

TÍNH HIỆU QUẢ CỦA VIỆC SỬ DỤNG VIDEO NGUYÊN GỐC TRONG GIẢNG DẠY THÀNH NGỮ TIẾNG ANH CHO SINH VIÊN MỘT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC TẠI VIỆT NAM

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Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu tính hiệu quả của việc sử dụng các trích đoạn phim và chương trình truyền hình trong giảng dạy thành ngữ tiếng Anh cho sinh viên Việt Nam. 44 sinh viên trình độ A2 ở 2 lớp học tại một trường đại học công lập ở Hà Nội đã được chia thành hai nhóm và được học 20 thành ngữ tiếng Anh trong 6 buổi học trong 3 tuần liên tục. Nhóm thực nghiệm học thành ngữ thông qua các trích đoạn video nguyên gốc, trong khi nhóm đối chứng được giảng dạy theo phương pháp truyền thống. Các bài kiểm tra trước và sau thử nghiệm giảng dạy được sử dụng để đo lường mức độ hiểu thành ngữ của sinh viên. Kết quả phân tích thống kê mô tả và suy luận cho thấy nhóm thực nghiệm có kết quả vượt trội đáng kể so với nhóm đối chứng. Những phát hiện này nhấn mạnh lợi ích sư phạm của việc tích hợp tài liệu nghe nhìn nguyên gốc vào giảng dạy thành ngữ cho người học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ tại Việt Nam, đồng thời gợi ý tiềm năng áp dụng phương pháp này trong các bối cảnh tương tự tại bậc đại học ở khu vực Đông Nam Á.

Từ khóa: thành ngữ tiếng Anh, hiểu thành ngữ, sử dụng thành ngữ, tài liệu nguyên gốc, tài liệu đa phương tiện, sinh viên đại học.

This study investigates the effectiveness of using excerpts from movies and television series to teach English idiomatic expressions to Vietnamese university students. 44 A2-level non-English-majored students from two classes at a public university in Hanoi were assigned to either an experimental group or a control group and taught 20 English idiomatic expressions in six 45-minute lessons over a span of three weeks by the same instructor. The experimental group was introduced to English idiomatic expressions through authentic video clips containing idiomatic expressions while the control group received instruction through traditional methods without audiovisual input. Pre- and post-tests were administered to assess students' comprehension of idioms. The descriptive and inferential statistical analyses of the test scores revealed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in comprehension of idioms. These findings highlight the pedagogical values of integrating authentic audiovisual materials into the instruction of idiomatic expressions for Vietnamese EFL learners and suggest the potential capability of this approach in other EFL university settings in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: English idioms, idiom comprehension, authentic materials, multimedia materials, university student.

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AUTHENTIC VIDEOS IN TEACHING ENGLISH IDIOMS TO VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

1. Introduction

Idiomatic and figurative expressions, although largely disregarded before the 20th century, have received significant pedagogical attention in recent years. This renewed interest is primarily attributed to the increasing recognition that such expressions constitute an inseparable aspect of human language and thus prevalent in everyday discourse (Sanaeifar, 2017). Previous research has indicated that acquiring idiomatic expressions yields considerable advantages for second-language learners. Proficiency in these expressions not only enriches learners' linguistic repertoire but also facilitates a deeper understanding of underlying cultural references and societal expectations, while contributing to more sophisticated and creative language use (Sadiqzade, 2025). Besides, as a form of English formulaic sequences, idioms essentially contribute to communicative competence - a critical component that is frequently assessed in language examinations (Boers et al., 2017). In the context of Vietnam, the importance of mastering English idioms has grown considerably with the increasing demand for standardised English examinations such as IELTS, where idiomatic fluency is particularly crucial for achieving higher scores. According to the official Writing

Band Descriptors, candidates who can demonstrate their idiomatic competence would score higher; specifically, a band score of 7 in Lexical Resource requires 'some ability to use less common and/or idiomatic items', while a band 8 needs 'skilful use', and a band 9 demands 'natural and sophisticated control' of such expressions (IELTS, 2025).

