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Spilling the Beans on Understanding English Idioms Using Multimodality: An Idiom Acquisition Technique for Iranian Language Learners

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Abstract

Idioms are ubiquitous in English language. Despite their ubiquity, learning idioms is a thorny issue for second language learners. Multiple researchers have scrutinized different aspects of idiom learning by second language learners: important factors in processing idioms in L2 (Cieślicka, 2015); the incorporation of technology in idiom learning (Khoshnevisan, 2018b); idiom assessment (Khoshnevisan, 2018a). A number of studies have been conducted concerning the application of the Idiom Diffusion Model—an L2 idiom processing model—to develop the idiomatic competence of learners, however, the pertinent literature is sparse: Greek, German, and French (Liontas, 1997); Greek (Katsarou, 2013); Korean (Türker, 2016). It turns out that the application of the model to Persian language learners is missing. To address the gap, the author conducted a qualitative study to explore the perceptions of Iranian language learners about using a website to learn idioms. The researcher employed an online questionnaire to delve into the learners' perceptions. The findings imply that the majority of the participants used video and picture modules to arrive at the figurative meaning of the idiomatic phrases. However, in terms of semi and post-lexical idioms, most learners benefited from translations to decode the meanings. The findings corroborate the theory that translation facilitates learning idioms.

Keywords: *Idiom Hypotheses and Models, Technology in idiom learning, Idioms, Idiom website*

1 Introduction

Idioms are omnipresent in English language. Despite their ubiquity, learners need to bend over backwards to learn a boatload of idioms (Khoshnevisan, 2018a). It is deemed that native speakers use idiomatic language effortlessly and subconsciously. However, embedding idiomatic phrases in everyday conversation for nonnative speakers is a stumble, but hitting the bulls' eyes. It then comes as no surprise that mastery of the idiomatic competence is difficult to attain for nonnative speakers. Jackendoff (1997) reports the number of fixed expressions in a native speaker's mental lexicon is similar to that of single words. Importantly, Searle (1979) maintains speak idiomatically unless there is some reason not to do so.

Researchers have a common consensus on idiom comprehension that conceptual knowledge is cultural-specific. In other words, conceptual metaphorical links have been shaped by specific cultures (Boers & Demecheleer, 1997). Boers and Demecheleer (1997) suggested that sailing is rather a specific cultural concept in France due to the fact that it is a source of food and cooking for them. Accordingly, many French idiomatic expressions are associated with food, cooking, and sailing. Cooper (1999) explored that L2 subjects in his study tended to employ "a

heuristic approach in solving the linguistic problem of finding the meaning of the idioms" (p. 256), through a trial and error effort to decode the figurative meaning of L2 idioms, by applying a variety of strategies, including guessing, using pragmatic knowledge and experimentation. Guessing and pragmatic knowledge of idiomatic phrases are rooted in learners' L1 idiomatic competence and conceptual knowledge.

2 Literature Review

2.1 L1 and L2 Learners' Approaches in Idiom Processing

Scrutinizing the nature and structure of idioms aside**,** Warren (2005) conducted an empirical study which amounted to findings regarding the techniques and approaches that native and non-native speakers harness to process idioms. Warren posed a question which addressed the significance of idiomaticity: *why should we know more than rules and how to combine them?* Warren notes that the answer is inextricably linked with the economy of effort. She, however, highlights that economy and frequency of the phrase do not explain the overall reason. She further assumes that in terms of L1, the generalized meaning is constructed by a native speaker through a bottom-up approach. In contrast, non-native learners are likely to construct generalized meanings by equating the word with their first language, that is, transfer. In light of this, non-native speakers employ a top-down approach. Old models of idiomaticity assume that the combination of words falls under two categories (open combs and restricted combs). In this sense, restriction combination is divided into idioms and collocations. Conversely, this model includes an alternative classification of word combination. Warren claims that her model is to investigate abstract commonalities among stored expressions in the mental lexicon. In this model, fixed phrases are divided into transparent and opaque. Supporting the definition of idiomaticity as "nativelike choices of expressions", she argues that collocations and idioms have numerous commonalities and few differences which make her model divergent from the traditional models of word combination.

2.2 L2 Idiom Processing and Comprehension

Idiomaticity, in general, has been the topic of intense research in the past few decades. Both linguists and psycholinguists have investigated and proposed hypotheses and models with regard to idiom processing in L2 context. Idiomaticity in L2 is a topic deserving more detailed investigation since a change of context, from L1 to L2, can drastically change the process of idiom comprehension. In what follows, I shall detail and delineate the most significant and oft-cited hypotheses and models of L2 idiom processing.

