

Students' Perception Towards Idiomatic Speaking Class: A Study at Foreign Language Center Students

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Abstract

Learning idioms requires appropriate teaching methods to facilitate students' understanding, especially when teaching speaking. Therefore, the research examined how teaching idioms affected students' speaking skills and perceptions of the learning experiences. The research was conducted at the Foreign Language Center (FLC) students in Selong, East Lombok Regency, using qualitative and quantitative methods, focusing on detailed descriptions and analysis, as well as surveys to investigate social or humanitarian issues. The results showed that 68.75% of students enjoyed learning idioms and felt the class improved their speaking abilities. Meanwhile, about 50% of students experienced difficulty memorizing idioms and correct pronunciation. Interactive teaching methods could make learning more enjoyable. Students gained confidence and fluency in using idioms, despite initial difficulties with pronunciation and memorization. Overall, the study concluded that teaching idioms enhances English speaking skills and student motivation.

Keywords: Students' Perception; Idiomatic Speaking Class; Interactive Learning.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Perception refers to an individual's impression of a particular object, influenced by internal factors, such as behavior under personal control, and external factors, such as behavior shaped by external circumstances (Ashar et al., 2022; Firmansyah, 2015). According to Aryanti et al. (2024) and Santoso (2019), perception involves how individuals organize and interpret sensory input to make sense of their surroundings. Thus, student perception is how individuals, particularly students, interpret and comprehend the information they receive from their environment, which includes their experiences, prior knowledge, and other influences. Student perception specifically relates to how students interpret and understand different elements of their educational experiences, such as their interactions with teachers, learning environments, instructional methods, and assessment practices (Knickenberg et al., 2022; Saraswati et al., 2020).

Balhara et al. (2024) explained that students with positive perceptions will be more motivated to learn, but negative perceptions can lead to negative motivation. Perception, according to Balhara et al. (2024), Firmansyah (2015), and Knickenberg et al. (2022), is divided into two forms, namely, positive perception and negative perception. Learning requires interesting and relevant experiences that make students feel actively involved in the learning

process and can create positive perceptions (Mehlhorn et al., 2022). Constructivist as explained by Cobb (2024), and Topçiu and Myftiu (2015) is a learning theory that emphasizes the active role of students in building understanding and making sense of information. It is based on the idea that individuals construct their own knowledge and understanding through experiences and interactions with their environment (Cobb, 2024; Mishra, 2023). Therefore, the way of learning in class influences a learner's perception.

Each subject requires unique learning methods because they have distinct characteristics, varying learning objectives, and different student needs. Not every lesson can be taught using the same approach, as each student learns differently, and a method that works for one student may not necessarily be effective for another (Benati, 2021; Patel & Jain, 2008; Ta'amneh, 2021). Similarly, idiomatic lessons require tailored teaching approaches. An idiomatic speaking class is a specialized program focused on learning idioms. This program is crafted to help students who want to study idioms through engaging teaching methods. This class aims to enhance students' speaking abilities by incorporating idioms into their speech. Mastering speaking skills improves overall communication and helps convey ideas more effectively, listen attentively, and ask the right questions during conversations. To excel in speaking, it is important to consider the various aspects of effective communication.

Five aspects are considered when assessing speaking skills: grammar, vocabulary, language skills, pronunciation, and comprehension (Bygate, 1987; Cole et al., 2007; Maysuroh et al., 2023; Tulu & Gutema, 2023). In addition to these five aspects, idioms are also included in these aspects. Idiom is one of the components of speaking because it can improve English speaking ability and increase comprehension (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2016; Hinkel, 2017; Martinez Del Castillo, 2016; Turick, 2018). According to Martinez Del Castillo (2016), idioms are phrases or expressions in a language where the meaning cannot be inferred from the literal definitions of the individual words. However, idioms are challenging to learn and teach for several reasons. They are not literal and do not directly convey their content. The most difficult idioms have no direct equivalents and cannot be derived from the combined meanings of their individual components (Rakhmyta & Rusmiati, 2020; Ta'amneh, 2021). Another reason is the limited exposure to the cultural background behind the idiom, which causes difficulties in understanding its meaning (Hinkel, 2017; Rana, 2016).