However, Vietnamese university students often face challenges in both understanding and producing idioms due to various factors, the most prominent of which include differences in cultural context and limited exposure to idioms being used in authentic situations (Phan et al., 2022). Despite these challenges, research on optimal idiom instructions in the Vietnamese ELT context remains limited (Phan et al., 2022; Vo, 2023), while students continue to struggle with idiom comprehension and production. In recent years, however, authentic video excerpts from movie and television series featuring idiomatic language have emerged as rich and valuable pedagogical resources. Such materials present colloquial English in naturalistic and real-life contexts rather than in artificial and scripted scenarios, thereby providing learners with exposure to native speech patterns, including slangs, reduced forms, accents and dialects (Mayer & Sims, 1994, as cited in Sanaeifar,

2017). This study thus examines whether using such materials can result in significant improvements in the comprehension of idiomatic language among undergraduates in Hanoi, Vietnam.

2. Literature review

2.1. *Idioms/idiomatic expressions*

All languages have phrases or sentences whose meanings cannot be directly inferred from the grammar and literal meanings of the individual words within them; such phrases or expressions are referred to as an idiomatic expression. Unlike compositional phrases, where the meaning is deduced from the combined meanings of the words involved, idiomatic expressions often derive their meaning in a non-compositional manner. In other words, there is typically little to no direct relationship between the words that make up an idiom and its overall meaning (Fotovatnia & Khaki, 2012). "For example, the idiom 'throw somebody for a loop' might literally suggest tossing someone in a way that creates a loop. However, its figurative meaning is 'to shock or confuse someone unexpectedly'—a meaning not evident from the individual words."

Other researchers also hold a similar view regarding the disconnection between an idiom's lexical component and its holistic meaning, and how this semantic gap can pose significant challenges for learners in interpreting meaning, causing misunderstanding or confusion in communicative contexts. Cutting and

Block (1997) define an idiom as "a unitised phrase with interpretations that are independent of the literal meanings of their individual words" (p. 57); similarly, Abel (2003) describes idioms as fixed or semi-fixed expressions whose figurative meaning is not immediately apparent from the meanings of the individual words. Such semantic opacity, coupled with additional challenges such as the lack of contextual learning and cultural background, often hinders comprehension and use of English idioms, especially among non-native speakers who mainly study idioms through de-contextualised instruction. As Guo (2019, as cited in Zarei, 2020) argues, it is essential for students to learn idioms appropriately via authentic, real-life communication. To this end, our research explores the effectiveness of using authentic audiovisual materials - in the form of excerpts from television series and movies - as a pedagogical tool to expose learners to English idioms in more natural and context-rich settings.

2.2. *Importance of idioms in EFL contexts*

Language learning is a complicated process consisting of a range of dimensions, with lexical resources being especially crucial. Extensive research such as Aljebreen and Alzamil's (2022) and Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki's (2014) has emphasised the importance of vocabulary and identified the most effective methods for vocabulary acquisition. Vocabulary learning is regarded as the main

component of language and knowledge acquisition (Zarei, 2020). While many teachers refer to learning vocabulary as learning individual words, this view is rather incomplete as vocabulary encompasses not only words with literal meanings but also metaphorical expressions with figurative meaning.

Among these figurative expressions, idioms play a particularly prominent role in communication; idioms are among the most frequently used linguistic features in many varieties of English, and they permeate a wide range of discourse - ranging from everyday conversations to university lectures, movies, or TV programs (Fotovatnia & Khaki, 2012). Given their ubiquity, a limited understanding of idioms can hinder learners' ability to engage fully and appropriately in diverse communicative contexts. Research also indicates that many second-language learners, even those of higher proficiency levels, often fail to use idioms appropriately (Liontas, 2018); sometimes they just avoid using them altogether. This tendency to misuse or avoid idioms may reflect their inherent complexity, stemming from features such as non-transparent meaning, cultural embeddedness, and reliance on contextual cues. As previously discussed, such characteristics can cause difficulties for the learners, hence reinforcing the need for classroom instruction that can address them. Given these challenges, teaching idioms to learners should be an essential

component of a language classroom. The teaching of idioms will ensure that students' language learning process is not impeded (Zarei, 2020), particularly in classes with native-speaking instructors who use idioms frequently. Additionally, mastery of idioms benefits students' reading comprehension and social interactions in the target language (Secord & Wiig, 1993, as cited in Fotovatnia & Khaki, 2012). Consequently, it is essential that language teachers opt for effective techniques to teach idioms that address the challenges of idiom learning by grounding idiomatic instruction in meaningful contexts, which is an approach this study aims to investigate.

