2006). In this test the participants were presented with 50 different sentences where they had to fill in the correct grammatical expressions by circling one of the alternatives offered. The number of alternatives varied from 2-4. The results were given as a number of correct answers out of the 50 tasks. The results of the tests were written down by the teacher and myself in order to avoid that any false results would be reported.

3.3.2 Testing Part I- Before Instruction

After establishing the baseline of the two groups, the participants were given the first of two different comprehension questionnaires on idioms. The participants were, however, not informed of the specific topic of the questionnaires but given a more general description of the project's aim. The participants, parents and guardians, the school and the teacher of the control group were informed that the experiment was to examine how students with English as a second language process sentences in their L2. The reasons for this were to avoid priming the participants, to avoid that the teacher of the control group would be spending any extra time teaching idioms than otherwise planned and to avoid that the participants of the control group were to spend time practicing idioms on their own.

The first questionnaire administered to the participants was in paper form and consisted of two tasks, an identification task and a definition task (Appendix 2). The questionnaire's two main

purposes were to measure the level of comprehension of idioms of the two groups and to serve as a comparative baseline to the comprehension questionnaire that would be conducted after the experiment group had received the instruction on idioms. Both tasks were presented in linguistic contexts as this is a condition emphasized by a number of researchers to enhance learners' identification of figurative language (Gibbs, 1987, 1991; Levorato and Cacciari, 1992; Nippold and Rudzinski, 1993). The students were tested in their respective classrooms during a 60 minute session with a 10 minute break "halfway". The first part of the test was handed in before the break to avoid the participants from helping each other. In addition to the instruction about the procedures given in the questionnaire, instructions were given orally in English. Both groups were given the translation of the term *fixed expressions* in their L1 written on the whiteboard and orally.

In the identification task, the participants were asked to identify fixed expressions in a 300 word text by underlining the strings of words they believed to be such expressions. The text was chosen based on the frequency of idioms and the high number of conventionalized idiomatic expressions and clichés. In the definition task, using a multiple-choice response format, the participants were presented with 60 idiomatic expressions and asked to select what they believed to be the correct definition. The idioms were set in brief story contexts and each given four alternatives. An example of the context for the idiom *cold feet* was:

They had been planning their wedding for three years, but when the day finally came she got cold feet and chose not to show up. What is the meaning of the expression 'cold feet'?

Of the four alternatives, one was correct, two were plausible answers but not accurate, and the last was intentionally made to be perceived as incorrect. The selection of the fixed expressions for the definitions tasks was based on frequency, their belonging to the categories biologically motivated idioms, culturally motivated idioms or clichés, and the concept of cross-linguistic transfer. The frequency of the idioms selected for the definition tasks was checked both in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the British National Corpus (BNC). The reason for representing different categories of idiomatic expressions is due to the complex nature of idioms. The division between biologically and culturally motivated idioms is based on an attempt to represent the variety of idioms in terms of including idioms which are decomposable and transparent, but also non-decomposable and non-transparent. In order to show the concept of transfer, expressions both similar and different in the Norwegian and English were selected.

3.3.3 Instruction Part

After the participants' English proficiency had been tested and the first comprehension questionnaire on idioms had been completed by both groups, the experiment group was given targeted input on idioms. In reference to Berggreen and Tenfjord (1999), input has to occur with a certain frequency in order to be registered, and hence, eight sessions were planned and distributed in a five week period. The 15-20 minutes input was given at the beginning of the students' twice a week English class. The participants had a one week break halfway through the instruction part due to mock exams. The goals of the instruction were to make the students aware of and expose them to a variety of idiomatic expressions in order for them to manage to identify and comprehend this linguistic feature in their second language. To achieve these goals, instruction aimed to provide what Krashen (1981) describes as comprehensive input, and for the learners to be in, what Vygotsky (1978) termed, the zone of proximal development. Based on this, the students were to a large extent included in the teaching. As mentioned, scaffolding requires the learner to be an active participant and social interaction makes the input more easily accessible for mental processing. The activation of the students' mental processes is significant in order to provide what Corder (1967) describes as intake.

In reference to Levorato and Cacciari (2002) and Nippold (2006), metalinguistic awareness and strategies were emphasized in the instruction. The instruction aim was not only to develop and advance the comprehension of single idioms but the comprehension of idioms per se. Give the man a fish, and you feed him for a day; show him how to catch fish, and you feed him for a lifetime is a well-known proverb which in this study functioned as an underlying concept of the instruction part. As a consequence of the enormous amount of idioms, the multifaceted nature of these expressions, and the continuous occurrence of novel expressions, teaching idioms is not a simple task. One method to teach idioms could be to have the students memorizing single idioms and their meaning. Learning a selection of fixed phrases, their meaning and usage, is of great significance. However, in order to equip the students with the competence to detect and learn idiomatic expressions on their own, and not only recognize those expressions taught in class, their metalinguistic awareness and strategies has to be challenged.

A variety of methods were utilized to teach the different aspects of the topic in order to engage and motivate the students according to Gass and Selinker (2001) and Harmer (2007). The teaching was given in the students' L2 for exposure. However, translation to and comparisons made in Norwegian occurred for two reasons. First, it was important that the students knew the meaning of each lexical item of the expressions taught in order to follow the teaching and feel

included. Second, in reference to Gass and Selinker (2001), these processes are included in the use a learner's of metalinguistic competency. The topics of the eight sessions were Idioms – an Introduction, Identifying Idioms, Positive vs. Negative Transfer of Idioms, The Origin of Idioms and Source of Idioms Today, Using Idioms in Your Texts, Illustrating Idioms, The Grammar of Idioms and The Transparency of Idioms. Six of the sessions in the experiment group were instructed by me, and the last two sessions were given by the participants' English teacher.

In the first session it was discussed what an idiom is and why idioms are important in learning a language. This in reference to Selinker (1992), in which the need and purpose of communication as an important factor influencing the outcome of the SLA is emphasized. One of the aims with the start of the introduction part and the students' first task was therefore, to make idiom learning relevant to their language development. The bell-ringer and first task was to listen to what was considered as a popular song at that time, and to reflect on the possible meaning of three idioms in the song's lyric presented in a handout in bold (Appendix 6). According to Berggreen and Tenfjord (1999), input can be easily be manipulated by highlighting idioms in bold with the purpose to influence the learners' attention and achieve salience. In addition, the song was chosen to catch the students' attention and introduce the topic to the students in what, to them, would be a familiar context to make it relevant to their language learning. After asking the students what they knew about idioms in order to activate their schema, in reference to Harmer (2007), the difference between literal and figurative meaning was discussed. To underline this difference, the bizarreness of taking a figurative meaning literally, or the fun which can be made due to this distinction, a PowerPoint presentation with pictures of different idioms was utilized (Appendix 14). In addition, with reference to Nippold (2006), the importance of cultural knowledge of the target language in terms of a pragmatically correct use of it was discussed. Last, the students were given the explanation of five idioms and a task in which these where applied.

The second session's agenda was to learn how idioms in an L2 text can be detected, and once detected, how the idiomatic meaning of such expressions can be found. After a brief recap from the previous session and a short film based on the difference between the literal and figurative meaning (Englishdomcom, 2001) as a bell-ringer, the students were given a task where they were to use what they had learned so far about this distinction. The task consisted of eight sentences and their challenge was to identify the idioms (Appendix 7). If recognizing the sentence's idiomatic expression was found difficult, as suggested by Harmer (2007), that the English sentence was translated word by word into their L1, Norwegian. When finished, the

students' next task was to try to give an explanation of the meaning of the idioms from the last task in their own words. In reference to Gass and Selinker (2001) and the importance of a speaker's ability to think about language, the purpose of the task was to challenge the students' metalinguistic awareness. When finished, they used a dictionary to confirm or correct their definitions. The last task of the session was for the students to find their favorite idiom in Norwegian, explain its meaning in English and find a translation of the expression in English if possible. This task aimed to engage the students, challenge their metalinguistic abilities and to prepare them for the next session which had transfer as its topic. The purpose of preparing the students was based on Berggreen and Tenfjord (1999), who state that salience can be increased as a result of the students' previous practice.

The third session and the concept of transfer between a speaker's L1 and L2 were introduced by three headlines from Norwegian newspapers (Appendix 8). The theoretical starting point for this session was, as mentioned, that prior knowledge of a speaker's L1 will influence the development of his or her L2, and as Harmer points out (2007), that L2 learners will make comparisons between their L1 and L2. The students were asked how they would translate the idioms in the headlines as a metalinguistic challenge, before the term transfer was explained and the headlines were described as having a negative or positive transfer. The three headlines were chosen to exemplify different scenarios possible to encounter as a Norwegian L2 speaker of English. Both Ringbom (2007) and Kellerman's (1978 in Laufer, 2000) theories were applied since similarities and differences between the languages were discussed. The first headline contained an idiom in English which does not have an equivalent in Norwegian, whereas the last two headlines do have what can be considered equivalent expressions. The intention of the first headline was to show that not all idioms in English have an equivalent in Norwegian (e.g. *'the shit hits the fan'*). The intention of the second and third headline was to illustrate that many idioms in English do have equivalents in Norwegian but that attention must be paid. The second headline exemplified the similarities of idioms that can be found in English and Norwegian (e.g. *throw in the towel, kaste inn håndkledet*). However, as the last headline was to show, some idioms in the two languages based on the same concept can have different lexical items to express it (e.g. in Norwegian *'slå to fluer i en smekk'*/*hit two flies in one hit, in English *'killing two birds with one stone'*). After the input, all the students wrote their favorite Norwegian idiom from last session on the whiteboard. The following task was for them to find three idioms which could be directly translated from Norwegian into English, and three which could not. In the latter case the students were challenged to find the English equivalent. This in reference to Harmer

(2007), with the purpose for the students to actively encounter language with ‘cognitive depth’, and ultimately, raising their metalinguistic awareness.

In the fourth session, different sources of idioms and the origin of idioms were discussed. The purpose was to reinforce the relevance of idiom learning to the students’ language development mentioned in the first session, and to establish an expectation of encountering idiomatic expressions in the range of texts they are surrounded with. The concept of idioms had been pointed out as important based on their frequent occurrence in everyday language, but where exactly do we encounter these expressions? That was a question the students were to discuss with a fellow student before we talked about it as a whole class. To illustrate and sum up the students answers, a PowerPoint presentation with pictures of movies, books, TV- shows, newspapers and lyrics with idiomatic expressions in their titles, was displayed (Appendix 15). The aim of the task was, in line with Schmidt (1990), to establish an expectation of where idioms can be found. Secondly, the origin of different idioms was discussed with the purpose to show that they can reveal historic and cultural information about a language and the language’s country which, in reference to Nippold (2006), serves as a backdrop to language comprehension. Exemplifying this was one approach to meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education (2010), in which Norwegian students are asked to consider cultural norms and conventions when communicating in English. Next, the students were put in groups to compete in finding as many idioms as possible using the Internet. They were to write down the idioms and their source on a list before handing it in. However, before putting the expressions on the list, they also had to check a dictionary or use Google in order to confirm whether it was considered as an idiom or not.

Halfway through the instruction part of the experiment, and after a week’s break, the topic was ‘Using Idioms in Your Own Texts’. Even though comprehension was the focus in this study and systematic instruction, practice was emphasized consistently. One of the aims for the work of this session was, hence, to give, in reference to Harmer’s circle of input and output (2007), the students a chance to see how it turns out in their texts and to get feedback from the teacher in order to modify his or her understanding of the input given, if necessary. A second aim was, once again, to make idiom learning relevant for the students’ language development. The importance of knowing the meaning of an idiom, its style and register, were discussed briefly before the students were activated. A list of idioms that had been taught in the previous session was distributed to the students (Appendix 9), with the task to write short texts where the idioms

were included. The students' texts were handed in, read and given individual feedback in writing in order to give the students credit and guidance.

In the sixth session, the students were challenged to illustrate idioms (Appendix 10). This activity was chosen because, as noted by Ramberg (2007), illustration helps language acquisition through imaging and the physical movement. In addition it provides variation in the teaching. The students were paired up and could choose to illustrate the idioms by acting them out and/or drawing them. The two students were given two different lists, each with four idioms. In case a student did not know one of them, the meaning of the idiom and two examples where the idiom appeared in context were included. After both students had read and understood the idioms, they were to guess each other's expressions. Before the task was given and the texts with comments were handed back to the students, a short PowerPoint presentation with a selection of the students' sentences from the hand in last session was presented. This in order to praise the students work by including it in the teaching and to show the students who did not fully understand examples of how to use one or more of the idioms correctly.

In the seventh session, the grammar of idioms was the topic, and the aim was to shed some light on the complexity of idiomatic expressions in that idioms do not always follow the usual language pattern. Due to the level of the student's knowledge and limited time, the aim was not to teach how some idioms can be modified, whereas others cannot, but rather to focus on how idioms can be used to learn different aspects of grammar and how to use the idiomatic expressions correctly. The students were, in reference to the approach of Error Analysis, given sentences where they were to first identify the idiomatic expression and secondly, explain how it was grammatically incorrect (Appendix 11). When the student had completed the task, the teacher, along with the students, provided answers to what the expression was, what was wrong with the expression and what the meaning of the correct expression was for each of the sentences.

For the last session the students received instruction on the transparency of idioms. To activate the students' schema, they were asked if it is possible to find the meaning of an English idiom they had never heard before. After a brief discussion and examples given on the matter of degree of transparency, the students were presented to different transparent idioms. Their task was to imagine the idiomatic meaning and explain the expressions in their own words (Appendix 12). In this case, the idioms were presented without a context which required the students to apply the metalinguistic strategy which Nippold (2006) refers to as the 'metalexical analysis'. When the students had completed the task, the teacher, with help from the students, wrote a definition for

each of the task's idioms on the whiteboard. The goal of the session was yet again to challenge the students' metalinguistic skills and strategies, in order for them to continue developing their English and understanding of idiomatic expressions on their own. One week after the experiment group finished these sessions, both groups were tested a second time.

3.3.4 Testing Part II- After Instruction

Six weeks after the first idiom comprehension questionnaire was completed, the participants of both groups were presented with a second comprehension questionnaire (Appendix 3) and asked once again to execute the same online grammar and vocabulary tests as they did before this experiment took place. The aim of the questionnaire was to examine if systematic instruction has had an effect on the students comprehension of idioms, whereas the aim of the grammar and vocabulary test was to investigate if instruction has had an effect on the students' proficiency in English. The students were tested in their respective classrooms during a 90 minute session with a 10 minute break after the comprehension questionnaire had been completed and handed in. Due to a sizable amount of things that needed to be administrated, and that both groups were tested at the same time, a research assistant was engaged to instruct one of the groups. Instruction about the tasks and the procedure were given in writing, both on the paper of the questionnaire and in a PowerPoint presentation, as well as orally.

