

Idiom Understanding and Teaching: Do We Need to Assume a Target Culture?

Salim Bouherar
Middlesex University, London, UK

Abstract—This paper argues that learning idioms can be more effective when assuming first language cultural contexts because easier access to relevant contextual assumptions from first language context reduces processing loads and makes learning easier. This is also consistent with Winkler's (2012) view that learning can have better results when it takes place in an environment that corresponds to learners' needs. This paper reports on results from a pilot study with participants in the UK and Algeria who are teachers and learners of English as a second and foreign language. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with UK and Algerian teachers to know about their current teaching practice. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with learners who worked with some teaching materials. Learners were assigned into two groups, both taught idioms in English by the same teacher for a four-week period. In group 1, participants worked with teaching materials which assumed first language cultural contexts however in group 2 students worked with teaching materials that assumed target cultural context. All students were tested pre- and post the four-week study. The results revealed that students' and teacher's attitudes to the first language culture activities were positive but the language tests did not provide evidence of significant differences between the two groups.

Index Terms—idioms, home culture, target culture, cognitive processing, contextual assumptions

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching language and idioms in particular is not an easy task for teachers in class. Despite the various teaching strategies of idioms which are used, it is sometimes puzzling for teachers to choose what best fit their class because of, maybe, multi-cultural ethnicities they are teaching or some other times the teaching materials used in class.

If we suppose that learners of second language are beginners and from different cultural backgrounds, teaching them a second language could be a challenge. This could be even harder if the teacher does not speak learners' first language. Interaction at that stage could be made on peers' level more than learner-teacher interaction. On the other hand, if teachers speak learners' first language, this might be of a good help to learners. Based on relevance theory's idea of effects and efforts, interference of first language and home culture of learners might help learners to speed the process of learning a second language in general. If teachers could use the first language and also bits of learners' home culture in class, it means that they are providing many cognitive effects to their students and instead learners are also minimizing their cognitive efforts. It is not just about cognitive efforts but also about maximization of relevance. Wilson and Sperber (2012) assert that the human cognition in processing language is always directed toward the maximization of relevance of the speaker. Learners are always waiting to hear something that is relevant to them and save them much cognitive efforts to process. This idea could be also applicable to teaching idioms. Using home culture to teach idioms of second language could be of beneficial effects to learners. Learners do not have to go through imagining themselves in a target culture in which they have never been to but twisting that a bit by editing the cultural context to suit their local or home culture.

II. FIRST LANGUAGE CULTURE AND TEACHING OF IDIOMS

Learners and some teachers in class use first language to explain some parts of second language, but not all teachers allow the use of first language in class. This practice is done in an unsystematic manner. Daily-O'Cain and Liebscher (2009) argue that students in second language class use codeswitching in ways that are not instructed by the teacher. Students may use the cognitive loads they are familiar with to understand language and idioms in particular even if the teacher does not use first language or home culture.

First Language Culture and Effects/Efforts Processing

To explain the effect and effort idea, Sun Song (1998) defines this by stating that the speaker has to think of an utterance that shares many effects and with less processing efforts for the listener to understand. For example, (1) an old man needed to buy coffee but instead of going around and looking for which section it is, he directly asked one of the employees there, '*excuse me, where are you putting coffee?*'

First of all, asking the employee directly means saving time and seeking a shortcut road to get coffee and leave. He communicated something of relevance and waited to receive something of relevance too. This example may not show effects/efforts idea of relevance very clearly but it manifests humans' tendency to go for a low cost of cognitive efforts by providing many effects as possible and getting a low cognitive processing answer. Asking about coffee means that

the person in the shop did not know where it is, it also means that he needed help and maybe he did not want to go and fetch it by himself. All these effects were communicated in one sentence to the store employee to save him time and effort of moving around the store. This is exactly what would happen when first language culture is used to teach idioms to second language learners. Platt and Brook (1994) (as cited in Ife, 2008) argue that learners of second language do have only one mediational tool to help them solving different kinds of problems they are facing in second language which is using L1. Quite far from the second language acquisition view on that, I display some other arguments that have to do with the psycholinguistic aspects of learners who are learning a second language.