2.3. Techniques for teaching idioms

Teaching idioms is arguably one of the most difficult areas in which second-language learners and teachers are involved (Fotovatnia & Khaki, 2012). This, coupled with the importance of idioms in achieving successful language learning, has prompted the exploration and development of effective strategies for idiom instruction among teachers and researchers. Contemporary approaches to idiom teaching include several main frameworks:

- **Multimodal instruction:** combining a range of sensory inputs - mainly visual (images or videos) and verbal (spoken or written), this approach stems from the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML) (Aljebreen & Alzamil, 2022; Mayer, 2001, as cited in Mahmoodi-

Shahrehabaki, 2014). Integrating both visual and auditory channels for optimum cognitive processing, this approach has been proven to significantly improve both idiom comprehension and production among language learners, thereby effectively enhancing retention and recall.

- Visual-based instruction: this approach relies on the Dual Coding Theory (Boers et al., 2017), highlighting the importance of visual representation along with verbal information, which are processed via different cognitive channels. Therefore, to create mental relations between idioms and their figurative meaning, thereby improving knowledge retention and recall, this approach suggests using images, videos, and visual aids to teach idioms.

- Narrative-based method: drawing on Schema Theory (Liontas, 2018), this approach advocates teaching idioms via storytelling activities, in which new knowledge is integrated into existing knowledge. This way, new idioms are contextualised within meaningful narratives, allowing students to associate newly learned idioms with familiar or relatable situations, as well as facilitating deeper understanding of idiomatic expressions and natural production.

- Translation-based approach: based on Contrastive Analysis Theory, this pedagogical approach merely focuses on comparing L1 and L2 equivalents of idioms (Chen & Lai, 2013). While being able to help learners identify cross-

linguistic differences, this method has been proven to be far less effective than multimodal and visual approaches regarding enhancing idiom production (Fotovatnia & Khaki, 2012).

2.4. Use of authentic materials in teaching idioms

Materials that are not originally designed for pedagogical purposes, such as magazines, newspapers, tapes of natural speech, TV shows, movies, etc., are defined as ‘authentic’ (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, as cited in Gilmore, 2007). Authentic materials have become an important feature of communicative language teaching. In the context of teaching idioms, the use of such materials presents both merits and drawbacks.

Proponents argue that authentic materials confer substantial benefits when used to teach vocabulary or idioms. First, they expose learners to more realistic, up-to-date and contextually appropriate language than traditional textbooks - which are now considered “inadequate, either as models for language use or as preparation for real life reading and listening” - do (Thornbury, 2006, p. 21). Second, the meaningful and cohesive storylines typical of various authentic sources - such as movies and television shows - would further enhance learners’ comprehension by embedding idioms in situations that allow learners to better interpret the pragmatic use and figurative meanings of such expressions. This is particularly essential since an idiom’s

meaning generally cannot be directly interpreted from its individual lexical components alone.

However, critics also raise concerns regarding the use of authentic materials. While Thornbury (2006) criticises traditional textbooks for their lack of realism, Andarab (2013) cautions that highly authentic materials may sometimes be less beneficial than simulated resources for idiom instruction, hence suggesting the need to balance between resource authenticity and pedagogical purposes. Gilmore (2007) similarly warns that complex linguistic features (e.g., syntax and discourse patterns) in authentic materials may appear overwhelming for learners, especially those at lower proficiency levels. Likewise, features such as fast-paced authentic speech and culturally embedded references can hinder comprehensive, necessitating considerable scaffolding and extensive explanation. These challenges, along with the substantial time and effort required from ESL teachers to locate and adapt suitable excerpts (Andarab, 2013), suggest that resource authenticity should be mediated by careful pedagogical design rather than blindly pursued for its own sake.