The idiom comprehension questionnaire was in paper form and, like the first questionnaire, consisted of an identification task and a definition task. The identification task of this questionnaire consisted of excerpts from two different song lyrics by two different artists. The participants were asked to identify fixed expressions in this 400 word task, by underlining the strings of words they believed to be such expressions. In the definition task, the participants were presented to twenty of the sixty idioms from the multiple choice formatted definition task in the first idiom comprehension questionnaire, and asked to give a definition of the expressions' meaning in their own words. Out of the sixty expressions, 8 biologically motivated idioms, 8 culturally motivated idioms and 4 clichés were selected, in order to get an even representation of the expressions from the first test. None of the idioms the participants were tested on in the second test were used in the instruction part to avoid manipulating the results in the favor of the experiment group based on priming. As the participants had to make definitions on their own, their productive skill was challenged in the process of showing comprehension compared to selecting prefabricated definitions like the first time. After the participants had completed the questionnaire and had a 10 minute break, they performed the online grammar and vocabulary tests which they once before had completed in advance of this experiment (*cf.* 3.3.1).

A week after all the tests had been completed, the students were also asked to fill in a background questionnaire, in order to get a picture of their linguistic background and other factors that could be assumed affecting their language acquisition (Appendix 4). The questionnaire was based on a version applied in research at the Department of Modern Foreign Languages, NTNU. The questions were modified or added to fit the purpose of this particular study. The questionnaire was given in paper and consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. For the closed questions the participants were asked to respond to questions by ticking either a simple binary questions or by ticking a box on a scale with several alternatives. The answers to the questions with these formats were converted to the numerical format required by SPSS. For the questions related to the participants' time spent engaging in the English language, they were given five options ranging from 'never' to 'every day' (1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = a few times a week, 4 = several times a week, 5 = every day). When asked to evaluate their proficiency, they were given a scale with four options ranging from 'basic' to 'fluent', where 1 numerically represented 'basic' and 4 represented 'fluent'. For some of the Yes/No questions where the participants answered yes, they were asked to specify the answers in an open-ended question.

3.4 Analysis

In order to analyze the collected data, the results had to be numerically coded. The grammar tests, the vocabulary test and the definition task given in a multiple choice format automatically produced numbers for the data set. The remaining data, however, was scored according to the guidelines developed and presented in Table 1 and 2. All the data was numerically converted by me. In the cases of uncertainties, the criteria developed and a list of responses was given to two independent scores who individually conducted an additional scoring. There was a high degree of overlap in the evaluation of the responses. When evaluating the responses no information of which group they belonged to were given. This to maintain the anonymity of the participants, but it also served as a way to process the data more objectively.

3.4.1 The Identification Tasks

To score the identification tasks, certain guidelines were developed. The participants could underline as many words or phrases as they wanted. Points were assigned as follows:

Table 1. Guidelines for Scoring the Responses to the Identification Tasks

| Score | Guidelines |
|-------|---|
| 0 | No response or the response is irrelevant (e.g. the participant underlined a lexical item which is unrelated and clearly incorrect or only a word of the idiomatic expression). |
| 0.5 | The response is relevant, but not complete (e.g. the participant underlined a part of the expression, which could reflect a partial understanding of its figurative meaning). |
| 1 | The response is correct (e.g. the participant has identified the idiomatic expression in its completeness). |

The identification tasks before and after the instruction were, however, different in length and level of difficulty. The text of the first identification task is an exercise designed for children with the purpose of practicing idioms, and the expressions in the text are all highly conventionalized except for 'passed the test'. With little information about what the first task of the test asked for, a sense of achievement and expressions likely to be recognized were of importance. And the first identification task showed a positive result; Norwegian students do recognize such expressions. Due to the fact that quite a few of the participants managed to identify a high number of idiomatic expressions in the first task, the bar had to be raised for the second task. Correct results would not be possible to obtain if some of the participant were to accomplish full score. In addition, in encountering the same type of task it would be expected that the participant consequently would perform better on the second task than the first (McLeod, 2007). Therefore, the level of difficulty of the second identification task was raised by using authentic contexts with a mix of conventionalized and novel expressions that were not targeting children or made with the purpose of practicing idiomaticity. In order to compare the two groups and the tasks before and after instruction, the value of the results of the second task is doubled when calculating correct answers into percentage. The second text consisted of 28 target expressions compared to the 14 in the first test (Appendix 5). However, the texts used for the second task were longer.

3.4.2 The Definition Tasks

The scoring of the multiple-choice task was rather simple when only the correct definition selected was credited. The participants were given 1 point for each correct answer. For the second definition task, where the definitions were produced by the participants, guidelines were developed that focused on what degree the response of the students reflected their comprehension of the twenty idiomatic expressions presented.

Table 2. Guidelines for Scoring the Responses to the Definition Task after Instruction

| Score | Guidelines |
|-------|--|
| 0 | No response or the response is incorrect (e.g. the participant's response is unrelated with the figurative meaning of the expression). For example, definitions given to the question "What does it mean to 'roll up one's sleeves'" was 'give something back' or 'take a chance and try to help'. |
| 0.5 | The response is relevant, but not accurate (e.g. the participant has given two answers with the help of the connective <i>or</i> where only one is correct, parts of the literal meaning is included or parts of the expression repeated or slightly changed without adding new information, only the meaning as a consequence of the context is included). For example, definitions given to the question "What is the meaning of the expression 'for good' was 'to never return' or 'won't turn back'. |
| 1 | The response is correct (e.g. the participant captures the figurative meaning of the expression; the figurative meaning as a consequence of the context and the figurative meaning of the expression are included, correct register). An example of the response to the question "What is the meaning of the expression 'by the book' was 'to follow the law' and 'to do everything as it should be done'. |

The definition tasks before and after instruction also differed in length and level of difficulty. In the second task the participants were asked to provide definitions for only twenty idioms, compared to the sixty idioms in the task before instruction. The challenge with the definition task after instruction was that the participants had to give them in their own words. The reasons for changing the test were to avoid priming the participants, the challenge to find a test battery of sixty new idioms that would match the previous, and that the high score of both groups on the first task required that the bar was raised in order to avoid the risk of getting a full score.

3.5 Potential Sources of Error and Limitations

Before the experiment was conducted certain limitations of the study such as the sample, the familiarity of idioms and the complexity of teaching were already known. First, in conducting a classroom research the number of participants was not set before the last data were collected and analyzed. Because of a number of tests spread out on different days, participants who did not attend school one of those days or outliers detected based on the analyses and the background questionnaire, had to be excluded from the study. This made the sample size vulnerable.

Second, familiarity is to researchers such as Nippold and Taylor (1995), important to take into account. To make an accurate calculation of an idiom's frequency, however, is rather difficult. One aspect causing this difficulty is the phenomenon's complex nature. Some of the challenges encountered in finding idioms' frequencies were the syntactical and semantic variations, the possibility for modification and the possibility for different pronouns. For instance, in the idiom *talk of the devil* the verb phrase (VP), *talk*, could be replace by *speak* without changing the

expression's figurative meaning (*Collins Cobuild, 1995*). A second example is the idiom *give somebody a hand* where the first noun phrase (NP), *somebody*, could be removed without changing the expression. It is also possible to change the structure of the expression without changing the idiomatic meaning, by moving the NP to the end of the expression as a prepositional phrase (PP and get the phrase *give a hand to somebody*. In cases where the NP *somebody* is represented (e.g. *give somebody a hand*) the frequency varies according to the pronoun selected for the specific context, e.g. *me, him, her, them, us, or someone*. Nunberg, Sag and Wasow's (1994) arguments for compositionality point to a third example. By inserting the adjective *full* to the idiomatic phrase *take advantage of*, parts of the expression has be modified. In addition, the different options for the verb's tense make it difficult to give an exact number of frequency, e.g. *took, taken, have taken, being taken*. A second aspect causing difficulties is that the measurement of frequency of an English idiom in English could be different from the frequency the expression would have in the English input in which a Norwegian would be exposed of. Even though an exact calculation of familiarity was out of reach, an attempt to include high-familiarity idioms according to the language experience hypothesis was made.

Last, teaching is, as idioms, complex and multifaceted in which pedagogical activity and learning outcome has no automaticity guaranteed. The 30 some students expected to be found in a Norwegian classroom can differ in language backgrounds, learning styles and strategies and level of motivation. In addition, there are factors concerning the social dynamics of the group and the social life of the individuals in this group that can affect a student's learning process. For the teacher to get all the students' attention, provide comprehensible input for each of the students and provided tasks that engages all them according to their personal learning style is quite a challenge. Due to the range of factors affecting the students' learning outcome, simply applying Krashen's comprehensive input hypothesis (1981) or Vygotsky's theory about the zone of proximal development (1978) does not automatically provide a learning outcome for thirty students. Successfully applying the comprehensive input hypothesis or the theory about the zone of proximal development does not guarantee it either as the students might have a bad day.

Despite of these possible limitations, the repeated and carefully planned instruction and practice of the eight sessions given to the experiment group was assumed to provide sufficient input to manipulate the actual environment in which the casual relationship was to be tested. Other weaknesses of the study detected in the process will be included in the discussion of the results.

4. Results

The data was analyzed in SPSS using IBM SPSS Statistics 21. To compare the two groups a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) and a Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were applied, and to explore relationships among variables correlation techniques were applied. The two groups performed as expected and according to the main hypotheses about idiom comprehension. The results of the proficiency tests, however, are inconclusive. The results of the grammar and vocabulary tests will be presented, but not emphasized. The reason for presenting these are, according to recommendations given by The British Association for Applied Linguistics (1994), to avoid misrepresentation of the study conducted, and hence, sustain research ethical principles. The descriptive statistics, the inferential analysis of the eight tests and the background information questionnaire will be presented in the following.

4.1 The Proficiency Tests

Each participant earned a separate raw score for the number of correct responses on the vocabulary and grammar tests. The repeated measurement analysis was applied to the tests to calculate the difference before and after instruction, in order to see whether instruction on idioms could boost the proficiency as well as the comprehension of idioms.

Table 3. Mean score and standard deviation on the grammar and vocabulary tests

| Group | N | Before | Mean | Std. dev | After | Mean | Std. Dev |
|----------------|----|------------|----------|----------|------------|----------|----------|
| Instruction | 22 | Vocabulary | 11743.21 | 3440.45 | Vocabulary | 14768.66 | 4027.93 |
| No instruction | 24 | | 11602.00 | 4302.00 | | 16553.27 | 5964.48 |
| Instruction | 22 | Grammar | 42.27 | 5.025 | Grammar | 43.36 | 3.079 |
| No instruction | 24 | | 44.92 | 2.518 | | 42.38 | 7.131 |

Note: Instruction = the group which received instruction on idioms, No instruction = the group which did not receive instruction. Vocabulary = amount of words estimated to be known by the participant, Grammar = number of correct answers.

As illustrated in Table 3, the descriptive statistics show that the experiment group achieved the highest score on the vocabulary test before any input were given, while the control group achieved the highest score on the grammar test. After the experiment group had received instruction on idioms they achieved higher scores on both the vocabulary test and the grammar test compared to the results before instruction. The control group also performed better in the testing of their vocabulary the second time. The score of the grammar test, however, is lower than the result of the first grammar test. Despite the experiment group's improved results on the vocabulary test, the results compared to the control group show that the latter improved their vocabulary more than the former. The results of the second grammar test show that the control group's score has not improved.

4.1.1 The Vocabulary Tests

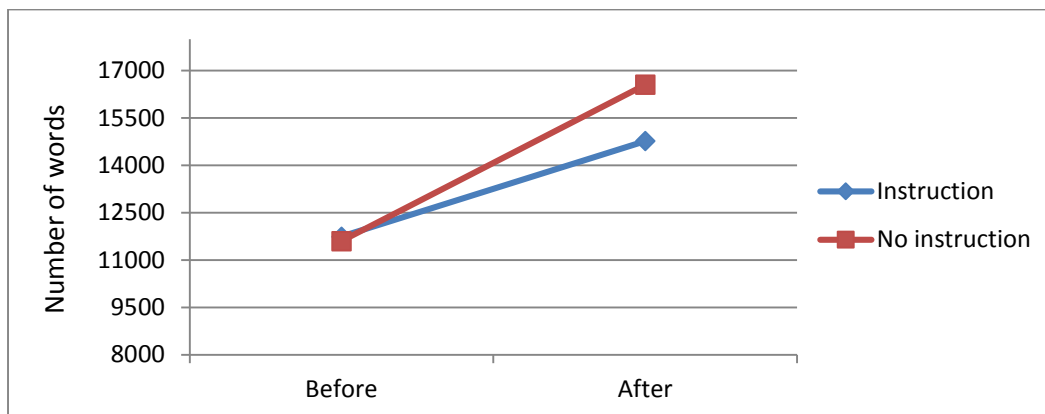
Before Instruction

As presented in Table 3, the average results of the vocabulary test of the two groups before any instruction had been given are quite similar, with the average score of the experiment group being 11 743.21 estimated words known and the score of the control group being 11 602.00 estimated words known. The experiment group has a range of 13 982 words, where the lowest amount of words estimated to be known to the participant is 6053 and the highest amount of words is 20 035. The range of the control group was 16 003 words, where the lowest amount of words estimated to be known to the participant were 4070 and the highest amount of words were 20 073.

After Instruction

On the vocabulary test completed after the experiment group had received instruction, both groups had a wide range from the lowest score to the highest score. The result of the participant with the lowest estimation of words known in the experiment group was 6023.5 while the highest score was 25 804.5 giving a range of 19 781 words known. In the control group the participants' results had a range of 24 276, with the lowest score being estimated to 4032.5 words know and the highest score being 28 308.5 words. The average score of the experiment group was 14 768.66 in comparison to the control group's 16 653.27.

Figure 1. Results of the Vocabulary Tests before and after Instruction



As illustrated in Figure 1, the results from the vocabulary tests before and after instruction show that both groups improved and increased their vocabulary size. Inferential statistical tests provide predictive power to the descriptive statistic (Levon, 2010). Comparing the performance of the experiment group and the control group with an alpha .05 yield no statistical significant difference for the groups' results on the vocabulary tests ($F(1, 44) = 0.606, p = .440$).

4.1.2 The Grammar Tests

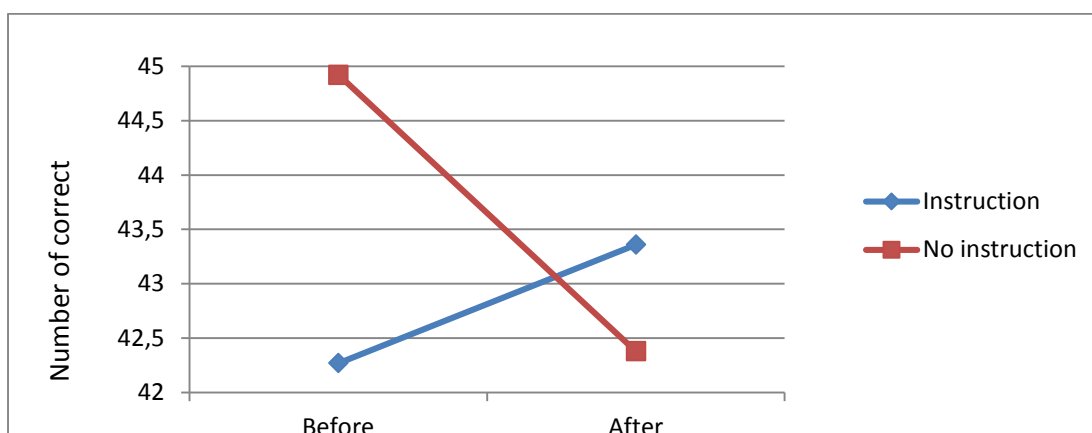
Before Instruction

As illustrated in Table 3, the average score for the experiment group before instruction was 42.27, where the lowest score ranged from 29 correct responses to the highest score of 49 correct responses, producing a standard deviation of 5.03. The dispersion of the control group's results was smaller to that of the experiment group where the standard deviation was only 2.52, with the lowest and highest score of correct responses ranging from 38 to 49. The mean score of the control group was 44.92, with an average of nearly 3 more correct answers per participant than of the experiment group.