2.2.1 Dual Idiom Representation (DIR)

Abel (2003) juxtaposed the judgements of German learners about the decomposability of English idioms with those of native speakers. Abel reviewed several models of idiom comprehension and processing and proposed a model called *Dual Idiom Representation (DIR)*. This model explains the differences between the native and non-native learners and considers both lexical and conceptual levels of idiom processing. At the lexical level, the model confirms the existence of both idiom and constituent entries. The former deals with the figurative meaning of the idiomatic

phrase and the latter is associated with the literal meaning of the constituent parts (single words) that makes up an idiomatic phrase. The lexical representation is determined by two major factors: the degree of decomposibility and the frequency that the idiom is encountered with. Decomposibility does not deal with idiom processing. In contrast, decomposibility is associated with comprehension and representation than processing. Decomposability is primarily concerned with the analyzability of idioms. That is, how the meaning of the constituent parts (of an idiom) aid exploration of the figurative meaning. In a decomposable idiom, the individual components contribute to its figurative meaning. On this account, the model posits that if there is no idiom entry (figurative entry), conceptual representations are accessed during the comprehension process. Finally, the model reaffirms that L1 and L2 lexicon differ since native speakers are more frequently exposed to idioms (frequency) in comparison with non-native speakers.

2.2.2 Parasitic Mechanism

Cieślicka (2015) compared idiom processing and comprehension in L1 and L2 contexts and examined factors which play key roles in this process. The author was primarily concerned with idiom processing and comprehension by second language learners. In this study, she first explained how idioms are different and presented comprehensive theoretical accounts of the idiom processing by both L1 and L2 learners. Having critically analyzed idiom processing models, she proposed a mechanism dealing with idiom processing and comprehension for L2 learners known as the *parasitic mechanism*. Cieślicka noted that this mechanism is a working cognitive strategy for L2 learners to develop L2 figurative competence. Cieślicka discussed factors which come into play in L1 idiom processing such as literal plausibility, semantic decomposasbility, salience, and context. She then analyzed the factors in L2 idiom learning. As such, some of these factors (literal plausibility, semantic decomposasbility, salience, and context) appeared to be similar. Some factors, however, differ when it comes to the context of learning (L2) such as cross-language similarity.

2.2.3 Idiom Diffusion Model

Proposed by Liontas (2002), the *Idiom Diffusion Model* (IDM) explains how L1 and L2 idiom processing are different. Liontas details the major tenets of the *Idiom Diffusion Model* in a number of studies (Liontas, 2002). In one of his studies regarding the vivid phrasal (VP) idioms and Conceptual Semantic Image (CSI) distance, Liontas (2002) highlights that the major issue in idiomaticity stems from a lack of scholarly accord on the definition of the term, "idiom". Accordingly, Liontas introduces a new category of second language idioms, i.e., *vivid phrasal (VP) idioms*. He then proposes a continuum called *conceptual lexical-image continuum*. The following hypotheses arose from an earlier two-year pilot study conducted during 1996-1998 with 35 third-, fourth-, and fifth-semester students of Modern Greek (Liontas 1997). He sheds light on the existing definitions to propose a model comprised of three hypotheses to unify idiom investigation in both L1 and L2 context. To achieve that, Liontas (2002) defines *Conceptual Semantic Image (CSI) distance*. CSI distance denotes " how close or distant a target-language idiom is from its equivalent native-language idiom both conceptually (i.e., in terms of the picture it evokes) and semantically (i.e., in terms of the literal meanings of its words)" (p. 6). The author stresses that his intent of this continuum is not to provide a definite taxonomy, but aid exploration of the implications of VP idioms for SLA research. To detail the categories of CSI, Liontas (2002) posits that

> at one end of this Lexical-Image Continuum are target-language idioms that exhibit a one-to-one lexical and pictorial match with corresponding native-

language idioms; the term *Lexical Level* (*LL*) *idioms* will be used to describe this type of idiom. At the other end of this continuum are target language idioms that do not match native-language idioms either lexically or pictorially; these are called *Post-Lexical Level* (*PLL) idioms*. Somewhere in the middle of this continuum are target-language idioms which, although they exemplify to a large extent the one-to-one lexical and pictorial correspondence of LL idioms, may or may not use all the same individual words as native-language idioms and may differ by only a few or even just one word; these are referred to as *Semi-Lexical Level* (*SLL) idioms*. (p. 5)