In summary, the aforementioned converging perspectives highlight the pedagogical challenges of reaping the contextual benefits of authentic materials without overwhelming learners, hence justifying the need to explore whether authentic excerpts from movies and

television series can be used to teach English idioms more effectively to Vietnamese undergraduates in the context of a public university in Hanoi, Vietnam.

2.5. Research gap

A large amount of empirical research supports the use of movie and television excerpts in idiom instruction, consistently emphasising their pedagogical merits over traditional methods. For example, Sanaeifar (2017) and Aljebreen and Alzamil (2022) reveal that learners learning idioms via animated films or short movies show statistically significant improvements in both idiom comprehension and usage, outperforming their peers who just receive conventional, translation-based instruction. These findings align with Mayer's CTML - which asserts that learning is more effective when visual and auditory inputs are processed simultaneously through dual channels (Mayer, 2001, as cited in Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki, 2014). This theoretical framework helps explain how contextualised, multimodal input - in this case, excerpts from movies and television shows - can aid learning, particularly in areas like idiom comprehension benefitting from situational cues. Besides, findings proposed by Fotovatnia and Khaki (2012) corroborate this claim, showing that multimodal exposure can enhance recognition and understanding of idiomatic expressions, while Sanaeifar (2017) further emphasises that not only multimedia-based instruction promotes

idiom comprehension, but also helps bridge the gap between passive recognition and active use, fostering greater pragmatic competence of second-language learners. In general, these findings highlight the potential of movie and television series excerpts in idiom instruction, thereby justifying the current research's focus on contextualised, movie-based pedagogical approach to idiom teaching.

In the context of Vietnam, several recent studies have explored idiom instruction, yet notable gaps remain. For example, Vo (2023) examined the cultural and methodological challenges English-major students face while studying English idioms at a university in a southern province of Vietnam, highlighting the need for more culturally immersive teaching practices. Meanwhile, Dao et al. (2024) conducted a mixed-methods study on younger learners (those aged between 12 and 18), noting their tendency to prioritise exam strategies over idiom acquisition. While both studies offer valuable insights, they mainly placed an emphasis on highly-motivated learners (English majors and soon-to-be test takers). In contrast, research focusing on non-English majors remains scarce. Furthermore, neither of these studies examined the pedagogical potential of authentic materials such as movies and television excerpts in teaching English idioms, despite their documented merits for idiom acquisition. This gap is particularly concerning given the current 'IELTS fever' in Vietnam and the increasing number of students pursuing

international education (Dao et al., 2024), both of which demand a strong command of idiomatic language to succeed in.

By targeting this underrepresented demographic and investigating a contextualised media-based approach to idiom teaching, the current study was conducted to establish a theoretical foundation for applying effective pedagogical approaches to improve students' command of idiomatic expressions in Vietnamese tertiary contexts. It aims to examine whether using sample clips from movies and television series could improve students' comprehension of idiomatic expressions. To achieve the aforementioned aim, it seeks to answer the following research question: *Does an instruction using excerpts from movies and television series enhance university students' comprehension of English idioms?*

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

Given that the aim and research question of this study seek to explain the relationship between variables, a quantitative approach was adopted. As Creswell and Guetterman (2019) suggest, this approach enables researchers to examine the impacts of an independent variable - in this case, the integration of video excerpts from movies and television series in teaching English idioms, on a dependent variable - that is students' comprehension of idiomatic expressions.

In particular, this study employed a quasi-experimental design in which intact groups are used. This design was chosen due to practical reasons, as assigning students to different groups for experimental purposes may disrupt their regular learning and is often infeasible in educational settings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Accordingly, existing classes were designated as the experimental and control groups. Both groups completed a pre-test prior to intervention to ensure there are no significant differences in their initial idiom knowledge. The experimental group then received the intervention, while the control group continued with the traditional instruction. Following the treatment, a post-test was administered to both groups to assess any changes in comprehension and differences between the two groups. While this design offers the advantage of utilizing existing intact groups, it also presents some threats to validity, which this study attempted to address.