After Instruction

On the second grammar test the experiment group had improved their average score by 1.5%, with the new average score being 43.36, and the dispersion of the results had lessened to a range of 13 instead of 20, measuring a standard deviation of 3.08. The highest score achieved was still 49, while the lowest score this time was 36 correct responses. The result of the control group, on the other hand, shows a negative development with a significantly wider range than that of the first test. The average score was 42.38. The participant with the lowest score achieved 27 correct responses, a drop of 11 points from the last test, while the highest score was 48 correct responses. Compared to the distribution of the first grammar test where the dispersion was 2.52 the standard deviation increased to 7.13 on the second grammar test.

Figure 2. Results of the Grammar Tests before and after Instruction



Note: Possible number of correct responses is 50.

Inferential statistics show that the results of the two groups on the grammar tests are not significant ($F(1, 44) = 0.523, p = .473$). According to Levene's test, the first grammar test shows a non-homogenic variance ($p = .029$). This means that sample variances of the participants of the grammar test are unlikely to have occurred on random sampling. The second grammar test has a

P-value which is within the value of homogenic variance ($p = .063$). The malfunctioned results made it impossible to obtain data after instruction.

4.2 Idiom Comprehension Questionnaires

To analyze the idiom comprehension tasks MANOVA with Bonferroni corrections was applied as it compares groups when there is more than one dependent variable. In addition, the analysis shows “whether the mean differences between the groups on the combination of dependent variables are likely to have occurred by chance” (Pallant, 2010, p. 283). In testing the effect of instruction, there were four dependent variables; the two pre-tests measuring the participants’ results of the idiom identification and definition tasks and the two post-tests measuring the same categories as the pre-tests. The independent variable was the group. The advantage of including all the tests in one, instead of doing a series of separate t-tests, is the decreased risk of a Type 1 error (Pallant, 2010).

Table 4. Mean Score and Standard Deviation on the Idiom Comprehension Tasks

| Group | N | Before | Mean | % | Std. dev | After | Mean | % | Std. dev |
|----------------|----|----------------|-------|-------|----------|----------------|-------|-------|----------|
| Instruction | 22 | Identification | 5.727 | 40.91 | 3.088 | Identification | 8.932 | 63.80 | 3.783 |
| No instruction | 24 | | 5.500 | 39.29 | 3.064 | | 5.625 | 40.18 | 4.025 |
| Instruction | 22 | Definition | 44.59 | 74.32 | 6.595 | Definition | 15.86 | 79.30 | 2.508 |
| No instruction | 24 | | 46.00 | 76.67 | 5.477 | | 13.48 | 67.40 | 2.393 |

Note: Instruction = the group which received instruction on idioms, No instruction = the group which did not receive instruction. Identification = number of idioms identified in a text by the participant, Definition = number of correct answers. The participants were given two different tasks before and after instruction. The raw scores in the table are therefore not compatible. For comparison of the results, the groups’ percentages of correct answers are provided. The value of the results of the identification task after is doubled when calculating correct answers into percentages. $100/14 \cdot \text{mean score}$ was the formula used to calculate the percentage for both identification tasks before and after instruction. The value of the results of the definition task after is tripled when calculating correct answers into percentage. $100/60 \cdot (\text{mean score} \cdot 3)$ was the formula used to calculate the percentage for the definition task after instruction. Calculating the percentage of the definition task before instruction, the value of the mean score is not increased ($100/60 \cdot \text{mean score}$).

As presented by the descriptive statistics in Table 4, the two groups have a similar starting point on the two different tasks before instruction was given to the experiment group. According to the mean score of the identification task, the experiment group performed slightly better than then the control group whereas the results on the definition task before are reversed. On the definition task, the control group preformed slightly better than the experiment group. According to the results of the tasks after instruction, the experiment group achieved higher scores and outperformed the control group on both the definition task and the identification task. In the following, the results and analyses of the two tests will be presented in detail separately. The analyses which show that there is a significant difference between the groups will be presented before how they differ is described.

4.2.1 The Identification Tasks

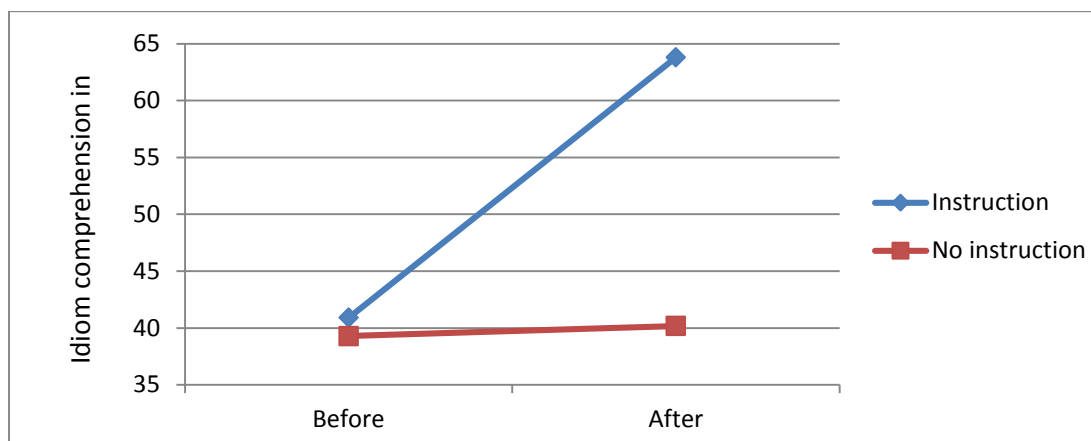
The descriptive statistics and the mean scores show the similar starting point of the two groups before instruction and the different outcome of the task after instruction. The analysis of variance between the two groups show weather the scores and the different outcome of the two groups are significant or not.

Table 5. Identification task - Analysis of Variance between Groups before and after Instruction

| Dependent Variable | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | P |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|-------|------|
| Identification before | .593 | 1 | .593 | .063 | .804 |
| Identification after | 125.515 | 1 | 125.515 | 8.203 | .006 |

As presented in Table 5, the difference between the two groups before instruction was slight and close to non-existent ($p = .804$). After the instruction was given to the experiment group, there is a clear difference between the two groups ($p = .006$). The analysis of the identification tasks provides evidence supporting the predictions made, in which the instruction group was expected to be better at identifying idiomatic expressions.

Figure 3. Results of the Identification Tasks before and after Instruction



As Figure 3 illustrates, the results of the first identification task show the similar starting point of the experiment group and the control group before instruction. The results of the second identification task given after the experiment group had received instruction, however, show a great difference between the two groups. The experiment group has in terms of identifying idiomatic expressions improved considerably compared to the slight improvement of the control group. This indicates a confirmation of hypothesis 1, “if made aware of the lexical phenomenon of idioms through systematic instruction and practice, such expressions will become easier to recognize”.

Before Instruction

In the first text given to the participants, where the task was to underline what they believed to be fixed expressions in English, there were 14 target expressions. The results of the two groups are close to identical. Both groups had a range of 10 correct responses, with the lowest score existing being 0 and the highest being 10 and a standard deviation of 3.09 and 3.06. According to the mean scores illustrated in table 2, the experiment group performed slightly better with the result 5.73 compared to the score 5.50 of the control group.

After Instruction

For the second text the task and instruction were the same as the first, however the text was somewhat longer and contained 28 target expressions. The participant in the experiment group with the lowest score managed to identify 3 expressions, while the participant with the highest score identified 15.5 expressions. As presented in table 2, the average score of the group was 8.93. As the experiment group, the result of the control group also has a wide range from the lowest to the highest score. The participant with the lowest score has not identified any expressions, while 13.5 expressions have been identified by the participant with the highest score. The average score of the control group was 5.63. The dispersion of the two groups was similar with a standard deviation of 3.78 for the experiment group and 4.03 for the control group.

The analysis of the identification tasks provides evidence supporting the predictions made in which the instruction group was expected to be better at identifying idiomatic expressions. The requirement to yield statistical significant differences set to an alpha level .05 was achieved. The instruction has had a significant effect on the participants' achievement for the identification task ($F(1, 44) = 8.203, p = .006$). There was only improvement for the instruction group.

Linear Regression Analysis Identification Task

The statistics presented above show that there is a clear difference between the two groups, with regards to their ability to identify idiomatic expressions, after the instruction in idioms. To analyze the relationship between the dependent variable, and the independent variables a linear regression analysis was performed. The main goal of the regression has been to prove that the instruction in idioms has had an effect on the students' ability to identify idiomatic expressions in English. The advantage of a linear regression is that it allows me to control for the effects of other variables, so as to make sure that there are no spurious effects.

The linear regression for the identification test after instruction is presented in Table 7 (Appendix 13). The dependent variable is the score on the identification task after instruction in

idioms. The first dependent variable which is included in the model is instruction in idioms. The instruction variable is significant, and has a strong coefficient. It is clear that before controlling for other factors, the instruction has had a strong and significant effect on the ability of the students to identify idioms. To test for spurious effects, the variables for vocabulary and grammar skills before the instruction, English proficiency and daily exposure to English language were added in the analysis. The groups of variables were added stepwise. After adding the different groups of variables to the model, it is clear that the instruction is the only variable that has a significant effect. After controlling for the effects of the other groups of variables, the effects of the instruction in idioms are still significant and strong.

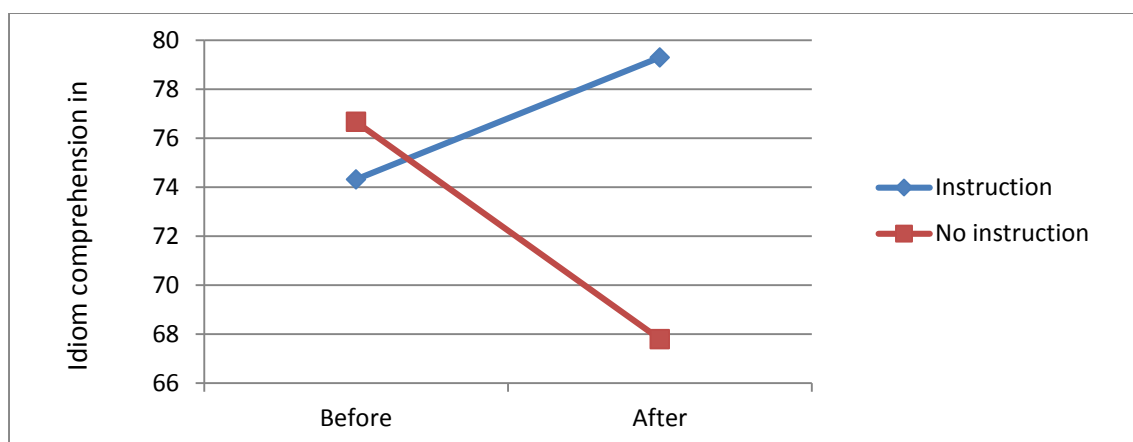
4.2.2 The Definition Tasks

Tabel 6. Definition task - Analysis of Variance Between Groups before and after Instruction

| Dependent Variable | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | P |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|-------|------|
| Definition before | 22.791 | 1 | 22.791 | .625 | .433 |
| Definition after | 24.666 | 1 | 24.666 | 3.863 | .056 |

As presented in Table 6, there was no significant difference between the two groups before instruction ($p = .433$). After the instruction was given to the experiment group, there is an apparent difference between the two groups ($p = .056$). The analysis of the definition tasks provides evidence supporting Hypothesis 2 which predicts that systematic instruction and practice will advance the participants' comprehension of idioms.

Figure 4. Results of the Definition Tasks before and after Instruction



As Figure 3 illustrates, the results of the first definition task show a similar starting point of the experiment group and the control group before instruction. The results of the second definition task given after the experiment group had received instruction, however, show a great difference

between the two groups. The experiment group has improved whereas the control group has not. This indicates that hypothesis 1, “if made aware of the lexical phenomenon of idioms through systematic instruction and practice, such expressions will become easier to recognize”, is correct.

Before Instruction

In the first definition task the participants were given 60 idiomatic expressions in a multiple choice format where they were to choose the correct definition out of four alternatives. The average score of the experiment group was 44.59 correct responses with a range from 31 to 53, and a standard deviation of 6.60. The control group performed slightly better with an average score of 46.00 correct responses. The participant with the lowest score chose the correct definition of 35 idioms, while the participant with the highest score chose the correct definition of 54 expressions. The standard deviation of the control group was 5.48.

After Instruction

For the second definition task given, where the experiment group had received eight sessions of instruction on the topic, the participants were asked to define 20 of idiomatic expressions from the previous definition task. None of the 20 had been taught during the instruction period. The experiment group achieved an average score of 15.86 correct responses, ranging from the lowest score of correct responses being 9.50 to the highest score being 19.00 and a standard deviation of 2.50. The control group which in the first definition task performed better than the experiment group, had a lower score in the second comparing the two groups. The average score of the control group was 13.48 correct responses, with the lowest score being 9.00 and the highest score achieved being 17.00. Similar to the standard deviation of the experiment group the dispersion of the control group was 2.40.

The requirement to yield statistical significant differences was set to an alpha level .05. The performance of the experiment group and the control group in comparison cannot therefore be said to have a significant effect. However, the results show a clear positive tendency of the instruction for experiment group with the *p- value* at .056.

Linear Regression Analysis Definition Task after Instruction

The main goal of the linear regression analysis of the definition task has been to prove that the instruction in idioms has had an effect on the students' comprehension of expressions' idiomatic meaning. The linear regression for the definition test after instruction is presented in Table 8 (Appendix 13). The dependent variable is the score on the definition test after instruction in idioms. The first dependent variable which is included in the model is instruction in idioms. The

instruction variable is significant, and has a strong coefficient. It is clear that before controlling for other factors, the instruction has had a strong and significant effect on the ability of the students to produce the definition of idioms.

To test for spurious effects, the variables for vocabulary and grammar skills before the instruction, English proficiency and daily exposure to English language were added stepwise to the analysis. As shown in Table 8, the variable for grammar skills before is significant and has a small, but positive, coefficient. The variable for vocabulary skills is almost significant, but the range of the variable is so large that the effects aren't properly shown in the coefficient. If it were significant I would have taken steps to show the effect of an enhanced vocabulary. The most interesting results after adding vocabulary and grammar to the model, is that the instruction variable is still significant and that the coefficient is just as strong as before. After adding the variables for English proficiency and exposure to English language it is clear that none of them have significant effects on the ability of students to define idioms, the effect of instruction is still strong and significant.