Liontas (2002) differentiates the *Idiom Diffusion Model* from the other models in that the *Idiom Diffusion Model* deals with L2 acquisition. For L2 learners, it is not a question whether they have access to either literal or figurative meaning first, but whether they can detect a phrasal unit to be an idiom. Liontas argues that in contrast to L1 learners, L2 learners create L2 idiomatic meaning through comparison and contrast. Learners' personal background, familiarity with L1 idioms, and making connections between L1 and L2 idioms play an essential role in detecting and creating L2 idiomatic meaning. Every hypothesis and model prior to the *Idiom Diffusion Model* had dealt with and emerged from L1 language learning regardless of differences between L1 and L2 idiom identification and comprehension process. This was among the first models, which attended to the L2 learning process.

As discussed above, there are multiple hypotheses and models regarding L2 idiom processing. However, for the purpose of this inquiry, I exclusively adhere to VP-idioms and the *Idiom Diffusion Model* (Liontas, 1999). Multiple studies have already examined the applicability of the *Idiom Diffusion Model* in learning VP idioms in different languages: Greek, German, and French (Liontas, 1999); Greek (Katsarou, 2013); Korean (Türker, 2016). It is, however, worth mentioning that, to date, no single study has been conducted on Persian language learners.

Multiple researchers, consistent with different idiom processing hypotheses and models, have studied the integration of technology in idiom learning (Amer, 2014; Khoshnevisan, 2018a). Khoshnevisan (2018a) sheds light on the major types of techniques and technologies used to teach idioms to language learners. Among the pool of methods to teach idioms, he highlights on the use of Disney movies (Khoshniyat & Dowlatabadi, 2014); idiom displaying techniques (Guduru, 2012); and using apps (Amer, 2014). On this account, a variety of studies have been conducted. However, to date, there has been no single study harnessing a website—drawing on the Idiom Diffusion Model—for Iranian language learners to learn English VP idioms.

The purpose of this study was to explore whether utilizing a website (drawing on the *Idiom Diffusion Model*) could be beneficial for Iranian language learners who study in America and thus find a convincing answer to the following research questions:

1. In what ways do Iranian language learners acquire idioms through a website?

2. What are the common modes of learning idioms (audio, video, image, translation) used by Iranian language learners?

3. Does translation help learners comprehend the figurative meaning of idioms across levels (LL, SLL, and PLL)?

3 Method

3.1 Participants

This article sets out to explore the perceptions of Iranian language learners who are studying at American institutions. To that end, the author employed snowball sampling to collect the data. To that end, the researcher announced his intention publically on the Iranian student's social media (Telegram). Telegram is a popular social media among Iranian students who are studying at American universities. In this way, the students who were interested passed the announcement to their friends who wanted to voluntarily participate in this study. Ultimately, 26 Iranian language learners aged between 20 to 35 voluntarily participated in this study. It is worth mentioning that all international students are required to take TOEFL exam to be admitted to American institutions. Accordingly, all the participants have already scored 80 or higher in TOEFL iBT.

3.2 Instrumentation

All international students must pass an English language proficiency test (TOEFL iBT) prior to being admitted to American institutions, so their level of English language comprehension prior to this study was rather high. The issue is that idioms are not predominantly taught in formal contexts. As international students in the US, the participants of this study are placed in both academic and social spaces where knowledge of idioms is required.

Drawing on the *Idiom Diffusion Model*, the interface of the website (as shown in Figure1.) was simple so students can simply navigate and find the related modules. The website was comprised of an introduction—which explains what the aims of the website are—a pretest, content (idioms), and a posttest. The posttest is another version of the pretest to measure the students' cognitive attainment. Both pre and posttests were automatically graded. The website then provided the students with their scores. There were no limitations on the number of attempts to do the tests.

Khoshnevisan (2018b) posits that recent idiom learning software and websites are primarily concerned with "colors, spatial (picture and related narration in proximity) and temporal contiguity (simultaneous narration and picture) principles" (p. 81). However, this website—consistent with the underpinnings of the *Idiom Diffusion Model*—is immensely concerned with the picture an idiomatic phrase evokes and the closeness of this picture with learners' L1. Similarly, the website heavily relies on the literal meaning of the constituent parts of idiomatic phrases.