3.2. Context and participants

The study was conducted at a public university in Hanoi and involved 44 undergraduates who were non-English majors from two classes taught by one of the researchers. These participants were selected using convenience sampling as one of the researchers is the instructor at the research site, which allows direct and easy access to the students. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), this sampling could optimize accessibility and time constraints while ensuring the

feasibility of data collection and analysis within the scope of the research. All participants were at CEFR A2 level of English proficiency, confirmed through the Duolingo English Test (DET). Those in this particular proficiency level were selected since they all have adequate basic vocabulary to understand most of the idiomatic instructions while still having significant room for improvement in idiomatic comprehension. Also, at the time of the study, these students were attending an English preparation course with idiom use being one of its objectives.

To facilitate the quasi-experimental design, the two classes, with 22 students each, were randomly assigned to either an experimental or control group. The experimental group received instruction on English idioms through authentic video excerpts from movies and television series, while the control group was taught the same idioms using a traditional, definition- and meaning-based method. This setup enabled a comparison of the effectiveness of audiovisual authentic materials in enhancing idiom comprehension among A2-level university students.

3.3. Data collection instruments

This study utilised the Duolingo English Test (DET), a pre-test and a post-test as the primary instruments. The DET, administered online via the participants' mobiles, was used to homogenise them in terms of their general English proficiency. This test was chosen for its maximal accessibility, usefulness, and low cost (Wagner, 2020). The results of the DET

indicated that all participants in this study were at the A2 proficiency level at the time of assessment.

In addition to the DET, pre- and post-tests were employed to assess the participants' comprehension of English idioms and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention involving using authentic audiovisual materials in teaching these expressions. Each test consists of 20 items, each targeting a different idiomatic expression taught during the intervention. The items followed a gap-fill format and involved contextualized sentences to target both form and meaning of the idioms, as suggested by Fotovatnia and Khaki (2012). Students were given 20 minutes to complete each test.

The selection of 20 idiomatic expressions was informed by frequency and relevance. Initially, 20 idiomatic expressions were chosen based on their pedagogical values and level of appropriateness to A2-level learners. Their frequency was then verified by the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to ensure they are commonly used in a wide range of contexts. After that, each idiom was searched on YouGlish to locate excerpts from movies and television series containing it, which were later used for the experimental treatment.

Prior to implementation, both the pre-test and post-test were piloted with six students, who were not members of the two selected classes for the study, to establish face and content validity. The face validity of the tests was assessed through a

feedback form in which the pilot participants were asked to rate the clarity of the test instructions, format, and the perceived difficulty level of each item on a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 indicating the highest level of clarity and difficulty. Meanwhile, to enhance content validity, both tests were reviewed by two experienced EFL instructors with expertise in vocabulary instruction and language assessment. Based on the feedback from the pilots, two key adjustments were made to improve the tests. First, the test instructions were simplified and clarified to facilitate students' understanding. Second, an example answer was added to the first question to guide students through the gap-fill format.

To assess the reliability of the instruments, the split-half method was employed to calculate the coefficient of internal consistency. The pre-test yielded a coefficient of 0.79, while the post-test produced a higher coefficient of 0.93, both of which exceed the threshold of 0.70 for acceptable reliability of a language test or assessment. These results indicate that both instruments were reliable tools for assessing students' understanding of idioms, strengthening the validity of the score comparisons between experimental and control groups.

3.4. Data collection

The experiment began with the online administration of the DET to all participants to ensure comparable English proficiency levels among two groups. Two weeks prior to the instructional phase, all

participants completed the pre-test in paper-based format to assess their initial knowledge of the 20 target idioms. During the subsequent three weeks, both groups attended six 45-minute English idiom-focused lessons, two per week. To minimize instructional bias, lessons were delivered by the same instructor (who is one of the researchers) with the same set of idioms, the same reinforcement activities and the same printed review worksheets.

