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The impact of idiomatic expressions on the development of English oral skills in A2 level students

El impacto de las Expresiones Idiomáticas en el Desarrollo de las Habilidades Orales del Inglés en Estudiantes de Nivel A2

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ABSTRACT

This article critically analyzes how idiomatic expressions affect the development of oral English skills in A2 level students. The study, based on a mixed-methods action research design, involved 15 students in various communicative activities that incorporate idiomatic expressions through contextualized and participatory activities, such as role-playing, audiovisual resources, and interactive conversations. The quantitative data validated by a T-test showed no significant changes in the fluency of the A2 level students. In addition, qualitative data corroborated that during the process of implementing, pronouncing, remembering, and processing idiomatic expressions, most students temporarily lost fluency, which was affected by the number of pauses, hesitations, paraphrasing, and nervousness. However, these same qualitative data showed great interest and satisfaction on the part of the participants, who managed to incorporate idiomatic expressions into their linguistic repertoire. Finally, the findings show the need to integrate idiomatic expressions on a regular basis as part of the teaching-learning process in educational environments.

Keywords: idiomatic expressions, oral skills, A2 level students, intercultural awareness, language fluency

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza críticamente cómo las expresiones idiomáticas afectan el desarrollo de las habilidades orales del inglés en estudiantes de nivel A2. El estudio, basado en un diseño de

investigación-acción con métodos mixtos, involucró a 15 estudiantes en diversas actividades comunicativas que incorporaron expresiones idiomáticas mediante actividades contextualizadas y participativas, como juegos de rol, recursos audiovisuales y conversaciones interactivas. Los datos cuantitativos, validados mediante una prueba t, no mostraron cambios significativos en la fluidez de los estudiantes de nivel A2. Además, los datos cualitativos corroboraron que, durante el proceso de implementación, pronunciación, memorización y procesamiento de expresiones idiomáticas, la mayoría de los estudiantes perdieron fluidez temporalmente, afectada por la cantidad de pausas, vacilaciones, parafraseo y nerviosismo. Sin embargo, estos mismos datos cualitativos mostraron gran interés y satisfacción por parte de los participantes, quienes incorporaron con éxito expresiones idiomáticas a su repertorio lingüístico. Finalmente, los hallazgos muestran la necesidad de integrar regularmente las expresiones idiomáticas como parte del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje en entornos educativos.

Palabras clave: expresiones idiomáticas, habilidades orales, estudiantes de nivel A2, conciencia intercultural, fluidez lingüística

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INTRODUCTION

During the process of learning English, oral ability is one of the most significant challenges in developing students at the A2 level. They often lack the linguistic resources to achieve fluency, natural communication. One of the most difficult, but also most enriching elements of spoken language is idiomatic expressions, with their figurative sense and cultural load, which are difficult to understand and use, especially at a basic level. According to Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2016), idioms act as a barrier for English learners because they lack semantic processes and direct equivalence in most mother tongues; therefore, a high level of pragmatic competence is necessary. Nevertheless, due to their figurative quality and cultural peculiarity, they are particularly hard to comprehend among students with a lower level of proficiency (Nguyen et al., 2022).

Despite their fundamental value, idiomatic expressions have been little considered in the process of teaching English, leading students to have an appropriate level of grammatical knowledge but difficulties with communication in real-life situations. This phenomenon has been mentioned by Al-Khawaldeh et al., (2016), who argue that many English language teaching programs lack strategies to promote idioms in the teaching-learning process, at that point even advanced students have a low level of idiomatic expressions, this is also strongly reflected in non-English-speaking contexts as is the Ecuadorian reality, where students do not have direct interaction with native speakers of the English language, it has been demonstrated that learners that are not taught idiomatic language experience challenges with the interpretation and production of natural spoken speech, which directly impacts the oral progress (Hajiyeva, 2024).