Figure 1. The Interface of the Website
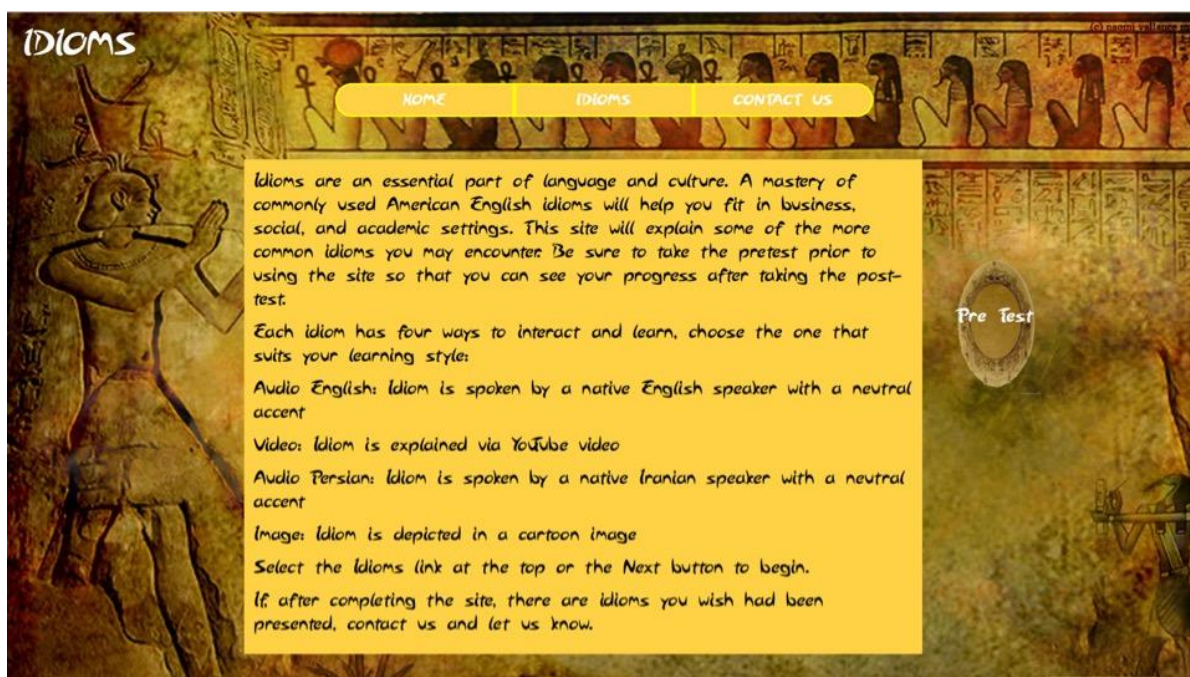
For the purpose of this article, the *Idiom Diffusion Model* was embraced to categorize idioms into three levels: lexical level (LL), semi-lexical level (SLL), and post-lexical level (PLL). Additionally, by the use of technology, I was able to introduce the culture and etymology of the idiom in a visual way. In this sense, the material was presented through multimodality (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001). Drawing on the theory, this website engages students with different modes of learning (audio and visual). Figure 2. shows how the website affords learners with the image, audio, video, and translation of the idioms.

Figure 2. Different Modes of Learning Idioms

Video	Image	Audio	Persian Translation

Based on the three levels of idioms in the *Idiom Diffusion Model*, the selected idioms were categorized to 3 levels. The author asked a native ESOL educator to research and select the most common American English idioms that pose difficulty to English language learners. The idioms were then categorized into three different groups. From a total number of 47 idioms, only