The tests do not provide any measurement that shows to what extent the experiment group has improved. However, it was not expected to either due to the complexity of idioms. Yet, it is evident that the participants in the group which received instruction has improved when compared to the control group. This indicates that systematic instruction and practice do have an effect on the student's comprehension of idioms in English.

5. Discussion

The main hypothesis of this study postulate that Norwegian students' comprehension of idioms would improve as a result of systematic teaching and practice on the topic over a certain time span. Based on this, two predictions were made. First, it was predicted that the experiment group would recognize a higher number of idiomatic expressions on the second identification task compared to the first, and that the group would outperform the control group. Second, it was predicted that the experiment group would show more progress on the second definition task than the first compared to the control group. A third prediction was that the experimental group would not only advance in the knowledge of idioms in response to the instruction, but that their overall proficiency in English would be affect as well. The main hypothesis and predictions are confirmed, whereas analyses of the proficiency tests seem to be inconclusive based on the questionable results on the second grammar test and vocabulary test. In the following, the results of the proficiency tests and the third hypothesis will be discussed briefly, before the results of the main hypotheses of the study will be discussed in relation to the theoretical framework.

5.1 The Proficiency Tests

The purpose of the proficiency tests was dual. First, to establish a baseline, verifying the two groups of participants' similar starting point. Second, to test the hypothesis in which the experimental group was predicted to advance their overall proficiency in English as well as their idiom comprehension. The results of the pre-tests did provide a baseline so that between groups comparisons could be made. However, the results from the two proficiency tests before and after instruction, did not confirm the prediction that the proficiency level of the instruction group would be influenced by the systematic input and practice of idioms. To use the results of the proficiency tests to show whether instruction on idioms could have an effect on the participants' proficiency in English, however, had to be dismissed. The reason for this was the inconclusive results of the tests. As a researcher I have failed to manipulate the variable in such a way that, as noted by Rasinger (2009), explicit proof can be found in order to support or reject the hypothesis.

The boost expected to occur in the experimental group's vocabulary as an effect of instruction in idioms according to the third hypothesis, does not have explicit proof as the descriptive statistics show that both groups has increased their vocabulary size. The control group achieved a higher score than the experimental group on the second test. To conclude that the improved result of the experiment group was due to their advanced knowledge of idioms is not possible. However, there is no explicit proof to reject and falsify the hypothesis either. Based on the results of the

vocabulary tests, the reliability of the test is to be questioned in terms of its capability to restrict the scope for variety in the answers (Harmer, 2007). The wide gap between the results of the first test and second test show that calculating the average score of two tests was not as sufficient as an estimate of words known to the participants as needed. Depending on the level of difficulty of the ten words given in one test, the participant could be fortunate and receive two sets of words with the potential to achieve a high score both times, or less fortunate and get two sets of words with no potential of achieving a high score. In addition, a participant commented that even though she got a word correct the total estimation of words known dropped. According to the pre-test, the results of the two groups give consistent results in which ground for comparison is gained (Harmer, 2007). However, the huge discrepancies between the results of participants' first and second tests of the control group especially, indicates otherwise. Nine of the control group's 24 participants received scores with a progress indicating that they have improved their lexicon with 5500- 17 000 words. In the experiment group only four participants improved with more than 5500 words, however, in this group within a range of 6000- 9000 words. Possible explanations for this could be the test's inability to restrict the scope for variety in the responses, the participant may have chosen the wrong level, or the participant may have cheated by making use of copy-paste and an online dictionary. All in all, these discrepancies show that the test used does not meet the requirements needed for this study to provide any evidence in order to support or reject the hypothesis put forward.

The descriptive statistics of the grammar test once again show a result in which the experimental group has improved their score of the second test. However, the results do not provide any evidence to support or reject hypothesis 3 for two reasons. One of the reasons for the malfunctioned result is what appears to be a decline in competence. According to the output from explore and the boxplot of the grammar tests, only one participant's result was on the extreme and marked with an asterisk in the pre-grammar test. In the post-test, three participant's results are marked with an asterisk. These participants belong to the control group and they all received the same score on the pre-grammar test. The median of the group was 45, and they all got 45 correct responses. The participants' results on the post-test, however, had dropped to 21, 26 and 27 correct responses. The explanation to the drastic drop of these participant's results is not certain. One possible explanation for the skewed distribution could be technological problems, as at least one of the participants had to do the test a second time because of problems with the Internet connection. A second possibility is that the participant did not wish to complete the test the second time. The negatively skewed distribution of the grammar test could have been corrected by calculating the results in such a way that would produce a more correct image, but it

was not due to limited time and competence in SPSS. The second reason was the non-homogenic variance revealed in Levene's test.

5.2 Idiom Comprehension Questionnaires

The initial test of the participants' idiom comprehension in general shows that both groups are able to identify some idiomatic expressions in English discourse and to largely select the correct figurative meaning when asked to define idioms. The mean score of the definition task before instruction in percentage for the two groups were 74.32 and 76.67. The results provide evidence that the Norwegian students do comprehend idiomatic expressions in English. To what extent, however, is difficult to say due to the complexity of idioms and lack of similar research conducted for comparison. In reference to Leverato and Cacciari (2002), Nippold (2006) and Vulchanova, Vulchanov and Stankova (2011), the results show that the participants have a metalinguistic awareness and an ability to infer from context, as this is vital for the comprehension of figurative language. Nevertheless, the standard deviation of both groups shows that there is a wide range between the lowest and highest score, emphasizing the need of metalinguistic input and the important role the Norwegian school has to provide this input to its students as previously pointed out in studies by Aukrust (2004). The high scores of the definition task, which shows that both groups has a good understanding of figurative language, is not exactly reflected in the low results of the first identification task. Well aware that the two tasks are different entities, it could still be suggested, in lines with Ellis (2002), to support that the knowledge of which lexical items that belongs in the expressions is a demanding task because of the high number of idioms and their various patterns. If that is the case, formal instruction could provide explicit knowledge on the concept of idioms in order to better equip the students with the ability to identify such expressions in the English language. In the following, the initial comprehension test of the two groups which serve as a baseline to the results of the second idiom comprehension test will show that instruction had a positive learning outcome on the student's comprehension of idioms in their L2.

5. 2. 1 The identification task

The results from the comprehension questionnaire indicate that systematic instruction and practice do have an effect on second language learners' idiom comprehension. The results of the identification task show that systematic instruction has a significant effect ($p = .006$), comparing the results of the experiment group and the control group before and after instruction. The descriptive statistics show that average score of the experimental group increased from 40.91% correct responses to 63.80% correct responses, whereas the control group stayed at the same

level, with scores of correct responses slightly increasing from 39.29% to 40.18%. This provides evidence supporting hypothesis 1, which predicted that with systematic instruction it becomes easier to recognize new idiomatic expressions. The effect of the instruction is in line with the argument made by Gass and Selinker (2001) in which salience occur by focusing a learner's attention on a particular language feature, and that this feature systematically brought to the learner's attention provides input which is more likely to become what Corder (1967) describes as intake. In combination with frequency and salience, the establishment of expectancy noted by Schmidt (1990) could be suggested to have had an effect on the experimental group's achievement. It seems plausible that the likelihood of identifying fixed expressions in discourse should be higher if you know what to look for, and in that sense easier. The effect of instruction is also shown in both the regression analysis and the descriptive statistics of the initial proficiency tests. The descriptive statistics of the initial grammar test underlines the effect of instruction since the participants of the experiment group had a lower score than the control group to start with. In terms of the initial vocabulary test, the two groups' score were similar. Based on the grammar and vocabulary tests, the level of proficiency can therefore not be said to have influenced the groups' performance which as a consequence emphasizes the effect of instruction.

The similar results of the control group on the two identification tasks were as expected. A possible explanation for this could be in relation to the ease of comprehending high-frequently idioms compared to less familiar ones noted by Nippold and Rudzinski (1993). Even though the control group was not given the specific topic of the study or any instruction on idioms, the control group was in the first idiom comprehension test exposed to the specific language form tested in the second identification task. This could be qualified as priming, thought to facilitate the language comprehension and improve the control group's score of the second identification task. However, the score remained at the same level. This could dismiss the facilitation of priming, or the priming all together, or the explanation could be due to the inclusion of novel expressions in the second identification task. In light of the theory, the level of difficulty of the two tasks concerns the difference in comprehension of conventionalized expressions and novel expressions. The text applied for the identification task before instruction consists of highly conventionalized expressions, which indicate a higher frequency of occurrence than in comparison to the second task where the text applied had a mix of conventionalized and novel expressions. In reference to Kempler et al. (1999), novel expressions are less frequent and, hence, more difficult to comprehend.

An error with the second idiom identification task detected after the analysis had been done was the inclusion of the two expressions *take advantage of* and *true colors show* from the lyrics *Honor Thy Father* by Dream Theater in the instruction. The intention of the instruction part was never to teach or prime the participant in order for them to achieve a better score on the second identification test. In terms of the first expression *take advantage of* there is not a big difference between the two groups. Compared to the 13.6% of the experiment group's participants that managed to identify the expression, 8.3% of the control group's participants identified the expression. However, for the second expression 81.8% of the participant in the experiment group identified the expression, compared to 29.1% of the control group's participants. For the first expressions the error does not seem to have had any effect, whereas it seems like it has in terms of the second. If the error had been detected earlier the two expressions could have been removed if an effect of the error was calculated.

5.2.2 The definition task

The results from the definition task also show that systematic instruction and practice has a significant effect, $p = .056$. The descriptive statistics show that average score of the experimental group increased from 74.32% correct responses to 79.30% correct responses, whereas the control group did not improve its score of 76.67% correct responses from the first task. The average score of the task completed after instruction was 67.40% correct responses. Hypothesis 2 was, as a continuation of the consequence of the prediction made in Hypothesis 1, also based on the theory provided by Gass and Selinker (2001) and Corder (1967). The improved ability of the experiment group's participants to recognize idioms suggests that more of the input has become intake due to saliency. As pointed out by Ellis (2002), the recognition of which lexical items that is included in idiomatic expressions is highly demanding. However, with the knowledge of which lexical items that are included in an expression and knowledge of its figurative meaning, comprehension of such expressions is more accessible for the learner. The results, in agreement with Ellis (2002), provide evidence indicating that the ease of recognizing idiomatic expressions, increased intake and practice has further enhanced the comprehension of idioms. Recognition indicates comprehension in the sense that salience increases the frequency of an idiom. The low results of the control groups' participants on the second definition task completed despite their result of the first task were as expected. According to the results presented in Figure 4, the participants of the control group and their comprehension of idioms seem to have diminished. That is not the case however. In reference to Levorato and Cacciari (1992), and as a general rule in language acquisition, a speaker's ability to comprehend precedes the ability to produce.

Hence, the result is not evidence of diminished comprehension, but most likely a reflection of the difference in difficulty in terms of comprehension and production.

As mentioned in the discussion of the results of the identification task, the control group had been exposed to the specific language form tested. Priming could be the case in the second definition test as well. In relation to the this task, the effect of priming could be expected to be stronger since the twenty expressions the participants were asked to define all occurred in the definition task before instruction where the correct definitions were given and the group had an average score of 76.67% correct responses. Compared to the experimental group's score, the control group actually performed slightly better. If an effect of priming was the case, this would go in the control group's favor. However, the average score of the twenty idiomatic expressions selected from the sixty of the first task was not taken into consideration. This could mean that the selected idioms for the second task could be the expressions representing the low score idioms of the control group. The random selection was made to ensure that neither of the groups got an advantage over the other. Nevertheless, the effect of being exposed to expressions cannot be said with certainty to have an influence on the results due to the time span between the two tests.

Considering that the participant had to produce definition of their own in their L2 in the second definition task, their productive skills had the plausible potential of being an obstacle in communication, and hence, not showing their exact comprehension. This again based on the general perception and consensus of researchers in the field of language acquisition, that comprehension proceeds production as noted by Levorato & Cacciari (1992). Since production was not the focus of this study, an alternative could have been to have the participants explain the definition in their L1. However, English was chosen as the responsive language as the tasks and contexts of the expressions were given in English and because their production could show more clearly of how the expressions are comprehended when communicating in a second language. The regression analyses show that having the participants answering in their L2 was not an obstacle as proficiency in English does not remove the effect of the instruction.

For both of the identification and definition tasks, the weighting of the scores can be discussed. Due to the necessity of applying different task in terms of level of difficulty and priming and the comparison before and after, the scoring had to be adjusted. For both tasks, there were alternatives where weighting of the scores was not needed. The second of definition task for instance could have applied the multi choice format as the first task. In this case sixty new expressions would be selected according to the categories and frequencies of the expressions in the first task. This way the weighting of scores for the second definition task could have been

avoided. Yet, to find a compatible set of the sixty idiomatic expressions tested in the first task would be quite time consuming and not to mention a feat due to the multifaceted nature of idioms. To attain two identical, or close to identical, measurements of idioms would require a great extent of research and time. A second alternative would be to adjust the scores with higher or lower numbers. If the weighing of the scores in this study has been rightly adjusted could be debated. However, with guidelines prepared and assistance from two independent scorers, an equal condition for the two groups has been attempted to maintain.

Levorato and Cacciari (1992), note that exposure could have an affect the rate of acquisition of figurative language without significantly affecting the underlying processes. By emphasizing metalinguistic awareness together with exposure, an attempt was made to affect the underlying processes, and not merely the acquisition rate of idioms. The results of the definition task given before instruction showed that the participants of both groups had a good comprehension of idioms. When the expressions were highlighted, the participants of the control group showed that they to a great extent comprehended the idioms' figurative meanings. This, as noted by Nippold and Taylor (1995), indicates the general developed ability of metalinguistic competence expected in older children. In this case, the ability to use the context seems to downplay the role of exposure. However, the definition task given after instruction shows that the participants of the experimental group managed to produce a higher number of definitions and to be more precise. The study shows that instruction has improved the participants of the experimental group's comprehension, and suggests that their underlying processes have been affected in comparison to the control group. Motivation, confidence and an establishment of expectation could together with exposure and metalinguistic awareness rising be factors influencing the performance of the experiment group in this study.

The potential effect of instruction of idioms for other groups can be discussed. As mentioned, the students can differ in language backgrounds, learning styles and strategies and level of motivation. In this study, the participants represent a rather homogeneous group. Instructing a group of students with several cultural backgrounds could require modifications to some of the input. This could be positive since the difference of cultures could underline the need of pragmatics and sociolinguistic competence and generate motivation. Even though Norwegian and English have different cultural motivated idioms, many are similar due to, for instance, a shared culture through a Christian tradition. The teacher could also be an influencing factor. The teacher's interest in idioms and knowledge of second language acquisition could be motivating, or the students could have reacted positively to the revisiting "guest speaker". In classroom

research there are many factors into play. Additionally, the dynamics of these factors can be decisive. This makes it hard to conclude that the result would be the same for a different selection of participants. However, the cause and effect of input and practice in general supports a positive outcome for other groups as well.