In terms of effects and efforts, using L1 is seen as providing more effects at low processing efforts. Let's consider this example; when the English teacher ask his students to share their point of views on some mythical creatures that does not exist in reality but are quite popular, he gives an example of the bogeyman. Learners from Arabic backgrounds would think of 'El-Ghol' to build their understanding of the bogeyman and say what they think about it from their cultural point of view. Though this is an inner cognitive process, it still has some effect over L2 learning. Learners who were asked to share their views on bogeyman thought of 'El-Ghol' because it is more manifested to them than bogeyman. They found more effects to process the same mythical creature in their L1 than in L2 with less cognitive efforts. However, if learners think of it through the target language, they would probably take a longer time to imagine themselves in a culture that they do not know about much and this would cost them more cognitive efforts to process the meaning. The same idea could be applicable to teaching idioms through L1 culture where learners imagine that an idiom such as (2) *a rain cheque* event could be taking place in a local environment which is familiar to them describing the cultural assumptions they know.

Low Cognitive Processing Efforts of Idioms:

Low cognitive efforts take place when individuals process something that is familiar and relevant to them. With regard to idioms, if we embed them in first language cultural situations, they could be processed with the least cognitive effort. In other words, the more relevant an utterance is; the more cognitive effects it produces and the less relevant, the more cognitive efforts it takes to understand (Allott, 2013). As an example, (3) is an idiom that is embedded in learners' first language culture (typically Algerian culture) which might be understood better than (4).

(3) A: *I hate Amine, whenever the teacher goes out of the class, he provides him with trouble-makers list of students.*

B: *He is such a loser; he always let the cat out of the bag.*

(4) A: *isn't that Johnny? What is he doing with a poppy bouquet in his hand at night?*

B: *everybody knows that he was an ex British soldier where all his friends died in front of him he might be off his rocker now.*

Learners studying example (3) may find it easier for them to understand than example (4). I built example (3) on first language Algerian culture because I am quite familiar with its content. Readers of (3A) can imagine the situation where teachers used to assign someone to have an eye on trouble-maker students or noisy ones and write their names down and hand the list to him when he is back. The cultural situation presented in (3) is very familiar to Algerian learners. The first sentence in (3A) sets the seen for the second sentence in (3B) where learners may not struggle much to know the meaning of '*let the cat out of the bag*' because they are already provided with a sentence that is very congruent with what is said in the second sentence. It is not just congruent but culturally relevant to their background since the cultural situation they are given is something of relevant to their culture which they do not struggle to process.

However, example (4) is different in the sense that it reveals something that is not quite relevant to learners (i.e. Algerian learners). The first sentence that sets the seen to the second sentence is problematic. If learners wants to understand what is meant by '*off one's rocker*' they have to go through the first sentence first. While the first sentence (4A) contains '*poppy bouquet*' utterance, learner would think of what a poppy bouquet is first. The meaning of a poppy would be very relevant if they also can find an explicit link between war and poppies but this is quite hard for them unless they have pre-existing information about this. Imagining themselves in a culture that is not relevant to them is little bit difficult compared to what they usually know. Once they know the meaning of a poppy, they come to realize that the time meant to celebrate the Remembrance Day is not really suitable and thus may derive a conclusion that off one's rocker means someone who is not acting logically appropriate and accordingly to the society etiquettes, there might be other scenarios as well. The meaning of craziness might not be thought of immediately but other (different) meanings might occur. In example (3), students may not get the exact meaning but the answer they deduce is more or less related to idiom's meaning. In example (3) it could be more related answer to the actual meaning of the idiom however in (4) it could be less related.

If we explain this in terms of effects and efforts, I would say that example (3) has more cognitive effects manifested to learners and thus they process that example with low cognitive efforts. Example (4) has less cognitive effects and thus learners process it with more cognitive efforts. Associating the first language culture to teaching idioms is presented as follows:

First language culture + idioms = more cognitive effects with less cognitive efforts.

Target language culture + idioms = less cognitive effects with more cognitive efforts.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts different methods of gathering data. First of all, it reports on semi-structured interviews conducted with both Algerian and UK teachers as well as Algerian learners of English. Second, it considers a small intervention of teaching with designed teaching materials which assume both target and home culture in class with pre and post testing. Interviews with learners took place also before and after they have worked with the teaching materials (i.e. post interviews were more related to the teaching materials that learners worked with). The total number of interviews conducted is 14 and that includes both teachers in the UK and Algeria and learners as well. Interviews with teachers in the UK and Algeria are meant to investigate the current teaching practice of language in general and idioms in particular. However, interviews with learners (usually post interviews, this also includes an interview with the teacher who taught both groups) are meant to find out about learners' point of views on the new teaching strategy (i.e. home culture). The number of learners who participated in the pre and post-tests is 18, 9 in each group. Both groups were taught for four weeks with the same idioms using different teaching strategies. Group 1 was taught through a home culture teaching strategy and group 2 was taught through a target culture strategy. At the end, I conducted a post-test to see if there is any difference in the performance of the groups.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to find out if home culture enhances the teaching of language in general and idioms in particular. Also, it investigates and compares the current teaching practice in both Algeria and the UK. The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. Does implementing teaching materials that assume home culture help learners to learn language and idioms in particular?
2. How does the teaching practice in Algeria and the UK affect the teaching of idioms?