21 idioms were randomly selected for this website. Table 1. shows the three levels of idioms used in the website.
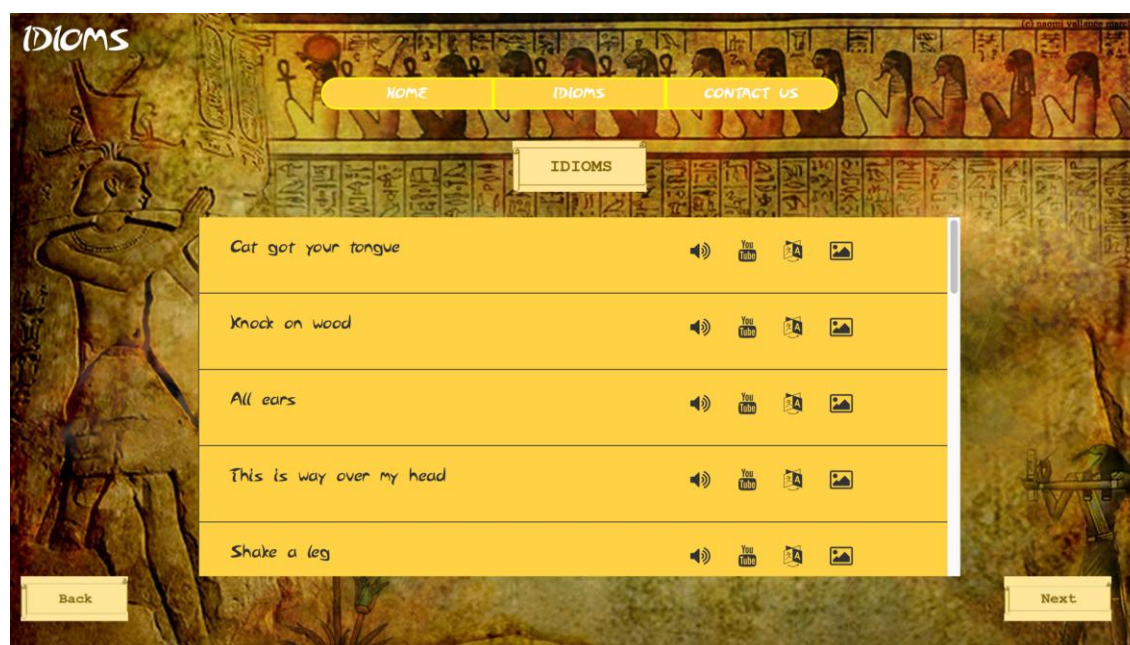
Table 1

The idioms used for the study

Lexical level	
Cat got your tongue	گربه زبونتو خورده
Knock on wood	بزنم به تخته
All ears	سرتا پا گوش
Semi-lexical Level	
Get off my back	دست از سر کسی برداشتن
Don't cry over spilled milk	آب رفته به جوی باز نمیگردد
Cry wolf	چوپان دروغگو
Let sleeping dogs lie	پا رو دم شیر نزار
Shake a leg	بجنب
This is way over my head	عقلم دیگر قد نمیدهد
Out of the frying pan into the fire	از چاله در آمدن و افتادن در چاه
Dig your own grave	گور خودتو کندی
Post-lexical Level	
To be all thumbs	دست و پا چلفتی
People who live in glass houses should not throw stones	رطب خورده کی منع رطب کند
Every cloud has a silver lining	در نا امیدی بسی امید است
Sit on the fence	بی طرف ماندن/ سر دوراهی موندن
It costs an arm and a leg	کلی واسم اب خورده. حسابی پیاده شدم
Kick the bucket	غزل خداحافظی را خواندن
Do not bite the hand that feeds you	نمک نشناس نباش/ نمک بخوره نمکدون بشکنه
Pulling your leg	*کسی را دست انداختن*
A bird in the hand is worth in the bush	*سیلی نقد به از حلوای نسیه*
It's raining cats and dogs	مثل دم اسب بارون میاد

3.3 Procedure

In order to explain the perceptions of Iranian international students about idioms alongside the ways and common modes (audio, video, image, and translation) they employ, 26 Iranian international students participated in this study. Figure 3. indicates the available modes that afford the students with different ways to decode the idiomatic meaning of idioms.