5.3 General Discussion

The results of this study indicate that systematic instruction of idioms has a positive effect on Norwegian students' comprehension of such expressions in English. Before the experiment group received the instruction, there were no significant differences between the groups' idiom comprehension level. After the experimental group received the instruction, however, there was a clear difference between the two groups on both tasks. The potential effect of instruction was significant in the identification tasks and close to significant in the definition tasks when comparing the two groups.

In identifying idiomatic expressions, it was predicted that the experimental group would identify a higher number of idiomatic expressions than the control group after instruction. The results show that the experiment group outperformed the control group and showed that the ability of the group's participants to recognize idiomatic expressions had increased. This suggests that the amount of exposure to idiomatic expressions of this group's participants is growing and that more of input concerning this topic is more likely to become intake. The results support Hypothesis 1. If made aware of idioms through systematic instruction and practice, such expressions will become easier to recognize. The effect of instruction is also underlined by the regression analysis and the descriptive statistics of the initial proficiency tests. The two expressions which were mentioned during the instruction part and then later appeared on the test should have been removed. However, the difference between the control group and the experimental group is significant at $p = .006$. The ease of comprehending high-frequent idioms compared to less familiar was challenged in the identification task after instruction. A challenge the experimental group mastered despite the introduction of novel expressions.

The results of the definition tasks show that the participants of the experimental group are able to define a higher number of idioms in comparison to the control group as predicted. However, the effect of instruction is not significant according to the alpha level set at .05. Hypothesis 2 postulated that comprehension would be further enhanced due to the ease of recognizing idioms gained from instruction and practice on the topic. Even though a significant result was not obtained and recognized as evidence to support the hypothesis, the result cannot be used to reject

the hypothesis either as it shows a clear tendency towards the alpha level. Maybe more time would be beneficial for the experimental group in achieving a significant. It would be interesting to test the two groups in a year's time to examine the instruction's effect on the underlying processes. Would the participants of the experimental group still outperform the participants of the control group and indicate a long-term effect of the instruction and practice. Or would the effect of instruction be lost and indicate only a short-term effect. In addition, it would have been fascinating to see to what extent the participants were able to explain the meaning of the expressions they underlined in the identification tasks. Were the participants' recognition simply based on the comprehension of the concept of idioms and the form, or a combination of concept, form, and meaning?

A conclusion to the potential effect of systematic instruction and practice of idioms in English in terms of boosting the participants overall proficiency is not within reach. However, the regression analyses show that the students' proficiency in English does not remove the effect of the instruction.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the potential effect of systematic instruction and practice on the topic idioms would have on Norwegian student's comprehension of such expressions in English. Forty-six Norwegian high school students were divided into two groups. One of the groups received instruction, whereas the other one, serving the function of being the control group, did not. Both groups completed two sets of tests consisting of a grammar test, a vocabulary test, an identification task and a definition task, one before instruction was given to the experimental group and the other after instruction. In comparing the results of the two groups, the potential effect of instruction was examined.

The study shows that instruction and practice enhanced Norwegian students' comprehension of idioms in English. By focusing the learners' attention on this particular language feature, idioms have been proven to become easier to recognize in English discourse. This is evident in the results and comparison of the two groups, where the effect of instruction in the identification task was significant. It was also expected that the experimental group would define a higher number of idioms in comparison to the control group. However, the effect of instruction was only close to significant in the definition task. The ease of recognizing idioms is not evident to further advance comprehension of idioms in English due to an increased amount of input and intake. Even though the participants of the experimental group did not further advance their comprehension significantly in terms of defining the meaning of idiomatic expressions, their comprehension to recognize idioms was enhanced. In total, this supports the participants of the experiment group benefited from the systematic instruction and practice. In order to control other factors that could influence the result of the effect, the groups completed a language background questionnaire which in addition to the proficiency tests were included in linear regression analyses. The proficiency level of the participants was shown not remove the effect of the instruction.

From a teacher's point of view it would be interesting and helpful to have more knowledge about the effect of idiom instruction in the L2 classroom. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training does recognize the importance of sociolinguistic competence in addition to linguistic competence. In June, 2013, the curriculum in English was revised. However, idioms were still not mentioned specifically.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Parental Consent Form

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt

Hei foreldre og foresatte på Vg1 ved videregående skole

Jeg er mastergradstudent ved lektorutdanningen i språk ved NTNU, og er interessert i å studere norske elevers prosessering av setninger på engelsk. Målet er å finne ut hvordan norske elever leser og forstår setninger på sitt andrespråk. For å finne ut av dette ønsker jeg å teste mellom 50 og 60 elever. I den forbindelse vil jeg be om tillatelse til å teste deres barn tre ganger i løpet av våren.

Testene er ikke prøver i skoleforstand, men forskningsmessige tester. Fokuset er altså ikke på om eleven svarer riktig eller galt. Testene vil foregå som samlet klasse i engelsktimene med engelsklæreren til stedet. Testsituasjonen skjer i vante rammer for at ungdommene skal føle seg trygge og på den måten også sikre den forskningsmessige kvaliteten.

Målet er å samle statistisk data, ikke å finne ut hvor flink den enkelte elev er. Testresultatene vil kun håndteres av meg med noe hjelp fra min veileder, professor Mila Vulchanova, og vil bli anonymisert før de brukes i offentligheten. Ved prosjektets slutt i desember 2013 vil dataene anonymiseres fullstendig ved at elevenes navn og alt av personopplysninger slettes. Deltakelse i prosjektet er selvfølgelig frivillig, og hvis dere ikke svarer på denne forespørselen, vil deres barn ikke bli involvert i studien. Hvis dere har spørsmål eller ønsker mer informasjon om prosjektet må dere svært gjerne kontakte meg. Om dere godtar at barnet deres deltar i prosjektet, men skulle ombestemme dere er det fortsatt mulig å reservere seg når som helst. Det er ingen behov for begrunnelse om hvorfor dere ønsker å trekke dere. Skulle dere se at dere ikke ønsker å fylle ut dette skjemaet, kan dere la være å returnere det, og dere vil da regnes som å ha trukket dere fra prosjektet uten at dere trenger å foreta dere noe mer.

Prosjektet er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste (NSD).

Med vennlig hilsen,

Rannveig Aleksandra Singstad

Mastergradsstudent
NTNU, Institutt for moderne fremmedspråk
Tlf.: 988 56 197, e-post: rannves@stud.ntnu.no

-
- Ja, jeg har mottatt skriftlig informasjon og er villig til å la barnet mitt delta i studien
- Nei, jeg ønsker ikke at mitt barn deltar i forskningsprosjektet

Elevenes navn

Sted og dato

Foresattes underskrift

Appendix 2: Idiom Comprehension Questionnaire before Instruction

Students' Sentence Processing in English

Thank you for participating in this survey. The questionnaire has two parts. Both parts are related to how students with English as a second language process sentences in English. The answers you give will be used in a research project and will in consequence be treated confidentially.

Please answer all the questions. If there is a question you are not quite certain about, choose the option you think it could be.

| |
|---------------|
| Deltakerkode: |
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PART A:

Read through the text and underline the string of words you identify as fixed expressions in English

The Eager Beavers and Old Mr. Oldkool

Once upon a time, there was a wonderful class of very hard-working and well-educated boys and girls in an amazing school in a far, far, far away fairytale land. Definitely not couch potatoes, these boys and girls were, in fact, full of beans. Their teacher, Mr. Oldkool, admired them, however, for their hard work and often called them his eager beavers. The eager beavers loved to learn. They spelled, they read and they wrote. They added, they subtracted and they multiplied. When Mr. Oldkool told them about a new and fascinating subject, like the apple snail, they were all ears. When he gave them assignments to do, they took them home eagerly and were as busy as bees. One day, Mr. Oldkool surprised the eager beavers with a math test. It was 10 pages long and had the most difficult questions on it that you could imagine. He handed out the test papers and told the boys and girls to put their thinking caps on. "Break a leg," he said to the students as he walked back to his desk and started working on another lesson plan on the fascinating world of the apple snail. Looking at the math tests, the children's faces, surprisingly, did not look troubled. Remaining cool as a cucumber, they picked up their pencils and went to work. It turned out that all of the eager beavers passed the test and, for some, it was even a piece of cake. To celebrate, the kids got to watch a two-hour movie on the apple snail as an aquarium pet. Who would have thought that their hard work would pay off so well and that apple snails could be as big as 15 cm in diameter? The answer to that question would have to be: Mr. Oldkool.

<http://www.english-idioms.com/articles/files/tag-idiom-exercises-for-kids.html>

Turn page to continue

PART B:

You will be presented with a number of English expressions. Choose one of the four alternatives by circling what you consider to be the correct meaning.

Example: Rob could not deny what he did. He was caught red-handed. What does it mean to be “caught red-handed”?

- a. To leave traces after a crime
- b. To be a murderer
- c. To be seen doing something illegal or private
- d. To turn red when lying

1. They had been planning their wedding for three years but when the day finally came she got cold feet and chose not to show up. What is the meaning of the expression “cold feet”?

- a. That your feet are freezing
- b. To become nervous about doing something
- c. To change your mind completely
- d. To ignore what is going on

2. Hannah had been unhappy in her job for years but the last straw came when they got a new boss who was harassing her. What is the meaning of the expression “last straw”?

- a. The last in a series of unpleasant events which finally makes you feel that you cannot continue to accept a bad situation
- b. The last word said by someone who is harassing you verbally
- c. Emotional breakdown
- d. When you have to drink your Coke without a straw because of the new boss

3. The question of assisted death is a slippery slope in terms of moral and legal considerations. What is the meaning of the expression “slippery slope”?

- a. A question that requires a decision
- b. A hill that is icy
- c. A path that is likely to lead to failure or serious trouble
- d. A personal issue

4. After discussing the matter back and forth for one month the parties could finally announce that they see eye to eye and that they had found a solution. What does it mean to “see eye to eye”?

- a. To find a compromise
- b. To be an eyewitness
- c. To agree about something with someone else
- d. To be able to look at each other, even if you do not agree with that person or persons

5. He was quite certain that he would not be in trouble when the police came. He had done everything by the book. What is the meaning of the expression “by the book”?

- a. To do all your work by the book shelf
- b. To follow the rules exactly
- c. To do exactly what your employer has told you to do
- d. When a movie is based on a book

6. He had been dreading this moment for a long time but it was time to confess his wrongdoings and face the music. What does it mean to “face the music”?

- a. To accept the unpleasant results of one's actions
- b. To take responsibility
- c. To say sorry
- d. To face the orchestra or band during a concert

7. “Why such a long face”? “My grandma died yesterday”. “I’m so sorry for your loss”. What does it mean to have a “long face”?

- a. To look serious
- b. To look tired
- c. To have a swollen face
- d. To look sad

8. I’m afraid my parents will hit the roof when I tell them that I crashed their car. What does it mean to “hit the roof”?

- a. To suddenly become very angry
- b. To become extremely disappointed
- c. To get hurt and sad
- d. To celebrate

9. Mark and Steve were fighting about which blockbuster to bring home and watch: “Skyfall” or “The Dark Knight Rises”? What is the meaning of the expression “blockbuster”?

- a. A new rabbit on the block
- b. Movies that will blow the viewer’s mind
- c. High explosives
- d. Something which sustains widespread popularity and achieves enormous sales

10. A number of shops had to close down after a multinational retail corporation offered to pay a significantly higher price for the lease on the building. I was not surprised. After all, we do live in a world where money talks. What is the meaning of the expression “money talks”?

- a. There is no hope for the average
- b. Money gives one power and influence to get one's own way
- c. Injustice rules
- d. Price is more important than variation

11. In today’s news paper I read an article with the following head line: ”Propane company takes advantage of costumers”. It turned out that I was one of them. I checked the last month’s bill -they had overcharged me too! What does it mean to “take advantage of”?

- a. To exploit
- b. To disrespect
- c. To do what seems best to do for the company
- d. To improve a situation

Turn page to continue

12. I had been working for nine hours but I couldn't stop. I was on a roll. What does it mean to be "on a roll"?

- a. To live up to the expectations in order to stay on the company's payroll
- b. To eat spring rolls while working
- c. To be in the midst of a series of successes
- d. To be a workaholic

13. Yesterday I found six steps for how to stop being a couch potato on Wikihow. The first step was to unplug the television. What does it mean to be a "couch potato"?

- a. A person who is unemployed and has nothing to do
- b. A person who spends much time sitting or lying down, usually watching television
- c. A person who likes to eat his dinner while he or she watches television
- d. A person who has to eat chips while watching television

14. When Bieber tweeted that he would throw in the towel and start doing something else with his life, a whole world protested. What does it mean to "throw in the towel"?

- a. To quit
- b. To dislike your job
- c. To stop throwing sweaty towels to fans
- d. To make a drastic change

15. Susan was reaching for the jar on the top shelf but she was not tall enough. She asked a man passing her in the aisle if he could give her a hand. What does it mean to "give someone a hand"?

- a. To be a gentleman
- b. To be a hand donor
- c. To help someone
- d. To reach for things placed high

16. Lenny asked Mark if he had plans for the night. Mark answered that he didn't have anything special planned. "Then we can hang out tonight," Lenny said. What does it mean to "hang out"?

- a. To exercise by hanging upside down in a tree doing crunches
- b. To spend time aimlessly
- c. To be with your friends outside
- d. To chat with your friends on Google+

17. I woke up this morning to my neighbor singing "My heart will go on" at the top of his lungs. What is the meaning of the expression "at the top of one's lungs"?

- a. To have a wish to annoy someone
- b. To breathe in a controlled matter
- c. As loudly as one's voice will allow
- d. As out of tune as possible

18. You should have seen this guy at the theater yesterday. He totally lost it when someone cut in line and got the last ticket. What does it mean to "lose it"?

- a. To lose track of time
- b. To get angry
- c. To get really disappointed
- d. To lose the thing you want

19. I wouldn't say that you're 100% correct, but you are definitely on the right track. What does it mean to be "on the right track"?

- a. A nice way to say that someone is wrong
- b. To tell someone what they want to hear
- c. That you have finally found the right song on a CD
- d. To follow the right set of assumptions

20. When the owner of the bar found out that a 14- year- old was in his bar he told the kid to beat it. What is the meaning of the expression "beat it"?

- a. To go to bed
- b. To sit down
- c. To go away immediately
- d. To hit the table so that someone would come and serve him

21. It crossed my mind when I read the article about the fireman who rescued five people – my purpose in life is to be a fireman. What is the meaning of the expression to "cross someone's mind"?

- a. To suddenly think of something
- b. To think about something for a short time
- c. To feel like God has marked you and given you a calling
- d. To wish you were brave

22. She was a cold-hearted old lady. At least that was what the neighbor hood kids thought after she killed Joe's cat with a shovel. They had not seen that the cat had been hit by a car. What does it mean to be "cold-hearted"?

- a. To be devoid of feeling
- b. To be mean
- c. To be crazy
- d. To be angry at life

23. "Are you good to go?" Jo asked. Almost, I just have to get my keys! What does it mean to be "good to go"?

- a. Make sure that everything that needs to be remembered is remembered
- b. To be organized
- c. Very skilled at walking
- d. To be ready to go

24. She told her parents that she was pregnant, but she was only pulling their leg. What does it mean to "pull someone's leg"?