The experimental group was taught using authentic excerpts between 50 seconds and 2 minutes from movies and television series, which featured the target idioms naturally used in dialogues. Each lesson introduced 3-4 idioms following this procedure:

(1) Students were briefly introduced to the context of the video to aid comprehension;

(2) Students watched the video and listened to the target idiom and answered guided questions about its meaning in context;

(3) Students completed gap-fill exercises to reinforce the comprehension and usage.

In contrast, the control group received instruction of the same idioms through a more traditional, definition- and explanation-based approach using written examples. The lesson followed these steps:

(1) The idiom was explained or translated, followed by example sentences illustrating typical usage;

(2) Students were given notes on the idiom's grammatical structure and usage restrictions;

(3) Students completed gap-fill exercises to reinforce the comprehension and usage.

At the end of the final lesson, all participants from both groups completed the printed post-test to measure their learning gains. Finally, the test results from both groups were collected for comparative analysis. To ensure data integrity, all participants were instructed not to write their names on all of the test papers. Instead, each of them was assigned a number used consistently across all instruments. Such a coding system preserved anonymity while allowing for accurate matching of the pre- and post-test scores. Upon completion, all test papers were collected, stored securely and later digitised for analysis.

3.5. Data analysis

The data obtained from the pre- and post-tests were analysed employing both descriptive and inferential statistics with the support of the MS Excel Data Analysis ToolPak. Descriptive statistics, including sample size (N), minimum and maximum scores, mean, and standard deviation (SD), were calculated to provide a general overview of both groups' performances on the pre- and post-tests.

To address the research question regarding the effectiveness of using authentic audiovisual materials for teaching idiomatic expressions, inferential

analysis was conducted. Specifically, two independent sample t-tests were performed at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. First, a two-tailed t-test was conducted on the pre-test results to examine whether there were any statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups before the instructional intervention. This step ensured that both groups began the study at comparable levels of idiom comprehension. Following the intervention, a one-tailed t-test was conducted on the post-test results to determine whether the experimental group outperformed the control group.

The decision to use t-test was to test for a difference between two groups of different individuals in terms of one dependent variable (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The two-tailed t-test was used as no directional difference was expected between the experimental and control groups prior to the instructional intervention, while the one-tailed t-test was selected based on the study's directional hypothesis, which predicted that the experimental group, who was exposed to authentic audiovisual input through movies and television series, would outperform the control group, who received instruction through traditional methods, in idiom comprehension. This prediction was grounded in existing research suggesting that multimodal input can enhance learners' ability to comprehend and retain idiomatic expressions (Aljebreen & Alzamil, 2022; Alzamil, 2022; Sanaeifar, 2017).

3.6. Ethical considerations

Several ethical considerations were addressed in conducting this research. Prior to data collection, the research's purposes and procedures were thoroughly explained to all participants, and written consent forms were obtained. Participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and thus they can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. To ensure confidentiality, all printed test papers were collected immediately upon completion, and the results were digitised and stored securely on the researcher's laptop on a MS Excel worksheet. Participants' real names are not revealed as numbers were used to identify them. Additionally, the test administration was designed to eliminate any disruption to the participants' class time, with tests being given within their regular academic schedule. Finally, participants were assured that their test performance would not affect their general academic grades.

4. Findings

4.1. Student performance before the intervention

A two-tailed t-test was conducted to analyse the performance of both control and experimental groups on the pre-test prior to the intervention. It aims to statistically confirm that both groups started learning at a comparable level of idiom comprehension. The hypotheses for this t-test are as follows:

- H_0 : There is no significant difference between the mean pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups ($\mu_1 = \mu_2$)

- H_1 : There is a significant difference between the mean pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups ($\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$)

The analysis indicated no significant difference between the control group and experimental group at the significance level of 0.5. As can be seen from Table 1, the P-values for the test were significantly

larger than 0.05 ($P = 0.65$); these results provided strong statistical evidence that no initial differences between the two groups prior to the commencement of the course were significant. This confirmation of comparable starting proficiency levels ensured that any differences seen in the students' post-test results would be confidently attributed to the effectiveness of the new teaching approach, rather than the pre-existing differences in students' initial abilities.