Figure 3. The List of Idioms with Different Modes of Learning

     Learners were asked to take a pretest—composed of 10 questions—to measure their idiomatic competence. The pretest included 10 multiple questions. Table 2 indicates the item difficulty (p) of the items used in the pretest. As shown in the table, all the items in the test are neither too easy nor too difficult. Having taken the pretest, a list of idioms was presented to the learners through different modes (audio, video, image, and translation)—as demonstrated in Figure 4. the learners could use one or several of the modes to decode the figurative meaning of the idiom. When ready, learners could take the posttest. Pre and posttest were similar except that the order of the questions was different. The pre/posttest were automatically graded, and the learners were provided with their grades as soon as they finish the tests. Having taken the posttest, the participants were asked to take an online questionnaire, so the researcher can delve into the perceptions of the participants regarding using a website to learn idioms.
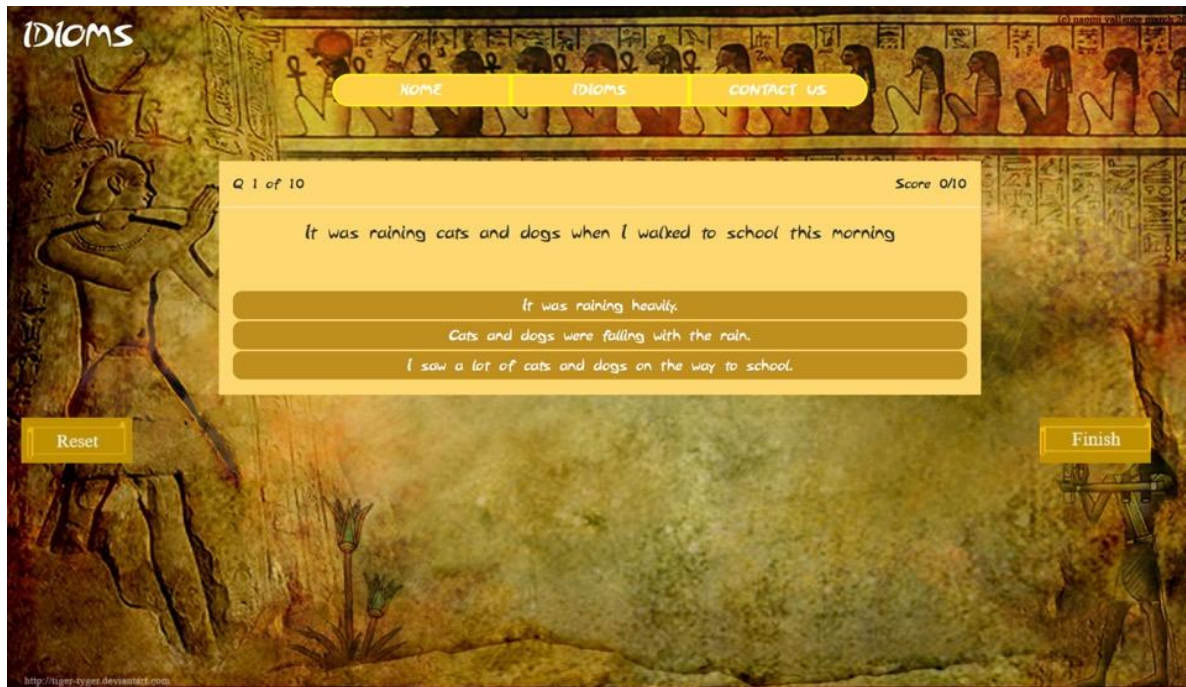
Figure 4. Pre/posttest

Table 2

The Results of Item Difficulty (p) of the pretest

Question	Item difficulty (p)
#1	0.73
#2	0.69
#3	0.65
#4	0.53
#5	0.57
#6	0.61
#7	0.57
#8	0.61
#9	0.57
#10	0.61

4 Results and Discussion

In this research, I analyzed the responses of the participants to online questionnaires. According to the results gleaned from online questionnaires, the overwhelming majority of the participants (96.2%) liked the way this website was designed to develop the idiomatic competence of the participants. That the website could pique the interest of the students to learn idioms is—by and of itself—a success in website designing.

According to Table 3, the majority of the participants (80.8%) found videos as the most helpful module to arrive at the figurative meaning of the idiomatic phrases. A number of participants (15.4%) mentioned that pictures could help them decode the meanings. Few

participants (3.8%) used audios to explore the figurative meanings. In terms of translation, the results of the questionnaire imply that students did not use translations for the idioms in the lexical level. However, more students benefited from translations of the idioms at the semi-lexical and post-lexical level where there is no similarity between idioms in L1 and their counterparts in L2.

Table 3

The most helpful mode of presentation

Mode of presentation	Percentage
Video	80.8 %
Picture	15.4 %
English audio	3.8 %
Translation	0 %

All the participants in this study agreed that the idea of learning idiomatic expressions in 3 levels and through different modes of presentation (audio, video, translation, and image) is helpful to develop the idiomatic competence. The results of the questionnaire suggest that 42.3% strongly agree with learning through this website and 57.7% of the participants agree. In this sense, no participant disagreed with learning through this website.