- a. To pull somebody by the leg to attract their attention
- b. To trick someone
- c. To lie to someone
- d. To see how far one can go with jokes before it is not acceptable

Turn page to continue

25. They all thought the match would be a piece of cake but they were wrong. The other team was faster. What is the meaning of the expression “piece of cake”?

- a. To be satisfactory
- b. The reward you get for winning
- c. To be easy to do
- d. To think that the victory is won before the match has started

26. I was shocked when I got the news! I felt as fit as a fiddle until the doctor showed me the negative results. What does it mean to be “fit as a fiddle”?

- a. To feel secure
- b. To be strong
- c. To be in very good health
- d. To be positive

27. As Nicole made her way to the stage co-actors and actresses quietly told her to break a leg. What does it mean to “break a leg”?

- a. Good luck
- b. You’ll do great
- c. To give a performance the audience will not forget
- d. To express that you are jealous for not getting the lead role

28. She has the book at her fingertips. If you wonder where to find the information she would be the one to ask. What does it mean to have something “at one’s fingertips”?

- a. To have something in your hand
- b. A few coins that you grab between your fingertips
- c. To have quick access
- d. To be well prepared and in control

29. He is always complaining about the expensive gas in this country, but as drivers, we’re all in the same boat. What does it mean to be “in the same boat”?

- a. To have to pay the same price
- b. To accept having to rely on expensive gas
- c. To agree but not complaining
- d. To be in the same situation as other people

30. It is always good to be a little nervous when driving, because it keeps you at your toes. What does it mean to “keep someone at one’s toes”?

- a. To respect the things that might be dangerous
- b. To stay calm and careful
- c. When a girl stands on her father’s feet while dancing
- d. Readily available

Deltakerkode:

PART B continues:

In this part you will be presented with a number of English expressions. Choose one of the four alternatives by circling what you consider to be the correct meaning.

**31. When her son told her that he was quitting school she told him “over my dead body!”
What is the meaning of the expression “over my dead body”?**

- a. That someone will do everything they can to prevent the plan or action suggested
- b. That it will be painful to see someone waste their talent
- c. That you have to be aware of the sacrifices a decision requires before you make a choice
- d. To follow your heart

**32. Jane was worried that she wouldn't make the transfer at 07.25. However, it turned out not to be a problem. The plane arrived at the airport 7 o'clock on the dot as scheduled.
What is the meaning of “on the dot”?**

- a. To be in the middle of something
- b. At the exact time
- c. At the moment when a problem is solved
- d. To land on the dot on the ground which the pilot navigates his position from the air

33. Elizabeth was admiring the outstanding garden. It was clear that the owner had green fingers. What does it mean to have “green fingers”?

- a. To be lonely and alienated from the rest of the society
- b. To be good at gardening
- c. That one's fingers turn green after touching too many plants
- d. That someone has a lot of time on their hands

34. “It's time to turn the tables”, she whispered. She had planned this for weeks. This time he would be the victim! What does it mean to “turn the tables”?

- a. To change a situation so that someone's position is the opposite of what it was
- b. To plan revenge
- c. To turn all the tables in a friend's house as a joke
- d. To redecorate

35. If you receive an e-mail from your bank asking for your password, a good rule of thumb is simply to delete it. Your bank would not ask for such information. What is the meaning of the expression “rule of thumb”?

- a. A general principle developed by experience
- b. An answer to how to deal with a problem
- c. To act cautiously in order to protect sensitive information and your computer
- d. To measure something using your thumbs as a ruler

36. When Matt’s older brother started school Matt would try to do the same tasks as him. This gave Matt a head-start. What does it mean to “get a head-start”?

- a. To get top grades because you are well prepared
- b. To get the idea that you are better than others
- c. To get an early start on something
- d. To give someone a soft transition from one stage of life to another

37. It was complete chaos after the accident. People were either running around creating more panic or just standing there watching. Luckily, a nurse arrived and took charge. What does it mean to “take charge”?

- a. To make someone pay for something
- b. To reload one’s batteries
- c. To take control over something
- d. To be responsible

38. I have such a sweet tooth! I could not possibly work at a chocolate factory without getting fat. What does it mean to have a “sweet tooth”?

- a. To indicate in a humoristic way that one has a problem with one’s metabolism
- b. To have diabetes
- c. To have a gold tooth
- d. To desire to eat sweet foods

39. Lauren was posting an invite to a Tim Tam slam party on Facebook asking: “who is game?” What does it mean to “be game”?

- a. To be willing to play a game
- b. To be agreeable to participate in something
- c. To be happy
- d. To be excited about an upcoming event

40. “Don’t point the finger at me. I didn’t take your iPhone!” What does it mean to “point the finger at someone”?

- a. To show your middle finger to someone to show your aversion of that person
- b. To blame someone
- c. To yell at someone
- d. To call someone a thief

41. Let’s not beat about the bush – the design was rejected. The employer said it was horrible. We simply have to start all over again. What does it mean to “beat about the bush”?

- a. To give up
- b. To run away into the bush in order to avoid facing the challenges of life
- c. To avoid talking about a difficult subject because you are worried about upsetting the person/s you are talking to
- d. To get angry at oneself when one has done something that does not meet the expectation of others

Turn page to continue

42. She had more or less decided to get a new job. She needed some new challenges. What is the meaning of the expression “more or less”?

- a. To have a dream about bigger things
- b. Slowly but certainly
- c. Wholeheartedly
- d. To some extent

43. Anna and Huey were talking about Bob. They had not seen him for week. All of the sudden he stood in front of them. “Well, talk of the devil! Where have you been?,” Huey asked. What is the meaning of the expression “talk of the devil”?

- a. Something that you say when a person you are talking about arrives unexpectedly
- b. What you say to express frustration and anger
- c. A mild form for swearing
- d. Something you say when someone you don’t want to meet shows up

44. “I’m all ears, waiting to hear your story about your engagement!” What does it mean to be “all ears”?

- a. When hearing is the only sense you have left after a horrible accident
- b. To listen attentively
- c. To be excited
- d. To be interested in only hearing about one topic

45. Sarah found it really hard to choose between the two. She simply couldn’t make up her mind! What does it mean to “make up one’s mind”?

- a. To end a relationship
- b. To choose the direction of a play
- c. To paint one’s face
- d. To come to a decision

46. After receiving the news saying that he didn’t get accepted by the school he wished to go to, it took a couple of weeks before he cheered up. What does it mean to “cheer up”?

- a. To buy new furniture
- b. To become happy
- c. To sing cheerfully
- d. To view something from above

47. After Cory got that new job he has been such a pain in the ass! All of a sudden he acts like he is better than us. What does it mean to be “a pain in the ass”?

- a. To cause trouble
- b. A suppository pill
- c. To have constipation
- d. To be able to sit in a McDonalds chair for more than 40 minutes

48. You should tell them to get off your back and stop pushing you around! If that doesn’t work you have to tell the teacher. What does it mean to “get pushed around”?

- a. To be pushed by people standing in a circle
- b. To be supported by someone
- c. To be bullied
- d. To do something bad

49. On the same day I lost my job, my apartment and my boyfriend. All I have left is a broken heart. What does it mean to “have a broken heart”?

- a. To have a cardiac arrest
- b. To feel a strong pain in the chest
- c. To be broke
- d. To experience great emotional pain

50. When my teacher told me to hold on halfway out of the door after class I was worried. However, he only wanted to give me my scarf which I had left on the desk. What does it mean to “hold on”?

- a. To tell someone to return to where they came from
- b. Something you humorously call a absent-minded person who tend to forget his or her belongings
- c. To wait or stop
- d. Something you say to indicate that someone has lost something that belongs to them

51. She held out a book and her father started to read: “Once upon a time there was a beautiful princess...” What is the meaning of the expression “once upon a time”?

- a. Beyond our concepts of time and the dimensions of this world
- b. Something that happens every hour
- c. On top of a watch
- d. Once in the past

52. Some people love skiing, but it’s not my cup of tea. I prefer swimming. What is the meaning of the phrase “not my cup of tea”?

- a. Something you do not like
- b. Something you enjoy or like
- c. A type of tea you do not like
- d. A borrowed cup used for drinking tea

53. I knew that my parents would come to the graduation ceremony but that my grandparents would was the icing on the cake. What is the meaning of the expression “icing on the cake”?

- a. An extra enhancement
- b. More than is actually necessary
- c. A surprise
- d. An intimidating thought

54. As one person it is hard to think that one can make a difference. However, throughout history there are a number of men and women who have. What does it mean to “make a difference”?

- a. To make a piece of art the world has not seen before
- b. To cause a change in a situation
- c. To create a company
- d. To stop war

55. As a nation, it is time for us to roll up our sleeves and give homeless a home and their dignity back. We simply cannot stand back and passively watch this growing problem any longer. What does it mean to “roll up one’s sleeves”?

- a. To call for the big bucks to roll in
- b. To be cheap
- c. To prepare for hard work
- d. To use less money on ourselves in order to give some more to the less fortunate

56. He said that this time he would make it to the recital in time for sure. But once again he disappointed his daughter and missed her number. What is the meaning of the expression “for sure”?

- a. To promise to be on time
- b. Gladly
- d. Certainly
- c. To be overconfident

57. Even though it is 10 miles to school I still bike. In that way I get from A to B and get my daily exercise. I’m killing two birds with one stone! What does it mean to “kill two birds with one stone”?

- a. To solve two problems at one time with a single action
- b. To save the environment and its resources by using manpower and get a bonus for the effort
- c. To try to kill time and lose weight at the same time
- d. Old-fashioned

58. When she finishes high school she would leave her home town and the bad memories attached to it for good. What is the meaning of the expression “for good”?

- a. Happily
- b. Permanently
- c. To make it better for the people who stays behind
- d. To get a second chance

59. I wish she would stop playing games with me! One day she will be smiling at me, talking and laughing. The next, it is like I do not exist! What does it mean to “play games”?

- a. To make someone feel uncomfortable because of your competitive nature
- b. To hold grudge towards someone
- c. To use clever strategies against someone
- d. To be inconsistent

60. People who paid attention to the effort that went into the economic plan of the Obama Administration would consider it a house of cards.

- a. Something one clearly cannot live with
- b. A plan that will benefit the need of a few individuals rather than the community as a whole
- c. A house bought with credit cards
- d. Something that is poorly thought out and can easily fail

Thank you for your patience and help with my research project!

Appendix 3: Idiom Comprehension Questionnaire after Instruction

Students' Sentence Processing in English

Thank you for participating in this survey. The questionnaire has two parts. Both parts are related to how students with English as a second language process sentences in English. The answers you give will be used in a research project and will in consequence be treated confidentially.

Please answer all the questions. If there is a question you are not quite certain about, take a guess and choose an option you think it could be.

| |
|---------------|
| Deltakerkode: |
|---------------|

PART A:

Read the lyrics and underline the string of words you identify as fixed expressions in English

Someone like you (Adele)

I heard that you're settled down
That you found a girl and you're married now
I heard that your dreams came true
Guess she gave you things I didn't give to you
Old friend, why are you so shy?
Ain't like you to hold back or hide from the light

I hate to turn up out of the blue uninvited but
I couldn't stay away, I couldn't fight it
I had hoped you'd see my face
And that you'd be reminded that for me it isn't over

Never mind I'll find someone like you
I wish nothing but the best for you two
Don't forget me, I beg, I remember you said
Sometimes it lasts in love but sometimes it hurts instead (2x)

You know how the time flies
Only yesterday was the time of our lives.
We were born and raised in a summer haze
Bound by the surprise of our glory days

Nothing compares. no worries or cares
Regrets and mistakes they're memories made
Who would have known how bittersweet this would taste?
(<http://www.metrolyrics.com/someone-like-you-lyrics-adele.html>)

Honor Thy Father (Dream Theater)

We're taught unconditional love
That blood is thicker than water
That a parent's world would revolve
Always around their son or their daughter
You pretended I was your own
And even believed that you loved me
But were always threatened by some
Invisible blood line that only you could see

You took advantage of an outreached hand
And twisted it to meet your every need?
"Gimme time to re-charge my batteries
I'll see her when she's older and
I'll bounce her on my knee"
Well listen to me you ungrateful fool
Here comes a dose of reality
You'll go to your grave a sad and lonely man
The door is now closed on your pathetic little plan

On and on and on and on it goes
It's so easy to run away with nothing in tow

How can you ever sleep a wink at night
Pretending that everything is alright
And have the nerve to blame this mess on me

Never in my life have I seen someone
So ignorant to the damage he has done
You're the rotted root in the family tree

I tried your 4 bill therapy
I tried to make amends
But nothing could lure you out of
Your selfish shell again

Expecting everyone to bow and kiss your feet
Don't you see respect is not a one way street
Blaming everyone for all that you've done wrong
I'll get my peace of mind when you hear this song

On and on and on and on it goes
And with every passing day true colors show
[...]

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGHXy9Fa45k>)

PART B:

You will be presented with a number of English expressions. For each expression give a definition of its meaning in your own words.

Example:

Rob could not deny what he did. He was caught red-handed. What does it mean to be “caught red-handed”?

To be seen doing something illegal or private

1. They had been planning their wedding for three years but when the day finally came she got cold feet and chose not to show up. What does it mean to get “cold feet”?

2. Sarah found it really hard to choose between the two. She simply couldn’t make up her mind! What does it mean to “make up one’s mind”?

3. She was a cold-hearted old lady. At least that was what the neighborhood kids thought after she killed Joe’s cat with a shovel. They had not seen that the cat had been hit by a car. What does it mean to be “cold-hearted”?

4. “Are you good to go?” Jo asked. Almost, I just have to get my keys! What does it mean to be “good to go”?

5. “Why such a long face”? “My grandma died yesterday”. “I’m so sorry for your loss”. What does it mean to have a “long face”?

6. If you receive an e-mail from your bank asking for your password, a good rule of thumb is simply to delete it. Your bank would not ask for such information. What is the meaning of the expression “rule of thumb”?

7. When she finishes high school she would leave her home town and the bad memories attached to it for good. What is the meaning of the expression “for good”?

8. When Matt’s older brother started school Matt would try to do the same tasks as him. This gave Matt a head-start. What does it mean to “get a head-start”?

9. You should have seen this guy at the theater yesterday. He totally lost it when someone cut in line and got the last ticket. What does it mean to “lose it”?

10. I wouldn’t say that you’re 100% correct, but you are definitely on the right track. What does it mean to be “on the right track”?

11. As a nation, it is time for us to roll up our sleeves and give homeless people a home and their dignity back. We simply cannot stand back and passively watch this growing problem any longer. What does it mean to “roll up one’s sleeves”?

12. He was quite certain that he would not be in trouble when the police came. He had done everything by the book. What is the meaning of the expression “by the book”?

13. After discussing the matter back and forth for one month the parties could finally announce that they see eye to eye and that they had found a solution. What does it mean to “see eye to eye”?

14. It was complete chaos after the accident. People were either running around creating more panic or just standing there watching. Luckily, a nurse arrived and took charge. What does it mean to “take charge”?

15. Hannah had been unhappy in her job for years but the last straw was drawn when they got a new boss who was harassing her. What is the meaning of the expression “last straw”?