Table 1. *T-test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances (Pre-test)*

| | Variable 1 | Variable 2 |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Mean | 10.72727273 | 10.45454545 |
| Variance | 3.16017316 | 5.116883117 |
| Observations | 22 | 22 |
| Pooled Variance | 4.138528139 | |
| Hypothesized Mean Difference | 0 | |
| df | 42 | |
| t Stat | 0.44463327 | |
| P(T<=t) one-tail | 0.32943386 | |
| t Critical one-tail | 1.681952357 | |
| P(T<=t) two-tail | 0.658867719 | |
| t Critical two-tail | 2.018081703 | |

4.2. Student performance after the intervention

4.2.1. Findings from descriptive analysis

Descriptive analysis was employed to analyse the performances of both experimental and control groups on the pre-test and post-test. The findings from Table 2 and Table 3 illustrate the progression of both groups during the

course. Initially, the control group and experimental group performed equally well in the pre-test with relatively similar mean scores (around 9-10); however, the post-test results showed a considerable improvement in the experimental group's performance. While improvement among those in the mean score of the control group (those studying idioms traditionally) was minimal (from 9.32 to 9.45), that of

the experimental group (those studying idioms via authentic movie and television series) was much more substantial (from 10.73 to 13.32). The experimental groups also displayed higher post-test maximum

scores (18, compared to 14), meaning that participants from this group tended to score more highly and thus, the new approach to teaching idioms was effective.

Table 2. *Students' pre-test results*

| | N | Min | Max | Mean | S.D. |
|--------------|----|-----|-----|-------|------|
| Control | 22 | 4 | 14 | 9.32 | 2.34 |
| Experimental | 22 | 6 | 14 | 10.73 | 1.78 |

Table 3. *Students' post-test results*

| | N | Min | Max | Mean | S.D. |
|--------------|----|-----|-----|-------|------|
| Control | 22 | 4 | 14 | 9.45 | 2.34 |
| Experimental | 22 | 6 | 18 | 13.32 | 3.11 |

4.2.2. Findings from inferential analysis

At the end of the three-week experimental treatment, a one-tailed t-test was conducted to evaluate whether the experimental group, who were taught idioms using sample excerpts from movies and TV shows, would exhibit significantly enhanced idiom comprehension compared to the control group, who learnt idioms through the traditional definition- and explanation-based method. The hypotheses for this t-test are as follows:

- H_0 : The mean post-test score of the experimental group is less than or equal to the mean post-test score of the control group ($\mu_1 \leq \mu_2$)
- H_1 : The mean post-test score of the experimental group is greater than the

mean post-test score of the control group ($\mu_1 > \mu_2$)

The analysis revealed a significant difference between the experimental group and control group at the 0.05 significance level. As can be seen from Table 4, the P-values for the test were significantly smaller than 0.05 ($P(P) = 1.61664E-05 = 0.000016$); these results provided strong statistical proof that those from the experimental group outperformed their peers in the control group by far and large regarding idiom comprehension. This significant enhancement statistically confirmed the effectiveness of incorporating sample clips from movies and television shows, directly addressing the research question regarding whether the new approach would make a significant difference in idiom teaching.

Table 4. *T-test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances*

| | Variable 1 | Variable 2 |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Mean | 9.454545455 | 13.31818182 |
| Variance | 5.497835498 | 9.655844156 |
| Observations | 22 | 22 |
| Pooled Variance | 7.576839827 | |
| Hypothesized Mean Difference | 0 | |
| df | 42 | |
| t Stat | -4.655309229 | |
| P(T<=t) one-tail | 1.61664E-05 | |
| t Critical one-tail | 1.681952357 | |
| P(T<=t) two-tail | 3.23327E-05 | |
| t Critical two-tail | 2.018081703 | |