In terms of the extent to which the participants learned the idiomatic phrases, the results suggest that 66.4 % of the participants conceived of the website as useful. However, this perception did not span across the participants. In other words, 33.6 % of the participants perceived the website as a useless tool for learning English. In contrast to the latter group, the former group of participants hold that they learned more idioms compared to traditional tools to learn English idioms—dictionaries, idiom lists, books, and flashcards.

As displayed in Table 4, the majority of the participants (38.5%) learned idioms using videos. This is followed by the first picture, then audio, translation, and video group (26.9%), video, audio, translation, and picture group (19.2%), and the rest of the participants (11.5%) used translation, audio, video, and picture. It is worth mentioning that the participants noted that in case of post-lexical idioms where there is no equivalent in their L1, they used only translation. This confirms the significance and the role that translation plays in learning idioms.

Table 4

The Order of Using Different Modes of Learning

Order of Learning with Different Modes	Percentage
Only pictures	0 %
Only translation	0 %
Only audio	0 %
Only video	38.5 %
First picture, then audio, translation, video	26.9 %
Video, audio, translation, picture	19.2 %
Audio, video, translation, picture	3.9 %
Translation, audio, video, picture	11.5 %

As shown in Table 5, drawing on the multimodality approach (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001) to present the material, the majority of the students used videos (80%) to learn. Following videos, pictures (50%), translations (23.1%), and audios (19.2%) were utilized by the participants. The participants used more than one mode of instruction to learn idioms. In this sense, the majority of the participants used videos and pictures for lexical-level. However, translations were used for post-lexical level of idioms. Furthermore, the results imply that the participants used a variety of modes rather than one single mode to decode the figurative meaning of idioms.

Table 5

Used modes to learn idioms by the participants

Different Modes of Learning	percentage	Total number of participants
Audio	19.2 %	5
Video	80.8 %	21
Picture	50 %	13
translation	23.1 %	6

5 Limitations

In this study, the researcher recruited a limited number of participants. This is a convincing number of participants for a qualitative study, however, as for the statistical analysis (quantitative aspects) to generalize the statistical findings, more participants are needed. Accordingly, large-scale studies are required to be conducted to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of harnessing a website to learn idioms. In short, the generalizability of findings must be treated more cautiously.

This study was a pure qualitative method to glean the data concerning the perceptions of Iranian language learners. On this account, the cognitive attainment of the participants who used the website to learn idioms was not measured. Additionally, there was no delayed posttest in this study to examine the retention of the idioms. In this sense, this study did not measure the idiom recall by the participants. In addition, the statistical analysis of the research is missing since this was a qualitative study and the researcher aimed to explore the perceptions of learners rather than the statistical results of learning idioms.

6 Pedagogical Implications

As indicated above, the *Idiom Diffusion Model* is a working model in developing the idiomatic competence of language learners. Since the idiom acquisition process is different in second language acquisition, an L2 idiom processing model should be embraced to harness the full potential in L2 learners. Drawing on the *Idiom Diffusion Model*, this website was confirmed to be beneficial for Persian international students. It is, thus, highly recommended that educators explore the L1 equivalent of idioms. The *Idiom Diffusion Model*, if effectively integrated, can and should aid educators exploring the extent to which context, translation, and explanation (etymology) are required to teach idioms. To teach idioms, it is recommended to categorize idioms into three levels (LL, SLL, and PLL). Consequently, educators know when they should supply learners with efficient type of context as well as the appropriate mode of learning based on multimodality (audio, video, and image).

Furthermore, incorporating video and picture in the curriculum—for PLL level—is strongly recommended. It is advisable that educators supply learners with appropriate and enough context when it comes to SLL and PLL idioms. Translation is helpful in case of PLL idioms, so learners can arrive at the figurative meaning of idiomatic phrases. However, as for LL idioms, it turns out that a static image can trigger the L1 idiomatic competence of learners to decode the figurative meaning of idioms. This finding is consistent with the findings of Liontas (2002) that L2 learners heavily rely on their L1 idiomatic competence to arrive at the figurative meaning of the idioms.