V. ANALYSING THE DATA

This section is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the results of semi-structured interviews and the second one discusses comprehension tests results obtained from the teaching materials taught for four weeks.

A. Analysis of Semi-structured Interviews

Each interview I analysed has three main types of themes as they appeared in the interviews I conducted. There is the global theme, basic and organising themes (Fawcett & Pockett, 2015). The global theme is the centre of each interview themes where it acts as a reference to all other types of themes. The basic themes are three themes in each interview except post interview of Algerian teachers and learners where they have only two basic themes. The organising themes are the sub-themes under each basic theme. Now, I start reporting the themes I organised in each interview.

First of all, there are three interviews with the Algerian teachers that are meant to investigate the current teaching practice. The global theme revolves around "the communicative approach" as a theoretical reference to the teaching practice in class. There are three basic themes: "language teaching", "idiom teaching practice", and "L1 and culture in teaching". The language teaching practice generally revealed that teachers I interviewed did not use any of real world materials as they think that they are not available and accessible. They also rely very much on ready-made teaching materials with the use of different teaching approaches. On the other hand, the teaching of idioms occurs often in class with wide range of activities of idioms. Teachers also use a wide range of teaching strategies including target culture context teaching strategy and the use of first language of learners in some occasions. Teachers reported that they usually compare between Algerian and target culture that occur in the teaching of idioms. The use of L1, they said, helps learners to retain the meaning and also gives them a feeling of security. L1 also is used to catch learners' attention in class. This is when the teacher says some words in L1 to attract learners' attention. In the next paragraph, I present the findings of UK teachers' interviews.

These interviews have the same interview structure with Algerian teachers' interviews. UK teachers teaching practice of English revealed that they follow the communicative approach of teaching in class. They also give great importance to the task-based in teaching and use materials that very much related to learners' interests. The use of authentic teaching materials is always present in teaching. When it comes to the teaching of idioms, UK teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies and activities of idioms. They also reported that idioms often occur with only advanced levels because it is quite difficult to teach them to lower levels. There is no separate sessions or lessons of idioms alone but most of the time teachers said that they teach them within other subjects of language like grammar and speaking. All the teachers I interviewed reported that they do not really mind using learners L1 in class to facilitate learning but due to multi-lingual classes they teach, they couldn't use this in class. They also think that using L1 in class can help learners to be more productive in class and pay more attention. Some of the teachers also reported that some course books they use in teaching present certain cultures as more salient than others as well as some teachers also have a tendency of culture superiority. On the teaching of culture they said, they don't teach them the bits of target culture that they don't need and use. In the next paragraph, I present findings of the interviews conducted with learners.

There are three interviews with learners. The interview structure is the same with the one of teachers in the previous paragraph. In language teaching practice, they reported that classes are mostly teacher-centered practice. They also

described the use of real world materials but only in oral expressions sessions where the teacher uses some videos and audios. Learning idioms is usually taught with other subjects of language (grammar and speaking more often). There is a wide range of teaching strategies that teachers use in class to teach idioms. One of these teaching strategies is the use of target culture teaching strategy. In terms of using L1 in class, learners reported that teachers sometimes are less flexible with using L1 in class but they usually make a link between L1 and L2. All students said that using L1 helps them in understanding and retaining idioms. In the next paragraph, I present results of post-interviews with learners.

There are three post-interviews (i.e. interviews conducted after the teaching) with learners and one with a teacher that is discussed in the next paragraph. The difference between pre and post interviews with teachers and students is that post-interviews do not have the basic theme of “language learning” because these interviews are about the teaching materials of the study. That is, post interviews do not discuss language teaching practice but specifically the teaching practice of idioms through some teaching materials of the study. The global (i.e. central) theme in these interviews is “home culture” teaching strategy. Home culture strategy links both basic themes of “idiom teaching practice” and “L1 and culture teaching”. Learners said that they liked the new teaching materials because they learnt new idioms especially the example that they consider quite easy to guess within the context given by the teacher. All of them agreed to recommend those teaching materials to other students however they reported that there should be more examples for them to understand idioms clearly. They needed additional examples or even further explanation on the cultural bits used with those idioms. When it comes to the use of home culture in learning idioms, some students reported that target culture is better when learning idioms and those equivalents of L1 do not really help them with idiom comprehension. However, they expressed their views in favour of making a balance between L1 and L2 cultures teaching in general. They also reported that L1 culture used in the lessons they were taught helped them to understand idioms, to activate schemas that are relevant to them and made learning of idioms easier. The post-interview conducted with the teacher has some similar views to these as well.