This research arises from the need to address the problem that A2 level students have when using idiomatic expressions. These are a fundamental part of spoken language. This presents a great barrier for Ecuadorian students because they are not directly exposed to idiomatic phrases, which is evident in the Ecuadorian curriculum. This makes it difficult for students to achieve a level of fluency in real-world contexts, as their figurative meaning and cultural implications often challenge the explanatory and creative ability of students with lower proficiency. Therefore, their description will be literal, minimal, and superficial. While idioms are frequently used in real-life contexts, they are often overlooked in English language teaching, and thus, students may excel in grammar but have deficient oral communication skills in real-life situations. As a result, the pedagogical requirement is to incorporate the idiomatic expressions in oral practices in a manner that facilitates fluency, expressiveness, and confidence in learners (Mehdi, 2024).

Therefore, this study examined the effect of integrating idiomatic expressions on improving students' oral performance. It also investigated how idiomatic expressions have affected A2-level students' oral fluency, their understanding and application of idiomatic expressions, and how these have affected their motivation and confidence when speaking. Furthermore, it examined how

students learned and applied idiomatic expressions in communication and the impact of active participation in their use in classroom tasks.

The main objective of this research is to analyze the impact of idiomatic expressions on the development of oral skills. Specifically, how the inclusion of idiomatic expressions influences the fluency, intonation, and naturalness of spoken speech. Develop contextualized and participatory activities that allow the development of natural and meaningful communication, and in turn understand the perceptions of students by integrating idiomatic expressions as part of the linguistic arsenal. Methodologically, the study employs a mixed-methods action research design, combining qualitative and quantitative data to reflect and enrich classroom practice.

Literature Review

Idiomatic Expressions and Language Proficiency

Idioms are among the richest and most complex aspects of learning English. Their importance during the teaching-learning process has grown exponentially, since they represent the cultural, historical, and linguistic richness of language Van Dijk et al., (2022). Although they have communicative value, they are generally not included in curricula, creating an apparent contradiction between theory and practice in education.

Idiomatic expressions are different linguistic phrases whose figurative meaning is not deducible from the literal meanings of the individual linguistic words that appear in the idiomatic expression. According to Cambridge University Press (2026), an idiom is a specific term defined as a collection of words in a consistent order that has a meaning that is not the same as the meaning of the words themselves. The phrases are culturally determined and based on specific templates, not the general syntax; Hence, they are usually difficult for those who learn a language and interpret them word-by-word. Fluency in languages requires mastery of these expressions, since they can assist speakers to convey complex thoughts and feelings more effectively and naturally than literal speech can.

Several studies have indicated that one of the main challenges students face when dealing with idioms is that they lack a literal counterpart and are not rooted in a specific culture. Students often attempt to break down idioms word for word, misinterpreting and misusing them. These problems are compounded by the fact that introducing idioms without adequate contextual cues overloads mental capacity and negatively impacts oral performance, which is undesirable (Mehdi, 2024). There is also a tension between the ubiquity of idioms in authentic usage and their insufficient systematization in the teaching and learning process. This creates a persistent gap in the development of oral communication skills.

Language proficiency not only demonstrates proficiency in language but also provides clear evidence of advanced oral skills. According to Al-Khawaldeh (2016), speakers who use idioms precisely have mastery of the pragmatics, stylistics, and sociocultural of the language. However, the report is attractively troubling: even high-achieving college students admit to poor

oral language proficiency. This makes a direct criticism of the educational system, which fails to take into account oral competence without considering figurative language as a fundamental criterion.

At the A2 level, students are in a transitional phase and begin to shift from simple language use to meaningful and functional communication. At this point, the use of idiomatic expressions can be particularly helpful for developing oral skills, provided they are chosen appropriately and adapted pedagogically. states that vocabulary acquisition at the lower-intermediate level is associated with high-frequency and contextually meaningful language, where the inclusion of common idiomatic expressions could be suitable.

Difficulties in Acquiring Idiomatic Expressions

Idioms subvert the contours of traditional learning based on the compositional logic of language. Since they lack a semantic approach, they require more complex cognitive processes, such as contextual inference, conceptual transfer, and cultural metaphor. The document mentions that a good part of the students understand the semantic concept, that is, they first grasp the literal sense before the figurative version, which shows an evident failure of cognitive automation (Yucedal & Kara, 2023).

Critically, this approach reflects the bias in L2 English teaching and learning: an ambiguous structure is maintained, a formalist view of the language is adopted, and more inclusive ways of learning, such as constructing contextual meaning, are marginalized. To this must be added the patterns of didactic resources that are not usually used or, in turn, lack language resources.