7 Future research

The present study shed light on the perceptions of Iranian international students at American institutions. However, other nationalities with different L1 are not taken into account. Future studies may explore the perceptions of other international students regarding learning idioms—drawing on the *Idiom Diffusion Model*—via a website. Notwithstanding the participants' L1, it is recommended that future studies investigate the impact of utilizing a website on learning idioms. In this sense, the cognitive attainment of the participants will be measured. Including delayed posttest, future studies can measure not only the cognitive attainment of learners but also the extent to which the participants can recall the idioms. Additionally, future studies, consistent with the *Idiom Diffusion Model,* can investigate the process of idiom detection and comprehension. Future studies on the *Idiom Diffusion Model* can focus on the production of idioms by participants rather than merely discerning idioms. Accordingly, it appears that our understanding in regard to the *Idiom Diffusion Model* is, to date, limited and the model must await further studies to either confirm or disconfirm it.

The *Idiom Diffusion Model* studies are strictly constrained to German, Greek, French, and Korean languages. It is advisable that future studies focus on other languages and investigate the

impact of employing the model on the participants with different L1. To date, there is no single study that has examined the participants' L1 idiomatic competence and juxtapose it with the participants' L2 idiomatic competence to examine idiom processing and comprehension based on the *Idiom Diffusion Model*. Additionally, former *Idiom Diffusion Model* studies predominantly investigated the cognitive attainment and explored the perceptions of college students. In this regard, other participants such as preschoolers and K-12 students' perceptions and cognitive attainment are missing. Finally, our understanding concerning heritage language learners and the way they harness images is not fully developed. How heritage language learners detect, process, and comprehend idioms has not been the topic of intense research and deserves more attention. Future studies can scrutinize the impact of this model on heritage language learners.

8 Conclusion

As previously stated, the present study attempted to explore the perceptions of the Iranian international students about learning idioms via a website. The findings of this study imply the pre-eminence of translation over the other modes in learning PLL idioms. In addition, it reiterates that language learners utilize a variety of methods rather than a single one to learn idioms. The findings suggest that learning idioms via a website can increase the motivation level of learners and pique their interests. This confirms that learning different categories of idioms based on the image they evoke in different languages using multimodality coupled with the translation of the idioms can and should pave the way for learning idioms.

The results of the surveys confirm that the website is an effective and motivating way of learning idiomatic expressions. Approximately 78% of the international students used videos to learn idiomatic expressions. This is followed by audio and picture with 11%. The participants did not show interest in taking advantage of translations in the lexical and semi-lexical level. All the participants concurred that they learned the idiomatic expressions in this website. As for the order of learning, 44% of the participants followed the order of *video, audio, translation, and images*. Surprisingly, 89% of the participants utilized videos to learn idioms rather than the other modes. It is hoped that the present study ushers the way to tailor curriculum and enhance web design to learn idiomatic phrases.

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Appendix

Pre/posttest

1. It was raining cats and dogs when I walked to school this morning.

a) It was raining heavily.
b) Cats and dogs were falling with the rain.
c) I saw a lot of cats and dogs on the way to school.

2. "Are you listening to me?" "Yes, I'm all ears.

a) I cannot think well.
b) I am carefully listening.
c) The others are talking with me.

3. His name is on the tip of my tongue. Unfortunately, I met him only once.

a) I have issues with my tongue.
b) I am not able to bring his name to my mind.
c) I don't want to say his name.

4. He just fought with his boss. He is digging his own grave.

a) His actions will have negative consequences.
b) He makes a living digging graves.
c) He knows how to dig holes.

5. Come on, shake a leg. We have a lot to do in this new office.

a) Hurry up. Get started.
b) Shake your body to feel better.
c) Do not move in the office.

6. The coach's comments went over my head.

a) I didn't understand a single thing the coach said.
b) The coach was talking to the person directly behind me.
c) The coach wanted me to take off my hat.

7. I know that we made a big mistake. However, there is no point in crying over spilled milk.

a) We need to buy more milk because we spilled some.
b) We made a mistake in buying milk.
c) We should not dwell on the mistake but move on.

8. John: I'm tired of your constant criticism! Get off my back! Elsa: I was just trying to help.

a) Get off my bike.
b) Stop harassing me.
c) Do not help me.

9. Manuel and Juan turned in their assignment late but were not penalized. Later they noticed that they did not get full credit because they forgot the cover sheet. Manuel wanted to complain but Raul advised Manuel to, "Let sleeping dogs lie."

a) Leave things as they are.
b) Wait until things have settled down.
c) Do not bring your sleepy dog into the argument.

10. My company is in a bad financial situation. However, if I accept his new proposal, my company will be jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.

a) It will make things worse.
b) I need to fire more employees.
c) My company is on fire.

Biographical Note

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