16. When my teacher told me to hold on as I was halfway out of the door after class I was worried. However, he only wanted to give me my scarf which I had left on the desk. What does it mean to “hold on”?

17. Mark and Steve were fighting about which blockbuster to bring home and watch: “Skyfall” or “The Dark Knight Rises”? What is the meaning of the expression “blockbuster”?

18. A number of shops had to close down after a multinational retail corporation offered to pay a significantly higher price for the lease on the building. I was not surprised. After all, we do live in a world where money talks. What is the meaning of the expression “money talks”?

19. When the owner of the bar found out that a 14- year- old was in his bar he told the kid to beat it. What is the meaning of the expression “beat it”?

20. I had been working for nine hours but I couldn’t stop. I was on a roll. What does it mean to be “on a roll”?

Thank you for your patience and help with my research project!

Appendix 4: The Background Information Questionnaire

Bakgrunnsinformasjon til forskningsprosjekt om andrespråksprosessering

Tusen takk for at du har sagt deg villig til å delta i forskningsprosjektet mitt om norske elevers prosessering av setninger på engelsk. I dette skjemaet ber jeg om informasjon som er nødvendig for at resultatene fra undersøkelsen skal kunne brukes. Opplysningene du gir vil bli behandlet på en konfidensiell måte. Koden du benyttet på testen knytter deg til dine opplysninger gjennom en deltakerliste. Det er kun personell knyttet til prosjektet som har adgang til deltakerlisten og som kan finne tilbake til informasjonen. All informasjon vil bli slettet ved prosjektslutt. Det vil ikke være mulig å identifisere deg i resultatene av studien når disse publiseres.

Legg merke til at skjemaet har 4 sider.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Rannveig Aleksandra Singstad

NTNU – Institutt for moderne fremmedspråk

Del A: Personlig informasjon

Kjønn: Kvinne Mann

Studieretning og trinn: _____

Fødselsår: _____

Bostedskommune: _____

Deltakerkode:

Del B: Språklig bakgrunn

Morsmål

Har du norsk som morsmål?

Ja Nei

Har du andre morsmål i tillegg til norsk?

Ja Nei

Hvis ja, hvilke(t) språk? _____

Hvilke(t) språk bruker dere hjemme? _____

Hvor ofte leser du tekst skrevet på norsk?

Hver dag Flere ganger per uke Et par ganger i uken Av og til Aldri

Hvor ofte skriver du tekst på norsk?

Hver dag Flere ganger per uke Et par ganger i uken Av og til Aldri

Engelsk og andre fremmedspråk

Hvordan vurderer du dine ferdigheter i engelsk på hvert av disse områdene?

| | Grunnleggende | Middels | Avansert | Flytende |
|----------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Lesing | | | | |
| Skriving | | | | |
| Snakke | | | | |
| Lytte | | | | |
| Totalt | | | | |

Har du bodd eller opphold deg i et land hvor engelsk er hovedspråket i mer enn seks måneder?

Ja Nei

Hvis ja, hvor lenge varte oppholdet/oppholdene? _____

Har du vært på kortere reise (under 14 dager) i et land hvor engelsk er hovedspråket?

Ja Nei

Har du bodd eller oppholdt deg i et land hvor et annet språk enn engelsk er hovedspråk i mer enn seks måneder?

Ja Nei

Hvis ja,

- hvor var det _____

- hvor lenge varte oppholdet/oppholdene? _____

Hvor ofte leser du tekster på engelsk?

Hver dag Flere ganger pr uke Et par ganger i uken Av og til Aldri

Hvor ofte skriver du tekster på engelsk?

Hver dag Flere ganger pr uke Et par ganger i uken Av og til Aldri

Hvor ofte lytter du til/hører du engelsk?

Hver dag Flere ganger pr uke Et par ganger i uken Av og til Aldri

Hvor ofte ser du engelskspråklige serier/filmer?

Hver dag Flere ganger pr uke Et par ganger i uken Av og til Aldri

Hvor ofte spiller du engelskspråklige dataspill?

Hver dag Flere ganger pr uke Et par ganger i uken Av og til Aldri

Hvilke språk kan du utover morsmålet ditt og engelsk?

(Hvis du ikke snakker andre språk, gå til *del C*)

| Språk | Nivå | | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------|----------|----------|
| | Grunnleggende | Middels | Avansert | Flytende |
| Tysk | | | | |
| Fransk | | | | |
| Spansk | | | | |
| - angi språk | | | | |
| - angi språk | | | | |
| - angi språk | | | | |

Del C: Andre faktorer i språklæring

Er du venstrehendt?

Ja Nei

Har du, eller har du hatt, problemer med synet utover normal brillebruk?

Ja Nei

Har du, eller har du hatt, problemer med hørselen?

Ja Nei

Har du, eller har du hatt, språkvansker av noe slag (spesifikke språkvansker, lese-/lærevansker eller lignende)?

Ja Nei

Hvis ja, spesifiser: _____

Har du, eller har du hatt, andre diagnoser som kan tenkes å påvirke språklæring (ADHD, autisme eller lignende)?

Ja Nei

Appendix 5: Target Expressions in the Identification Tasks

5.1 Target Expressions in Identification Task before

The Eager Beavers and Mr. Oldkool

Once upon a time¹, there was a wonderful class of very hard-working and well-educated boys and girls in an amazing school in a far, far, far away fairytale land. Definitely not **couch potatoes**², these boys and girls were, in fact, **full of beans**³. Their teacher, Mr. Oldkool, admired them, however, for their hard work and often called them his **eager beavers**⁴. The eager beavers loved to learn. They spelled, they read and they wrote. They added, they subtracted and they multiplied. When Mr. Oldkool told them about a new and fascinating subject, like the apple snail, they were **all ears**⁵. When he gave them assignments to do, they took them home eagerly and were as **busy as bees**⁶. One day, Mr. Oldkool surprised the eager beavers with a math test. It was 10 pages long and had the most difficult questions on it that you could imagine. He handed out the test papers and told the boys and girls to put their **thinking caps on**⁷. “**Break a leg**⁸” he said to the students as he walked back to his desk and started working on another lesson plan on the fascinating world of the apple snail. Looking at the math tests, the children’s faces, surprisingly, did not look troubled. Remaining **cool as a cucumber**⁹, they picked up their pencils and **went to work**¹⁰. It **turned out**¹¹ that all of the eager beavers **passed the test**¹² and, for some, it was even **a piece of cake**¹³. To celebrate, the kids got to watch a two-hour movie on the apple snail as an aquarium pet. Who would have thought that their hard work would **pay off**¹⁴ so well and that apple snails could be as big as 15 cm in diameter? The answer to that question would have to be: Mr. Oldkool.

5.2 Target Expressions in Identification Task after

Someone like you by Adele

I heard, that you're **settled down**¹,
That you, found a girl and your married now.
I heard that your **dreams came true**².
Guess she gave you things, I didn't give to you.
Old friend, why are you so shy?
Ain't like you to **hold back**³ or hide from the light.

I hate to **turn up**⁴ **out of the blue**⁵ uninvited,
But I couldn't stay away, I couldn't fight it.
I'd hoped you'd see my face and that you'd be reminded,
That for me, it isn't over.

Never mind⁶, I'll find someone like you.
I **wish nothing but the best**⁷, for you too.
Don't forget me, I beg, I remember you said,
"Sometimes it lasts in love but sometimes it hurts instead"
Sometimes it lasts in love but sometimes it hurts instead, yeah.

You'd know, how the **time flies**⁸.
Only yesterday, was **the time of our lives**⁹.
We were born and raised in a summer haze,
Bound by the surprise of our **glory days**¹⁰.

Nothing compares, no worries or cares.
Regret's and mistakes they're memories made.
Who would have known how **bittersweet**¹¹ this would taste?

Honor Thy Father by Dream Theater

We're taught unconditional love
That **blood is thicker than water**¹²
That a parent's world would **revolve**
Always around¹³ their son or their daughter
You pretended I was your own
And even believed that you loved me
But were always threatened by some
Invisible blood line that only you could see

You **took advantage of**¹⁴ an outreached hand
And twisted it to **meet your every need**¹⁵?
"Gimme time **to re-charge my batteries**¹⁶,
I'll see her when she's older and I'll bounce her on my knee"

Well listen to me you ungrateful fool
Here comes a dose of reality
You'll go to your grave a sad and lonely man
The door is now closed on your pathetic little plan

On and on and on and on it goes¹⁷

It's so easy to **run away**¹⁸ with nothing in **tow**¹⁹

How can you ever **sleep a wink**²⁰ at night
Pretending that everything is alright
And **have the nerve to**²¹ blame this mess on me
Never in my life have I seen someone
So ignorant to the damage he has done
You're the rotted root in the **family tree**²²

I tried your 4 bill therapy
I tried to **make amends**²³
But nothing could **lure you out of your selfish shell**²⁴ again

Expecting everyone to bow and kiss your feet
Don't you see respect is not a **one way street**²⁵
Blaming everyone for all that you've done wrong
I'll get my **peace of mind**²⁶ when you hear this song

On and on and on and on it goes
And with **every passing day**²⁷ **true colors (show)**²⁸

Appendix 6: Handout Session 1 – An Introduction

1. Idioms – an Introduction

Fireworks by Katy Perry

Do you ever feel like a plastic bag
Drifting through the wind, wanting to start again?
Do you ever feel, feel so paper thin
Like **a house of cards**, one blow from caving in?
Do you ever feel already buried deep?
Six feet under screams, but no one seems to hear a
thing
Do you know that there's still a chance for you
'Cause there's a spark in you?

You just gotta ignite the light and let it shine
Just own the night like the 4th of July

Baby, you're a firework
Come on, let your colors burst 'Cause baby, you're a
firework
Come on, show 'em what you're worth
Make 'em go, oh, oh, oh
As you shoot across the sky

Make 'em go, oh, oh, oh
You're gonna leave 'em falling down
You don't have to feel like **a waste of space**
You're original, cannot be replaced
If you only knew what the future holds
After a hurricane comes a rainbow

<http://www.directlyrics.com/katy-perry-firework-lyrics.html>

What do you think it means...

1. To be like a house of cards -

2. To be six feet under -

3. To be a waste of space -

What is an idiom?

- An expression that means something other than what the words literally suggests

Ex. "It's raining cats and dogs" – to rain heavily

- A kind of metaphor

Why learn idioms?

- Idioms are used in everyday language in every language
- To make a more colorful language
- To save time and explanation
- Idioms make your English sound the more natural and fluent.
- Use of idioms is a trait of being a native speaker
- Idioms hold knowledge of the culture and will hence help you to improve your understanding of the language

Ex. 

Ex. "Look like you gain some weight! Nice!"

Ex. "To put your John Hancock on this form"

Ex. "Det er som å hoppe etter Wirkola"

Guess what it means:

"To give someone the green light"-

- Since we cannot translate idioms literally, or word by word, their figurative meaning has to be remembered.

Turn to next page

5 new idioms and their meaning

Be careful what you wish for

When you wish (or hope) for something, it may not be as good as you think – there may be negative consequences that you hadn't thought of.

Better late than never

It's better to do something late than to not do it.

Better safe than sorry

It's better to be cautious (careful) than to take a risk that you might regret.

Bite your tongue!

Don't say something that might be rude or inappropriate – keep the words in your mouth, and don't let them out!

Break a leg!

This is a (funny) way to say "Good luck" – we usually say it to someone before a performance or contest.

TASK

Using four out of the five idioms, give advice to these people:

Tom: I really want to drive to my girlfriend's house, but there's a typhoon right now and it's quite dangerous outside.

Advice: _____

Julie: My brother is so mean! He just kicked me and threw water in my face! I hope he gets hit by a car!

Advice: _____

Now, look at the advice given, and think of a situation that would cause someone to give that advice:

William: _____

Advice: It's better late than never!

Rita: _____

Advice: Break a leg!

(The task is a modified version of the one found at <http://stickyball.net/idiomatic-idiom-worksheets-from-a-z.html?id=200>).

Appendix 7: Handout Session 2 –Identifying Idioms

2. Identifying Idioms

- Recap

- Literal vs. figurative meaning ⇒the expression means something other than what the words literally suggests
- Since idioms cannot be translated literally, or word by word, their figurative meaning has to be remembered
- The importance of cultural knowledge

Tasks:

1. Try to identify the idiom in each of the sentences below

Ex. She was here at 9 o'clock on the dot

Answer: She was here at 9 o'clock on the dot

Clue: If you find it hard to identify you could try to translate the English sentence into Norwegian word by word. This could give you a clue as idioms can be hard to translate directly and make the translated sentence sound a bit strange.

Ex. Hun var her klokka ni *på en prikk/på prikken?*

On the dot means at exactly the right time så på norsk ville vi kanskje heller sagt presist klokka ni.

- a. I'll be glad to give you a hand with the gardening
- b. She told her parents that she was pregnant, but she was only pulling their leg
- c. He thought the exam would be hard but it turned out to be a piece of cake.
- d. Wendy has been a real pain in the ass since she was voted prom queen. She thinks she's better than the rest of us now.
- e. You should have seen their filing system – I'd call it a complete dog's dinner!
- f. The girl with the red dress really caught my eye
- g. He had an affair and broke his wife's heart
- h. If there was a prize for the best couch potato, my husband would win it. Especially now that Champions League has started.

2. What is the meaning of these idioms?

Try to give an explanation in your own words and then check it with a dictionary

a. To give someone a hand –

b. To pull someone's leg –

c. A piece of cake –

d. A pain in the ass –

e. A dog's dinner –

f. To catch someone's eye –

g. To break someone's heart -

h. A couch potato –

- How to identify idioms in texts?

- Check for words or phrases that cannot be taken literally - you will know you have found an idiom when the actual phrase does not make sense
- Search for phrases that are colorfully describing an object or event. Idioms are commonly used in a descriptive manner
- Learn idioms so that you recognize them when you see/hear them

- “My favorite Idiom in Norwegian”

Step 1: Find your favorite idiom in Norwegian

Step 2: What does your favorite idiom mean?

Step 3: How would you translate that phrase into English?

Appendix 8: Handout Session 3 – Transfer

3. Positive vs. Negative Transfer

Three headlines from three different Norwegian news papers:

1. Dagbladet 5. mars 2013:

Aschehoug trekker tilbake bok og reviderer en annen etter oversettelsesrefs.

«Det topper seg når vi får høre om den gangen da the shit hit the fan: 'Ekskrementene nådde ventilasjonssystemet.'»

According to The Free Dictionary:

- **the shit hits the fan** (*taboo*)

if the shit hits the fan, a person or an organization gets into serious trouble

If Dad finds out how much money you spent, the shit will really hit the fan.

- **the shit hits the fan** (*rude*)

extremely unpleasant things happen and become known

The company's busy season was upon them once more, and the shit was hitting the fan.

2. Aftenposten 20. oktober 2012:

Rekdal: - Ingen grunn til å kaste inn håndkleet

3. Adressa 12. april 2012:

Slå to fluer i en smekk

Med denne automaten betaler du både for parkering og bussbillett.

- What is transfer?