From a critical standpoint, the acquisition of idioms cannot be separated from the appropriate socio-cultural support. The analysis shows that the students lack an adequate level of cultural knowledge, including knowledge of hidden language, creating contextual and cultural vulnerability. Many of these shortcomings are closely related to the lack of idiomatic language in the teaching-learning process.

Idioms, according to Van Dijk et al. (2022), encompass cultural knowledge that is difficult to translate word-for-word. So, asking students to understand expressions such as the aforementioned "kick the bucket" without introducing them to their cultural environment is a counterproductive approach. Teaching a foreign language through literal translation creates a gap in the performative dimension of language and reinforces a reductive view of it.

Moreover, learning idiomatic expressions not only leads to the enrichment of lexical skills, but also to the general oratory ability. When speaking exercises get learners to use idioms, they have to tend towards meaning-making and pragmatic acceptability. Though the process can have short-term implications on fluency, because of intensified cognitive requirements, it contributes to long-term oral progress and communicative proficiency (Tintiuc & Mihail-Veleşcu, 2026).

Relationship between Idioms and Oral Skill Development

In terms of oral communication, idiomatic expressions and other formal sequences are inextricably linked to fluency, sociolinguistic competence, and the natural nature of spoken language. Studies on formal sequences demonstrate that teaching idioms and collocations can significantly contribute to students' oral competence and communicative success (Yucedal & Kara, 2023). Similarly, idiomatic expressions have also proven to be an important element of communicative competence, enabling students to participate more effectively and appropriately by promoting natural speech (Tintiuc & Mihail-Veleşcu, 2026).

This practice can unconsciously restrict students' communicative development. Without instruction in idiomatic language, students may end up producing grammatically correct sentences and struggle to be spontaneous and natural in their conversations. Research emphasizes that, by using idioms, they enrich expressiveness and cultural understanding, generating real communication (Mehdi, 2024). By integrating idioms as a common use, it reduces the cognitive load when creating spoken discourse, as they are stored as a natural resource of speech, which promotes fluency and reduces hesitation (Yucedal & Kara, 2023). Students may have difficulty trying to respond effectively in real contexts because they are not exposed to the use of high-frequency idioms and their intercultural burdens.

The analysis indicates that the A2 level should not be considered an obstacle to acquiring oral skills through the use of idioms, but rather a strategic phase for improving fluency and confidence in oral production (Mehdi, 2024). While students at this level are characterized by a lack of vocabulary and structural control, their desire to be more natural motivates them to experiment with figurative language. This willingness to take risks contributes to the progressive development of their oral expression. For example, expressions such as a piece of cake or out of the blue can be used, and the students will be able to speak more naturally and with communicative intent.

The lack of instruction in idioms in the early stages could be a limitation for the methodology. Studies emphasize that idioms are part of natural conversation and should be introduced systematically depending on the students' proficiency level (Tintiuc & Mihail-Veleşcu, 2026). Furthermore, pedagogical research has also demonstrated the importance of contextualized and culturally conscious instruction in facilitating substantial idiomatic language acquisition (Mehdi, 2024). Therefore, failing to adequately assess students' oral competence and, at the same time, depriving them of idiomatic resources could hinder their development to intermediate and advanced proficiency levels. The judicious use of idioms in communicative practice can help achieve a more effective shift in proficiency levels and contribute to the development of oral skills.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study was a mixed-methods research design based on action research to investigate how idiomatic expressions affect the acquisition of oral English skills among A2-level students. A mixed method was chosen since it allows quantitative data to be measured and in turn to express the experiences of the intervention through its counterpart, that is, the qualitative method; resulting in an in-depth analysis of linguistic development (Forni & De Grande, 2020). Action research is fundamental in this research process, since it allows the research teacher to guide academic intervention in the classroom and, in turn be part of the classroom systematic reflection.

Context and Participants

The research was conducted in a classroom of 15 fifth-semester A2 level students at a public university. The students had an average age of 20-25, and the participants included 11 women and 4 men. The sampling method was selected because it allowed the researchers to identify participants directly relevant to the research objectives (Forni & De Grande, 2020). The participants were at an A2 level, which ensured the comparability of the results. The researcher's role as a teacher allowed for close observation of the students' oral development and facilitated reflective teaching practices, in accordance with the principles of action research.