The post-interview with the teacher was conducted after she finished teaching the teaching materials with both groups. She reported that the home culture strategy is very effective. She also said that group one was more active compared to group two which faced some difficulty understanding idioms. She follows a communicative approach in teaching and said that both strategies (home and target culture) reflect the communicative approach of teaching. With regard to L1 and home culture teaching in class, she claimed that she uses both cultures in her class depending on the objectives and type of lessons she teaches. She also said that L1 culture should appear more often with lower level classes because it helps them with understanding the meaning. When teaching both groups, the teacher reported that group two, which was taught through a target culture, asked sometimes for first language examples while they were supposed to use only target culture examples. The comprehension tests (pre and post) results are reported in the next paragraph.

B. Analysing Comprehension Tests of Idiom

The comprehension tests are analysed using two different statistical tests. The first one is used to measure the difference between the pre and post-tests and it is called the paired samples T-Test. The second one is applied to measure any significant different between group one and group two and it is called ANOVA (also the independent samples T-Test).

To start with, tables 1, 2, and 3 present the difference between pre and post-test through revealing the correlation, the standard deviation, the standard error, and the significance of both tests.

Table 1 presents the Mean difference between the pre and the post tests. The Mean of the pre-test is more than 5 ($\bar{x} > 5$). It is ($\bar{x} = 5, 5.2778$) to be exact and this is before learners got exposed to the teaching materials. This is very low compared to the Mean of the post-test which is more than 9 ($\bar{x} > 9$). It is ($\bar{x} = 9, 6111$) to be exact and this is after learners worked with the teaching materials in both groups. The Mean difference between pre and post-test is ($\bar{x} = -4.33333$). This also gives 0.03 different between the standard deviation of the Mean in both tests where the post-test has a Standard Deviation of (SD = 1.33) compared to the pre-test with a Standard Deviation of (SD = 1.36).

TABLE 1
THE MEAN DIFFERENCE

| | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----------|--------|----|----------------|-----------------|
| Pre-test | 5.2778 | 18 | 1.36363 | .32141 |
| Posttest | 9.6111 | 18 | 1.33456 | .31456 |

Table 2 presents the correlation of pre and post-tests that is (Corr. = .321) and this is significant at (P = .193). This is to say that the larger the correlation is, the less standard error is and thus less statistic number in the significant column.

TABLE 2
CORRELATION BETWEEN PRE AND POST TEST

| | N | Correlation | Sig. |
|---------------------|----|-------------|------|
| Pre-test & posttest | 18 | .321 | .193 |

Table 3 presents the Standard Deviation of the T test for each individual before and after the teaching process and it is (SD = 1.57181) with also a Standard Error of the Mean at ($\sigma_{\bar{x}} = .37048$). The T value is (T = -11.697). This is not very

big number compared to the number of participants I had in this study. The T value correlates to a significance of $P < .001$. The next tables reveal the difference between group 1 and group 2.

TABLE 3
T VALUE

| | Paired differences | | | T | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | | |
| Pretest-posttest | -4.33333 | 1.57181 | .37048 | -11.697 | .000 |

Tables from 4 to 8 are the output of the ANOVA test to measure the significance between the two groups. To start with, table 4 presents the number of the groups and the number of participants in each group.

TABLE 4
NUMBER OF GROUPS AND PARTICIPANTS

| | Value Label | N |
|------|-------------|---|
| 1.00 | Group 1 | 9 |
| 2.00 | Group 2 | 9 |

Table 5 reports the Mean and the Standard Deviation of both groups. The Mean of group 2 is slightly larger than the Mean of group one with a difference of 0.66. Standard Deviation is roughly the same in both groups with a difference of 0.15 higher in the second group.

TABLE 5
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

| Group | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---------|--------|----------------|----|
| Group 1 | 4.0000 | 1.50000 | 9 |
| Group 2 | 4.6667 | 1.65831 | 9 |
| Total | 4.3333 | 1.57181 | 18 |

The Standard Error of the Mean is displayed in table 6 and is exactly the same in both groups at ($\sigma_{\bar{x}} = .527$).