5. Discussions

The descriptive and analysis results from the post-test indicate that students in the experimental group significantly outperformed those in the control group in idiom comprehension, while pre-test scores show no significant difference between the two groups prior to intervention. In detail, the comparable pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups strengthen the validity of the study by confirming that these groups started the instructional period with comparable levels of idiom knowledge. Therefore, the differences observed in the experimental group can be reasonably attributed to the instructional treatment - that is the integration of movies and television shows - rather than pre-existing disparities (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Besides, the higher performance of the experimental group compared to the control group on the post-test confirms the hypothesis that authentic audiovisual input enhances learners' comprehension of idiomatic expressions. This finding further confirms the applicability of Mayer's CTML, which posits that activating both visual and auditory channels would optimal cognitive processing and foster more effective learning (Aljebreen & Alzamil, 2022; Mayer, 2001, as cited in Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki, 2014). Specifically, in this study, idioms were embedded in authentic scenes from movies and television shows, providing learners with multimodal cues, both visual and auditory. These cues could enable learners to decode the meanings of idioms and deepen their understanding of how idioms function in natural discourse.

This research's results are also consistent with previous research emphasizing the values of integrating authentic audiovisual materials in teaching English idiomatic expressions (Aljebreen & Alzamil, 2022; Sanaeifar, 2017). Prior studies showed that idioms are better acquired when introduced in meaningful, real-life contexts, as opposed to being taught in isolation. This study contributes to current research on idiom instruction by providing empirical support from a quasi-experimental classroom-based investigation and highlighting that even learners at a lower proficiency level (CEFR A2) can benefit from such an approach.

6. Implications

This study highlights the value of establishing a context-rich and visually supported learning environment through the integration of movie and television series clips, thereby facilitating effective learning via dual-channel processing. Not only does this approach align with established theoretical models and empirical findings in applied linguistics but it also responds to a notable research gap in the Vietnamese EFL context – namely the underrepresentation of idiomatic language instruction (Dao et al., 2024; Vo, 2023).

In light of the common challenges in Vietnamese classrooms, such as large class sizes and students' limited exposure to second language input, teachers are encouraged to select excerpts from TV series or movies that align with learners'

proficiency levels and sociocultural backgrounds. Ideally, these materials should feature idioms presented in natural, relatable and conversational contexts to help reduce the cognitive challenges typically associated with figurative language (Aljebreen & Alzamil, 2022; Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki, 2014).

Furthermore, to optimise learning outcomes, if possible, the application of integrating movies and television series in teaching English idioms should be extended to span 8-10 weeks rather than a condensed 3-week format. This extended timeframe would allow for more frequent and spaced exposure to idiomatic expressions to internalise them more effectively. Abel (2003) affirms that repeated encounters with idioms in authentic contexts would enhance both literal and figurative processing capabilities, thereby contributing to long-term retention and language transferability.

From pedagogical perspectives, when paired with multimedia resources, interactive techniques can not only promote students' meaningful use of idiomatic expressions in both academic and everyday contexts, but also enhance levels of engagement and a greater willingness to participate in language tasks, which could be challenging in traditional Vietnamese EFL settings (Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki, 2014).

7. Conclusion

This study adopted a quantitative approach to investigate the effectiveness of

integrating movies and TV shows in idiom instructions to 44 A2-level non-English majors at a public university in Hanoi during six 45-minutes lessons over three weeks. The pre- and post-test results revealed that compared to traditional methods, multimedia assisted learning with richer contextual cues can provide a more effective approach, improving students' learning of idioms. These findings offer significant implications for EFL teaching, particularly in contexts where idiomatic competence is crucial for real-world communication and standardized testing.

Despite its contributions, this quantitative quasi-experimental study is subject to several limitations. One of them lies in its relatively small sample size, with a total number of only 44 students. As such, the findings might not represent the broader population of language learners, thus limiting the generalizability of the research results beyond the specific institutional and demographic context (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This limitation calls for further research in the future with more diverse and larger samples to better validate and expand upon these findings. Another limitation is the limited time frame of intervention, which comprised merely six lessons across three weeks. Therefore, a more relaxed time limit would allow for a more extensive study with a wider range of idioms, offering more holistic and generalizable measurement into idiom teaching techniques. Last but not least, this study

did not fully explore potential confounding variables that may impact the outcomes of the intervention, for example, their prior exposure to English-language media, individual differences in learning preferences, or the possible distracting effects of the videos. These should be investigated in future research, ideally through a mixed-methods design.

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