Learning idioms requires appropriate teaching methods to facilitate their understanding. According to Ashar et al. (2022), Martinez Del Castillo (2016), and Rakhmyta and Rusmiati (2020), when teaching idiomatic expressions, it is important to understand and comprehend the context and culture in which the idiom is used, as idiomatic words often have different meanings in different contexts. When teaching idiomatic expressions, technologies such as online learning platforms (LMS) and learning apps can be used to organize and manage learning materials (Cole et al., 2007; Maysuroh et al., 2023; Mehlhorn et al., 2022).

Previous research has shown some difficulties faced by students, especially English majors, when learning idioms and their strategies. The studies conducted by (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2016; Asri & Rochmawati, 2017; Hinkel, 2017; Ta'amneh, 2021), they found difficulties faced by students when learning idioms, namely the lack of foreign cultural background, understanding English figurative expressions, using idioms in oral communication, practicing idioms in different communicative contexts, and difficulty in presenting idioms in a way that reflects language used in real life. In terms of strategies used by students in learning idioms, they found that the most frequently used strategies were predicting the meaning of idioms, translating them into the first language, guessing the meaning from the context, relying on verbal and visual information, and looking up unknown idioms in the dictionary.

The current research provides a novel contribution by redirecting attention from the general challenges and strategies in learning idioms, as explored in previous studies, to a more specific context—students' perceptions within an idiomatic speaking class at a Foreign Language Center (FLC). Although previous research has extensively documented the challenges associated with learning idioms and the strategies that students employ, this study explores the perspectives and experiences of learners in a classroom environment specifically designed to teach idiomatic expressions. This emphasis on students' perspectives offers a more sophisticated understanding of the application of idiomatic knowledge in a speaking-oriented setting. This topic has not been sufficiently investigated

in previous research. Additionally, this study examines the nature of an idiomatic speaking course, providing students with a perspective on the efficacy, challenges, and practicality of idioms in real-world communication. The novelty of this study is its emphasis on the experiential aspect of idiom learning in a structured class setting, as opposed to the general challenges highlighted in previous research. This study aims to identify ways idiomatic instruction can be customized to better suit learners' needs by focusing on students' feedback and perceptions. As a result, it will help to develop more effective pedagogical approaches to teaching idioms.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods, focusing on detailed descriptions and analysis, as well as surveys to investigate social or humanitarian issues (Benati, 2021; Hall & Liebenberg, 2024; Maher et al., 2018; Patel & Jain, 2008). This research focuses on FLC students who attended the speaking idiomatic class at the Foreign Language Center (FLC) in Selong, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. The class was designed to help students learn idiomatic by starting with an idiomatic sentence, explaining correct pronunciation, and practicing together. The material was taught on a topic, repeated at previous meetings, and interspersed with games to make learning more interesting. The study involved 27 FLC batch 27 students, with 6 being the research sample. The average FLC student was just graduating from high school. Most of the teachers have a bachelor's degree in English Education, and some have worked abroad for a long time. The class was designed to help students remember and retain information.

This study utilized observation sheets, questionnaires, and interview guides to gather data from students participating in an idiomatic speaking class. The data collection process included face-to-face interviews conducted in two stages. In the first stage, the authors introduced themselves and obtained consent from the participants. The interviews, lasting five to ten minutes, are recorded either by video or audio. In the second stage, two interviewees with the best responses were selected for direct interviews, which were also recorded. The recorded results were then transcribed into text for further analysis.