TABLE 6
MEAN AND STANDARD ERROR

| Group | Mean | Std. Error |
|---------|-------|------------|
| Group 1 | 4.000 | .527 |
| Group 2 | 4.667 | .527 |

Table 7 presents the significant level of both groups which is ($P = .747$) using Levene's test.

TABLE 7
LEVENE'S TEST OF EQUALITY OF ERROR VARIANCES^a

| F | Df1 | Df2 | Sig. |
|------|-----|-----|------|
| .108 | 1 | 16 | .747 |

In table 8, there is the group row which presents the output needed about this study. It contains the Mean Square which is very low ($s^2 = 2.000$) and can roughly explain the difference between groups. The Mean Square here represents between subjects variance (i.e. between groups). In the same table, there is also the significance column that is ($P = .384$) which is a way over the significance level of this study ($\alpha = .05$). In the next part, I present my interpretation of the results I obtained from interviews and comprehension tests of idioms.

TABLE 8
BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared | Noncent. Parameter | Observed Power ^a |
|-----------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|---------|------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Corrected Model | 2.000 ^a | 1 | 2.000 | .800 | .384 | .048 | .800 | .134 |
| Intercept | 338.000 | 1 | 338.000 | 135.200 | .000 | .894 | 135.200 | 1.000 |
| Group | 2.000 | 1 | 2.000 | .800 | .384 | .048 | .800 | .134 |
| Error | 40.000 | 16 | 2.500 | | | | | |
| Total | 380.000 | 18 | | | | | | |
| Corrected Total | 42.000 | 17 | | | | | | |

VI. DISCUSSING THE RESULTS

This section presents the discussion of the results displayed in the previous paragraphs.

A. Discussing Semi-structured Interviews Results

In this sub-section, I discuss interviews conducted with Algerian teachers, UK teachers, and Algerian learners. I also discuss interviews conducted after the teaching process with Algerian learners and their teacher. To start with,

interviews conducted with Algerian teachers revealed that the practice of teaching idioms lacks the essential use of authentic materials. This is, as a matter of fact, a huge challenge facing teachers of English in Algeria. Instead, teachers use excessively ready-made teaching materials in class. This teaching practice, I would say, has serious implications on the teaching process. The use of foreign ready-made teaching materials can result into teaching “other” values that most often do not fit into the cultural context of students. Also, there is no clear teaching approach that most teachers follow. There is a mixture between teaching approaches as they reported or sometimes there is the use of eclecticism. This gap that exists between the theory and the practice of teaching can affect teaching negatively. Bader and Hamada (2015) claim that some teachers in Algeria are unable to link the theoretical knowledge of communicative approach with its teaching practical context in class. This teaching practice affects also the teaching of idioms in two ways. First, the most of the teaching approaches teachers follow do not provide essential focus on idioms. Second, there is an excessive use of target culture to teach idioms which (as I explained earlier) makes learning idioms difficult. Despite the use of target culture when teaching idioms, there is also the use of L1 and direct translation. This is because there is a difficulty in teaching idioms that sometimes requires the use of L1. Sometimes, the use of L1 precedes the use L1 culture. Teachers compare the target culture with L1 culture because of the need to make students feel that they are in an environment where their L1 culture functions to a large extent. This gives learners a feeling of security. Relevance theory explains this teaching practice as Cummings (2005) claims that communication is guided by relevance principle. This also supports the idea given by teachers that the use of L1 expressions in class helps to catch learners’ attention as well as in the retention of meaning. Teachers’ practice of teaching is quite different from that of UK teachers.

UK teachers’ interviews showed quite different responses compared with the Algerian teachers. To start with, the use of communicative approach of teaching with the use of authentic teaching materials explains that the teaching practice in the UK is very congruent with the communicative teaching approach. The use of authentic materials that are related to learners needs implies that those teaching materials are developed by UK teachers in a way that cope with the cultural context learners live in (target cultural context) and this is how teaching should take place within communicative approach framework. Consequently, this teaching practice of language affects teaching idioms. Idioms are taught using a target culture in the UK. Idioms are given much importance but they only occur with advanced level students because UK teachers face difficulty teaching idioms with lower levels. This is mainly because lower level students rely very much on their L1 and home culture that most teachers are not familiar with. When it comes to the teaching of culture in class, English classes are very target culture-based classes. Course books promote the teaching of target culture which is a normal practice when we consider that learners are in a target culture society. Despite the fact that the teaching practice is a target culture-based, teachers, in the other hand, teach culture that is only specific to learners needs. One of the teachers reported that he does not teach learners bits of culture that they do not need. For example, ordering a beer in a pub might not be what learners from Islamic backgrounds want to know about. This is to emphasize on the relevance theoretic view of comprehension and cognition that learning takes place better in an environment that is relevant to learners. Learning also is better when teachers include teaching materials that learners need. Teaching practice in the UK is very congruent with communicative approach and relevance theory principle of cognitive effect and effort.