- Task: "My Favorite Idiom in English"

- Write your Norwegian idiom on the whiteboard
- Find 3 idioms which can be directly translated into English
- Find 3 idioms which cannot be directly translated into English

Appendix 9: Handout Session 5- Including Idioms in Our Own Texts

Task: Include each of these idiomatic expressions in a context. You could choose to include them in one story or to make a different context for each expression.

A yes man

Rise and shine

Make or break something/someone

A sheep in wolf's clothing

Show somebody's/someone's true colors

Take a stand

Appendix 10: Handout Session 6 – Illustrating and Guessing Idioms

Definitions and examples are retrieved from thefreedictionary.com.

Student 1: Read the information about your four idioms and use it to act out or draw the expressions to your partner. Your partner’s job is to guess which idioms you are illustrating.

To throw money down the drain/ to pour money down the drain

Meaning: To waste money; to throw money away

Examples:

1. *What a waste! Buying that old car is just pouring money down the drain.*
2. *Don't buy any more of that low-quality merchandise. That's just throwing money down the drain.*

In the same boat

Meaning: In the same situation; having the same problem

Examples:

1. *Tom: I'm broke. Can you lend me twenty dollars? Bill: Sorry. I'm in the same boat.*
2. *Jane and Mary are both in the same boat. They have been called for jury duty.*

Face the music

Meaning: to receive punishment; to accept the unpleasant results of one's actions.

Examples:

1. *Mary broke a dining-room window and had to face the music when her dad got home.*
2. *After failing a math test, Tom had to go home and face the music.*

Hit the roof

Meaning: to suddenly become very angry hit the ceiling

Examples:

1. *I'm afraid he'll hit the roof when he finds out our vacation is canceled.*
2. *Officials hit the roof when a local newspaper published the report.*

Student 2: Read the information about your four idioms and use it to act out or draw the expressions to your partner. Your partner's job is to guess which idioms you are illustrating.

Break someone's heart

Meaning: to cause someone great emotional pain.

Examples:

1. *It just broke my heart when Tom ran away from home.*
2. *Sally broke John's heart when she refused to marry him.*

Turn the tables

Meaning: to cause a reversal in someone's plans; to change a situation so that someone's position is the opposite of what it was.

Examples:

1. *Hendricks turned the tables on the media when he borrowed a camera from a TV crew and started filming.*
2. *Dan was always the one in trouble, but now the tables are turned and he's doing very well*

Over my dead body

Meaning: if you say that something will happen over your dead body, you mean that you will do everything you can to prevent it

Examples:

1. *'Josh says he's going to buy a motorbike.' 'Over my dead body!'*
2. *If they cut down those trees, they'll do it over my dead body.*

Killing two birds with one stone

Meaning: to solve two problems at one time with a single action.

Examples:

1. *John learned the words to his part in the play while peeling potatoes. He was killing two birds with one stone.*
2. *I have to cash a check and make a payment on my bank loan. I'll kill two birds with one stone by doing them both in one trip to the bank.*

Appendix 11: Handout Session 7- Fixed expressions

7. Fixed expressions

Task: What's wrong with these sentences?

Identify the fixed expression and try to explain what is wrong with it. The errors made could be due to lack of words, the choice of word, preposition or tense, or a simple typing mistake.

Example:

He had been dreading this moment for a long time but it was time for him to confess his wrongdoings and face the movie.

Answer:

The fixed expression in this sentence should be **face the music** and not face the movie. The choice of word is incorrect.

1. I like to hang with my friends!
2. Don't point the finger on me! I didn't take the money.
3. You should tell them to get off your back and stop push you around!
4. She gave him a couple of extra things to do just to keep him on he's toes.
5. This time we'll win for sur.

If you have time, give each of the expressions above a definition using your own words.

Appendix 12: Handout Session 8 – The Transparency of Idioms

8. The Transparency of Idioms

What do you think?

Is it possible to find the meaning of an English idiom you have not heard before?

In some cases, arriving at the idiomatic reading from the literal reading is close to impossible.

Example 1: *Fred kicked the bucket* ⇔ kicked the bucket = died

There are very few clues in a phrase such as “kick the bucket” that indicate that the meaning of it should be “to die”.

However, several idioms are transparent. This means that much of their meaning actually does get through if they are taken or translated literally.

Example 2: *She thought it was time to lay her cards on the table and tell him that she had no intention of marrying him.*

To lay one's cards on the table = to reveal a secret, or to reveal previously unknown intentions

Transparency is a matter of degree. Some are not entirely literally interpretable, but only involve a slight metaphorical broadening.

Example 3: *Spill the beans* = to let secret information become known

Example 4: *Leave no stone unturned* = to do everything possible in order to achieve or find something

Turn the page

Task: How would you define these idioms?

In this task you will be presented to some transparent idioms. Explain in your own words the idiomatic meaning of these expressions.

1. *To hold all the aces -*
2. *To stab someone in the back -*
3. *To miss the boat -*
4. *To have one's feet on the ground -*
5. *To turn over a new leaf-*
6. *To be the icing on the cake -*
7. *To go over the line -*
8. *To add fuel to the fire –*

If you finish early you could check your definitions with an online dictionary or your neighbor if s/he is done too.

Appendix 13: Linear Regression Identification and Definition Tasks

Table 7. Linear Regression Identification Task after Instruction

| Model | Variable | B | Std. Dev. | Sig. |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|-----------|------|
| 1 | Constant | 5,625 | ,798 | ,000 |
| | Instruction | 3,307 | 1,155 | ,006 |
| 2 | Constant | -3,579 | 6,340 | ,576 |
| | Instruction | 3,760 | 1,131 | ,002 |
| | Vocabular test before | ,000 | ,000 | ,084 |
| | Grammar test before | ,211 | ,145 | ,153 |
| | Gender | -2,018 | 1,120 | ,079 |
| 3 | Constant | -13,550 | 6,622 | ,048 |
| | Instruction | 4,279 | 1,029 | ,000 |
| | Vocabular test before | ,000 | ,000 | ,222 |
| | Grammar test before | ,264 | ,139 | ,065 |
| | Gender | -,639 | 1,120 | ,572 |
| | English proficiency reading | 1,063 | 1,153 | ,363 |
| | English proficiency writing | -,983 | 1,064 | ,362 |
| | English proficiency talking | 2,495 | 1,061 | ,024 |
| | English proficiency listening | -,400 | 1,107 | ,720 |
| | English proficiency total | -,011 | 2,111 | ,996 |
| 4 | Constant | -6,178 | 8,359 | ,465 |
| | Instruction | 3,571 | 1,073 | ,002 |
| | Vocabular test before | ,000 | ,000 | ,048 |
| | Grammar test before | ,098 | ,157 | ,536 |
| | Gender | 1,160 | 1,480 | ,439 |
| | English proficiency reading | 1,796 | 1,273 | ,168 |
| | English proficiency writing | -1,436 | 1,164 | ,227 |
| | English proficiency talking | 2,279 | 1,125 | ,052 |
| | English proficiency listening | -,073 | 1,138 | ,949 |
| | English proficiency total | -,458 | 2,188 | ,836 |
| | Reads English texts | ,235 | ,771 | ,762 |
| | Writes English texts | -,170 | ,674 | ,802 |
| | Listens to English | -1,936 | ,938 | ,048 |
| | Watches English series or movies | ,683 | ,869 | ,438 |
| Plays computer games in English | ,201 | ,459 | ,664 | |

Note: N= 46

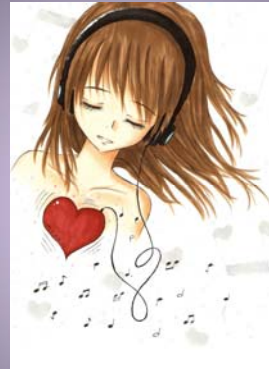
Table 8. Linear Regression Definition Task after Instruction

| Model | Variable | B | Std. Dev. | Sig. |
|--------------|----------------------------------|----------|------------------|-------------|
| 1 | (Constant) | 13,479 | ,500 | ,000 |
| | Instruction | 2,384 | ,723 | ,002 |
| 2 | (Constant) | 2,807 | 3,610 | ,441 |
| | Instruction | 2,937 | ,644 | ,000 |
| | Vocabulary test before | ,000 | ,000 | ,031 |
| | Grammar test before | ,235 | ,083 | ,007 |
| | Gender | -1,256 | ,638 | ,056 |
| 3 | (Constant) | 1,194 | 4,360 | ,786 |
| | Instruction | 2,907 | ,678 | ,000 |
| | Vocabulary test before | ,000 | ,000 | ,063 |
| | Grammar test before | ,212 | ,091 | ,026 |
| | Gender | -,823 | ,738 | ,272 |
| | English proficiency reading | ,968 | ,759 | ,210 |
| | English proficiency writing | -,480 | ,701 | ,498 |
| | English proficiency talking | ,329 | ,699 | ,640 |
| | English proficiency listening | -,159 | ,729 | ,828 |
| | English proficiency total | ,001 | 1,390 | ,999 |
| 4 | (Constant) | -,216 | 5,521 | ,969 |
| | Instruction | 3,297 | ,709 | ,000 |
| | Vocabular test before | ,000 | ,000 | ,275 |
| | Grammar test before | ,298 | ,104 | ,007 |
| | Gender | -1,401 | ,977 | ,162 |
| | English proficiency reading | 1,105 | ,841 | ,198 |
| | English proficiency writing | -,470 | ,769 | ,546 |
| | English proficiency talking | ,645 | ,743 | ,392 |
| | English proficiency listening | -,458 | ,751 | ,547 |
| | English proficiency total | -,068 | 1,445 | ,963 |
| | Reads English texts | -,593 | ,509 | ,253 |
| | Writes English texts | ,134 | ,445 | ,766 |
| | Listens to English | ,950 | ,620 | ,135 |
| | Watches English series or movies | -,852 | ,574 | ,148 |
| | Plays computer games in English | ,102 | ,303 | ,738 |

Note: N= 46

Appendix 14: PowerPoint Session 1 – An Introduction

Idioms – An Introduction



(SodaHead.com, n.d.)



(Farnsworth, n.d.)



(Mishra, 2011)

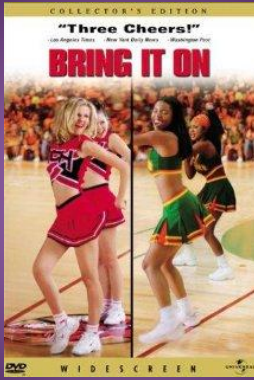


(Joshi, 2009)



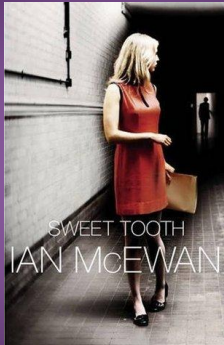
(Wellthelotherstranger.wordpress.com, 2013)

Appendix 15: PowerPoint Session 4 – The Origin of Idioms and Source of Idioms Today



Bring it on

- to begin a fight or competition



Have a sweet tooth

- to desire to eat many sweet foods



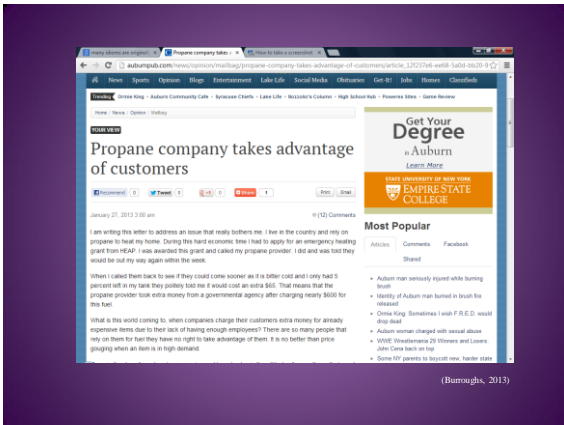
A house of cards

- an organization or a plan that is very weak and can easily be destroyed



Six feet under

- dead and buried



Take advantage of

- 1. To profit selfishly by; exploit:
 - took advantage of the customer.
- 2. To put to good use; avail oneself of:
 - take advantage of all educational opportunities.

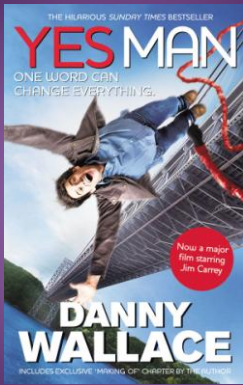
Fireworks by Katy Perry

Do you ever feel like a plastic bag
 Drifting through the wind, wanting to start again?
 Do you ever feel, feel so paper thin
 Like a house of cards, one blow from caving in?
 Do you ever feel already buried deep?
Six feet under screams, but no one seems to hear a thing
 Do you know that there's still a chance for you?
 'Cause there's a spark in you?
 You just gotta ignite the light and let it shine
 Just own the night like the 4th of July
 Baby, you're a firework
 Come on, let your colors burst 'Cause baby, you're a firework
 Come on, show 'em what you're worth
 Make 'em go, oh, oh, oh
 As you shoot across the sky
 Make 'em go, oh, oh, oh
 You're gonna leave 'em falling down
 You don't have to feel like a waste of space
 You're original, cannot be replaced
 If you only knew what the future holds
 After a hurricane comes a rainbow
 ...

A waste of space

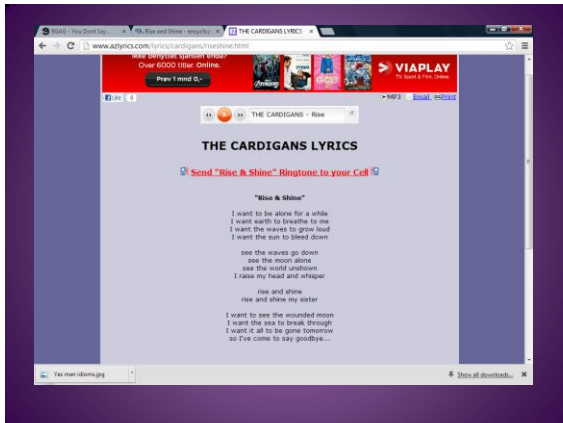
- something that is completely without value.

Example sentence:
 The wrecked furniture in here is just a waste of space.



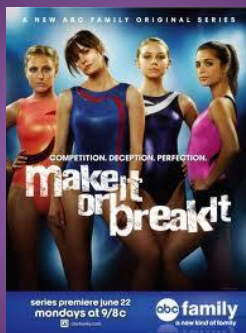
A yes man

- someone who agrees with everything their boss or leader says in order to please them



Rise and shine!

- Get out of bed and be lively and energetic! (Often a command.)



Make or brake something/ someone

- to make something a success or a failure
- to bring success to or improve, or ruin, someone.



(Russel, 2012)

But little does she know
That I'm a wolf in sheep's clothing

A wolf in sheep's clothing

- a dangerous person pretending to be harmless

True Colors by Phil Collins (1998)
But I see your true colors
Shining through
I see your true colors
And that's why I love you
So don't be afraid to let them show
Your true colors
True colors are beautiful,
Like a rainbow

Show somebody's/something's true colors (also reveal)

- let others see what someone or something is really



Take a stand

- to publicly express an opinion about something, especially to say whether you support or are against something

Thefreedictionary.com is the source of this presentation's definitions