The researcher used a holistic analysis approach (Beal, 2013; Hall & Liebenberg, 2024; Ofir et al., 2016; Walsh, 2015) to analyze data, including data collection, integration, presentation, interpretation, and maintenance. Trustworthiness was demonstrated through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This involved ensuring the research process is well-documented, transparent, and subjective (Maher et al., 2018; Shenton, 2004; Stahl & King, 2020). Triangulation is a common strategy to prove credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Morse et al., 2002). The researcher collected the data using observation, questionnaires, and participant interviews. Observation provided firsthand insights; questionnaires documented students' perceptions; and participant interviews enabled a thorough investigation of individual experiences, allowing for pattern and trend analysis (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher observed the activities in an idiomatic speaking class to assess the teaching and learning process on June 9, 2024. Using observation sheets, the researcher documented classroom activities, including tutor-student interactions. The observation revealed that the class proceeded smoothly. The tutor began with a greeting and a brief review of the previous material. The teaching methods employed were engaging and enjoyable, resulting in enthusiastic student participation. Most students actively asked questions and practiced idiomatic expressions. The tutor effectively addressed students' questions and difficulties. However, students faced challenges, particularly in pronouncing words in idiomatic sentences and remembering the meanings of idioms, which often lack literal interpretations. In conclusion, the idiomatic speaking class was conducted effectively, though students encountered difficulties with pronunciation and memorization of idioms.

The researcher distributed a research questionnaire on June 15, 2024, to collect field data. To clarify the results, the researcher compiled a table of student opinions about idiomatic speaking classes and idioms, presenting them as percentages. The results are shown in Table 1, which records students' opinions about the idiomatic

speaking class. The questionnaire consisted of 8 questions; the results are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Students Responses to Idiomatic Speaking Class

No	Questionnaire	SA	A	DS	SD
1.	I like learning idiom	3 18,75%	11 68,75%	2 12,5%	0 0%
2.	Idiomatic class is an interesting subject	4 25%	10 62,5%	1 6,25%	1 6,25%
3.	Idioms is difficult to learn	8 50%	5 31,25%	3 18,75%	0 0%
4.	Idioms is a very important lesson and needs to be learned in English	5 31,25%	10 62,5%	1 6,25%	0 0%
5.	The tutor uses interesting teaching methods	6 37,5%	10 62,5%	0 0%	0 0%
6.	The teaching method used makes it easy to learn idioms	6 35,5%	9 56,25%	1 6,25%	0 0%
7.	I am satisfied with the feedback given by the tutor on my use of idioms	7 34,75	8 50%	1 6,25%	0 0%
8.	“Idiomatic speaking class” helped me to improve my speaking ability.	5 31,25%	11 68,75%	0 0%	0 0%

Based on the Table 1 above, the results showed that most students (68.75%) enjoyed learning idioms. Although idioms are considered a difficult subject (50%), students find them interesting (62.5%) and important to learn in English (62.5%). With the use of interesting (62.5%) and easy-to-understand teaching methods, it has become easier for students to learn idioms (56.75%). Most students were also satisfied with the tutor's feedback on using idioms (50%). Additionally, students believe that the idiomatic speaking class helps improve their speaking ability (68.75%).

The researcher also conducted interviews with students to gather their perceptions. The interviews revealed that the idiomatic speaking class is highly beneficial for improving speaking skills. The tutor's interactive method and use of engaging, easy-to-understand media, such as audiovisual aids, contribute significantly to this positive outcome. Tutors also frequently incorporate games related to idiom learning, making the process enjoyable and preventing boredom. From the interviews, the researcher concluded that the idiomatic speaking class effectively enhances students' speaking abilities. This improvement is due to the class's emphasis on active practice of idiomatic expressions and building students' confidence in speaking. Many students reported noticeable improvements in their speaking skills due to participating in this class.

Based on the researcher's findings above, the students believe that the idiomatic speaking class greatly influences their speaking skills. The data shows that most students enjoy learning idiomatic expressions (68.75%) and consider them important and interesting lessons in English. They find idioms challenging (50%) due to difficulties in memorizing sentences and meanings and in proper pronunciation. However, the teaching and learning methods used in the class, such as direct interaction, memorization, and practicing in front of the class, make it easier for students to learn idioms. The tutor's effective responses to students' obstacles also play a significant role.