There is a tendency among both UK and Algerian teachers to use L1 and home culture of learners in class but not in a systematic way. However, the teaching practice of language is a somewhat different. The problem that still exists in many English classes in Algeria revolves around the teaching materials. This teaching practice affects the teaching of idioms as well as the comprehension and the uses of such expressions. The UK teaching practice, on the other hand, may seem more effective and relevant to learners’ needs. Next, I discuss interviews related to the teaching materials taught to the two groups.

The interviews conducted with Algerian learners revealed that the classes they are having are most of the times teacher-centred classes which may not reflect communicative approach principle of teaching of teachers who use communicative approach very often. The use of real world materials is essential in class as Mideros Camargo (2010) claims that communicative approach always stresses the importance of using real world materials in class. Authentic materials exist only in oral expressions where learners come across some target culture audios or videos. However, the use of real world materials as recommended by the communicative approach should be of interests to learners at first place. That is, materials should reflect learners’ needs and represent their contexts of learning. This does not seem exactly what teachers are selecting as a teaching material in classes of oral expression. Most of what teachers teach may not be described as authentic but rather target culture-oriented materials. This language teaching practice also affects the teaching of idioms. Learners also reported that idioms are taught by using a variety of teaching strategies and activities among which there is the use of target culture teaching strategies of idioms. That is, assuming that the interaction of teaching idioms is taking place in a target culture (British or American). This also explains the use of L1 in class. Because learners find learning idioms difficult, they have a tendency to shift to L1 or find equivalents of idioms that correspond to those of target culture. This helps; as learners reported; also to understand and retain idioms meaning. Relating this to relevance theory principle, I would say that the principle of effects and efforts (Clark, 2013) is best described here. That is, learners tend to go for information that is relevant and salient to them. The next paragraph discusses interviews conducted with Algerian learners after the teaching.

Interviews with learners and their teacher after they worked with the teaching materials are quite different; in terms of structure; to the previous interviews mentioned earlier. They revolve around home culture teaching strategy and the teaching materials they worked with during four weeks. Interviews with learners were a bit different from what I have expected. Learners I interviewed stated that idioms were easy to guess with the home culture context provided by the teacher. This confirms the relevance theory principle of relevance about effects and cognitive efforts in teaching idioms as explained in the previous paragraph. Learners tend to follow and better learn what is relevant to them and pay less attention to information that is less relevant to them. They also said that L1 culture context helped to understand idioms with activated schemas which correspond to idiom equivalents they know and participate to meaning understanding. This is very clear evidence that learning takes place better when assuming a home culture context. However, some learners reported that they needed more examples that clearly explain idioms as the examples provided by their teacher were not enough for them. They also said that L1 equivalents of idioms do not really help them with idiom understanding and they would prefer a target culture context teaching strategy in learning idioms than home culture. This has some reasons that might explain participants' views on using target culture in teaching. One of the reasons is that a considerable minority of some families' interaction at home (in Algeria) is with French language and not even with vernacular Algerian Arabic. This kind of attitudes has its roots from the 1950s (even before) when Algeria was colonised by France. The only education provided on that time was by French teachers who decided what to teach and how to teach it. This tendency of speaking French among many parents has been developed since ages and now passed to many generations. Thus, there is always a tendency to embrace what is foreign and have an inferior view to what is local. When learners said that L1 equivalents do not help us with idiom comprehension, this also means that they have not heard of such expressions (i.e. Arabic idiom equivalents) and they have not used it before but instead they use French equivalents. One of the interviewees has told me that when the teacher mentioned "bone of contention" she thought of "pomme de discorde" in French because she heard her father using it a lot at home. Thus, the tendency to use target culture in class may not be explained by academic reasons rather than other social reasons instead. In the next paragraph, I discuss the post interview of the teacher who taught both groups during the study.

The interview with the teacher who taught the teaching materials to both groups revealed that home culture teaching strategy was more effective and this can be seen in group one that was more active compared to group two that found difficulty understanding idioms. This gives another support to the assumption that home culture teaching strategy can result in better learning of idioms to learners of English as a second/foreign language. She also said that both teaching strategies (target and home culture) reflect the communicative approach of teaching which she follows. Target culture may reflect communicative approach when learners are taught in target culture settings. However, using a target culture strategy to teach learners who are not in a target culture context reflects a teaching practice that is not in line with learners' interests and needs. In communicative approach, teachers need to place learners in an environment that corresponds to their needs and interests (Farmer, 2006). Thus, target culture does not reflect learners needs in Algeria (but it might be elsewhere e.g. UK) and might not reflect the communicative approach teaching context in Algeria as well. When it comes to using L1 or home culture in class, the teacher said that she uses both cultures in class and this depends on the objective of the lessons she teaches. This means that there is a balance between assuming target and home cultures in teaching in general. Besides this, there was a need to use L1 culture sometimes in a target culture group. That is, there is a tendency to shift to L1 and home culture whenever learners feel the difficulty to understand idioms, sentences, and expressions. Again, this supports the assumption of this study and confirms the principle of relevance in teaching language in general and idioms in particular. In the next part, I discuss findings of the comprehension tests.

B. Discussing Idiom Comprehension Tests Results

The results obtained from comprehension tests are discussed on two levels. First, I discuss the pre and post-test differences. Second, I discuss if there is any significant difference on the level of the groups. To start with, there is the Mean of both tests which is significantly different. The Mean of the pre-test is ($\bar{x} = 5.2$) which is less than idiom comprehension competency scores of post-test (which is $\bar{x} = 9.6$) on an average of four weeks. The Standard Deviation (SD) of both tests is roughly the same number. This is because the sample of the study is small. The small sample of the study also gives small correlation which is ($\text{Corr.} = .321$). As explained in the analysis section, the more correlation is, the less statistical number of significance can be. This also explains the significance of the tests which is ($P = .193$). The third table shows a significant difference between the Means of the tests which is ($\bar{x} = -4.33$). The T statistic shows a value of ($T = -11.697$) which correlates to a significance of ($P = .000$). I would say that this is statically significant at ($P > .001$) compared to the significance character of this study ($\alpha = 0.05$) which is very significant. Thus, there is a significant difference between the pre and post-test in this study which means that learners in post-tests scored high on idiom comprehension than in the pre-test. Next, I discuss the difference between the groups.

As stated previously, the number of participants is nine in each group. The Mean of both groups is roughly the same statistical number ($G1 \bar{x} = 4.000$, $G2 \bar{x} = 4.666$). The Standard Deviation is ($G1 \text{SD} = 1.500$, $G2 \text{SD} = 1.658$), however, the Standard Error of the Mean is exactly the same in both groups ($\sigma_{\bar{x}} = .527$). This means that the difference between the groups can barely be seen. Levene's test provides a statistical significance number of ($P = .747$) which is way over the significant character of this study ($\alpha = .05$). This clearly indicates that the difference between groups performance on idiom comprehension is statistically insignificant. Table 6.8 shows more details about the difference between groups

performance. The Square Mean is very low ($s^2 = 2.000$) which describes again a small tiny difference between the Means of both groups. The F Ratio statistic shows that the amount of variance observed between the two groups is also very low ($F = .800$). The F Ratio correlates with a significance of ($P = .384$) which is over the significance level of alpha ($\alpha = .05$) of this study. This means that the null hypothesis (H_0) is not rejected. The null hypothesis of this study suggests that home culture teaching strategy of idioms does not provide further or extra beneficial effects compared with target culture teaching strategy.

VII. CONCLUSION

It seems that first language and home culture function in second language classes of English but there are no clear boundaries to when and how they are used. In other words, there are no specific rules or even a systematic manner in using first language and home culture in teaching. Interviews with teachers and learners revealed that using L1 and home culture of learners has a positive effect on understanding language and idioms in particular. This paper is meant to reveal the positive effects of using home culture in teaching English idioms and language in general but does not provide a methodology on how to implement this strategy in a teaching curriculum. This, I believe, is for further research and recommendations in the future.

For the comprehension tests, the results provided about comprehension tests may not be due to the correlation of the dependent and the independent variables. Instead, there might be other extraneous variables that interfered with the study. To start with, the small number of participants in the study may have affected the results in some ways. Second, there were some issues in teaching and in conducting the study. The groups should be completely isolated from each other before and after the teaching. However, this couldn't happen because both groups formed one class and I divided them only for the sake of the study. Interference of both groups together after they had the teaching lessons affects the validity of the study. Also, some of the teaching practices were indirectly subjective to one group of the study. This could have biased somehow the teaching process in favour of one group than the other. If other intervening variables were controlled, I might have obtained different results.