The research findings above also revealed that idiomatic speaking classes help improve students' speaking skills. Questionnaire data indicates that many students feel these classes enhance their speaking ability (68.75%). In these classes, the tutor encourages students to be more active in practicing and speaking. The class is designed to be as engaging as possible to prevent boredom, and students focus on memorizing sentences, frequently repeating them, and practicing in front of their peers to build confidence. Students have reported improvements in their speaking skills, noting that before taking this class, they used ordinary sentences, but now they can use idiomatic expressions. Many students were initially less confident in speaking English, but after taking this class, their confidence has increased.

The observed improvement in students' speaking abilities in idiomatic speaking classes can be attributed to a range of factors. One key element is the students' genuine interest in learning idioms. When students are engaged and motivated by the subject matter, they are more likely to participate actively and put in the effort required to master it. Another significant factor is the effectiveness of the teaching methods and media employed by the tutors. The use of interactive and engaging methods, such as direct classroom interactions and multimedia resources like audiovisual aids, enhances the learning experience. These methods help make the material more accessible and enjoyable, which can lead to better retention and understanding of idiomatic expressions.

The tutors' responsiveness to students' challenges also plays a crucial role. Effective tutors are attentive to students' difficulties and provide timely and constructive feedback. This support helps students overcome obstacles such as difficulties in pronunciation, memorization of idiomatic sentences, and understanding their meanings. Tutors address these issues to help pupils learn more effectively and gain confidence. Finally, the supportive learning environment contributes to the improvement of speaking skills. A positive and encouraging atmosphere in the classroom makes students feel comfortable and motivated to practice their speaking skills. This environment, coupled with the class's engaging nature and the tutor's supportive responses, creates a conducive setting for students to enhance their speaking abilities. The combined effect of students' interest in idioms, effective teaching methods, responsive tutoring, and a supportive learning environment collectively significantly improves students' speaking skills.

In conclusion, this study is consistent with previous research in acknowledging the difficulties students encounter when learning idioms, such as the complexities of interpreting figurative language, the cultural nuances hidden in idioms, and the difficulty of effectively integrating idioms in communication. However, by focusing on students' views in an idiomatic-speaking class, this study contributes to the discourse by better understanding how these issues materialize in a classroom setting built expressly for teaching idioms. The findings support the idea that focused, contextualized education, as investigated in previous studies, is critical for improving students' idiomatic competency. However, this study takes a step further, highlighting the relevance of student input in developing more successful teaching practices.

While this study confirms the difficulties and techniques identified in prior studies, it also emphasizes the sensory and perceptual components of idiom learning in an organized classroom setting. The insights gathered from students' perspectives make a unique contribution, implying that instructional techniques should reflect not just the cognitive problems of idiom learning but also the emotional and practical experiences of the learners. This study provides fresh directions for enhancing idiomatic training to better match the needs of students, contributing to the ongoing discussion about successful language teaching approaches.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that students perceive the Idiomatic Speaking Class as significantly beneficial for improving their English speaking skills. The questionnaire results revealed that 68.75% of students enjoyed learning idioms and viewed the class positively. The use of interactive teaching methods, including games and discussions, created an engaging learning environment that encouraged active student participation. Although students found idioms challenging, they recognized their importance in learning English. About 50% of students experienced difficulties with memorizing idioms and correct pronunciation but felt that the support from tutors and effective teaching methods helped them overcome these challenges. This demonstrates that a well-suited approach from teachers can help students grasp difficult material more effectively. Additionally, the study found that students' confidence in speaking improved after taking the idiomatic speaking class. Students who previously lacked confidence in using English were now more proficient in incorporating idioms into their conversations, increasing their motivation and interest in learning English.

For future improvements, the researcher offers several suggestions. The tutors must maintain interactive and engaging teaching methods, provide additional support for pronunciation challenges, and create a supportive classroom environment. Incorporate technology and digital media to enhance learning. The students should actively

participate in class, practice speaking regularly, review idioms at home, and seek help from tutors. Utilize learning resources and collaborate with peers to make learning more enjoyable. In the future, the researcher needs to expand the study to include a diverse range of students, use consistent data collection methods, and explore factors like the learning environment and social support to gain a deeper understanding of improving speaking skills.

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