APPENDIX A. UK AND ALGERIAN TEACHERS AND LEARNERS INTERVIEW

Interview guide for (teachers/learners)

This interview is meant to discover some point of views of how second language (teachers/learners) think of the process of teaching a second language in general and idioms in particular. Their point of views would enhance the process of teaching and learning. For participants who gave their consent to participate in this study, all anonymity/ethical issues have been explained to them. The interview will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

I. Language

1. How do you find teaching/learning English as a foreign language?
2. (Are you taught through/Do you use some) real world materials in teaching, such as; newspapers, magazines, radio talks... etc.?
3. If you do, why do you think these materials should be in class of English?
4. What are the teaching approaches that you are implementing in class? (i.e. communicative approach, audio lingual approach ... etc.) (For teachers only).
5. In your session/class mainly, you (receive/help) (students/from teachers) to enhance (their/your) speaking skills. So, what kind of topics do you usually discuss?
6. Do you think cultural topics would bring some sort of a good discussion?
7. What do you think a good speaker of English should acquire to sound more fluent?
8. Do you think idioms are important in speaking? Why?

II. Idioms

1. How often do you (teach/learn) idioms?
2. Do you think idioms are difficult or easy to (teach/learn)? Why?
3. What sort of activities do you (use/give students) to practice idioms in class (e.g. filling the gaps, matching idioms with their meaning, dialogues... etc.)?
4. What are the strategies (e.g. using pictures, using context guessing, explaining the origins of idioms, direct translation to your first language...etc.) that you use to (teach/learn) idioms in class?
5. Do you feel the necessity to use first language to explain idioms or any other saying or quote that (learners/you) don't quite understand?
6. If you do, how do you think that helps (you/them)?

III. Culture

1. Do you focus a lot on the target culture in class?
2. If you do, do you find that useful?
3. Do you use home culture to explain (or compare with target culture) some cultural situations (i.e. eating etiquettes, dressing ...), proverbs...etc. when (learners/you) seem not to understand what (you have/teacher) said?
4. Do you usually (ask your students to) find an equivalent idiom, proverb or saying in (their/your) first language?

5. Some people say that using first language in class should not be permitted because the more you use first language in class; the more you lose control over what you are supposed to teach. What do you think about that?

6. Some other people say also that none of the home cultural aspects should be used in class because the more you refer to students' culture; the more you tend to neglect the target culture. What do you think about that?

APPENDIX B. ALGERIAN TEACHER AND LEARNERS INTERVIEW AFTER TEACHING

Interview guide for (teachers/learners)

This interview is meant to discover some point of views of how second language (teachers/learners) think of the process of learning a second language in general and idioms in particular. Their point of views would enhance the process of teaching and learning. For participants who gave their consent to participate in this study, all anonymity/ethical issues have been explained to them. The interview will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

I. Language

1. Which strategy you think was more effective?
2. How was (students' reaction in each group) to the new lessons (i.e. did you like the new lessons/which group was active and willing to learn more)?
3. Did you face any difficulty in (teaching/learning) idioms (in both groups)? What was it?
4. What kind of teaching approach are you adopting in class (i.e. is it communicative approach, audio lingual approach ... etc.)? (For teachers only)
5. Which strategy you think may reflect the teaching approach you are following in class? Why? (For teachers only)
6. What do you think of culture in language teaching, is it a must? Then, what sort of culture are you looking at in (teaching/learning)?

II. Idioms

1. In what context do you think idioms should be embedded in to facilitate the process of (teaching/learning) them?
2. Some idioms were embedded in historical cultural contexts, others were embedded in religious cultural contexts and some others simulated the environment, which one of these cultural bits was very effective in terms of comprehension and accessibility of idiom's meaning when you (taught/learnt) them (in group one and two)?

III. Culture

1. Did you feel the necessity to elaborate a little bit on the cultural context used in those idioms or was it clear for (learners/you)? Why?
2. Were you somewhat obliged to use (learners' home culture in target culture group)? If you were, is that helping learners with something? (For teachers only)
3. Some teachers claim that we need to move forward from target culture teaching based-practice and we need to balance that with home culture based-practice? What do you think?

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Salim Bouherar was born in Algeria, 1990. He received his BA in translation studies in 2012 and his Master degree in applied linguistics in 2014 from Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel, Algeria. He is a former secondary school English teacher, Algeria (2014-2015). He is now a third year PhD student at Middlesex University, London. His research focuses on idiom and teaching, pragmatics, idiom comprehension, culture in teaching English language, teaching materials and teaching approaches.