Data Collection Instruments

Triangulation was implemented using different tools to ensure the validity of the findings, including a pre-test and a post-test based on an oral video recording that included an assessment of oral performance using an analytical rubric, a semi-structured questionnaire, and classroom observation records. The use of diverse instruments indicates that the study of language development should be supported by various tests and assessments, especially when examining oral language and the use of specific vocabulary in a real-world setting, since combining both types of tests can offer a more accurate view of student progress (Fray & McCandless, 2020).

Test

The pre-test and post-test consisted of one-minute oral video recordings in which students responded to similar speech prompts. This design ensured consistency and reliability in measuring the decline in oral performance over time. Fluency, vocabulary, and the integration of idiomatic expressions could be accurately assessed via video, which is particularly important when studying performance, as highlighted by his hypothesis on performance. The analytical rubric provided objective and measurable criteria.

Classroom Observations

In this study, participant observation was used as the primary method for collecting qualitative data. Idioms were directly implemented using the Communicative Language Teaching model. As a facilitator, I provided instructions and monitored the students' spontaneous oral

process and behavior as they interacted with peers using idiomatic expressions. Additionally, I conducted naturalistic classroom observations of the participants during the intervention. This method revealed an increase in intellectual workload and verbal panic during speech, especially when students attempted to incorporate figurative language. One of the most frequent causes was the interval between receptive comprehension and oral production, evidenced by a greater degree of perplexity and a considerable number of pauses when implementing idioms in spoken discourse. These observations reflect the complexity for A2 level students when introducing idiomatic expressions to their speeches, losing fluency in the transition, and favoring a more precise semantic approach. This idea agrees that oral skills are more aligned with literal meaning than with linguistic automation (Swain, 1985).

Reflective field notes

Reflective field notes served as an auxiliary qualitative tool for recording important incidents and contextual subtexts that could not be adequately illustrated through rubric-based assessment. This longitudinal documentation allowed for a longitudinal perspective on students' oral development, enabling the differentiation of errors stemming from a lack of phonetic knowledge or execution, such as difficulties with articulatory approximation when attempting to articulate idiomatic expressions. Furthermore, the notes reflected changes in affective states, showing how tension and anxiety were accompanied by feelings of communicative satisfaction and confidence. These results are consistent with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter hypothesis, which highlights that emotional variables affecting oral performance simultaneously contribute to meaningful linguistic performance.

Semi-structured questionnaire

A semi-structured questionnaire was used as a triangulation instrument to compare students' perceptions of the learning process through metacognition and observable oral performance. The questionnaire was organized with 7 Likert scale questions and three open questions in order to explore confidence, motivation, perception of fluency, and emotional loads when implementing idiomatic expressions.

Data Collection Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, where quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed individually and then combined. This procedure allowed for triangulation and improved the validity of the results (Forni & De Grande, 2020). Data integration enabled a better understanding of the role of idiomatic expressions in oral performance and students' perceptions.

Quantitative Data

The quantitative aspect of the present study was to quantify the improvement in the oral performance of students following the instructional intervention. The study chose a sample of 15 A2 level students, out of which they could be used in the pre-test and post-test using a purposive

sampling method. One-minute oral video recordings were used to collect data by tape recordings given before and after the intervention. The analyses of these recordings were conducted with the help of an analytic rubric that targeted content, grammar, vocabulary range, use of idiomatic expressions, fluency, and pronunciation. Also, semi-structured questionnaires with Likert-scale questions were given to obtain numerical data regarding the perceptions of students concerning their oral development. The descriptive analysis of the quantitative data was conducted to find the patterns of improvement and to estimate the effect of the idiomatic expression teaching.

Qualitative Data

The qualitative component was framed within an action research approach, in which the teacher assumed the roles of both instructor and researcher. Purposive sampling was used, observing the same group of students throughout the instructional process to study their experiences, attitudes, and emotional reactions to the use of idiomatic expressions in oral activities. Data were collected through classroom observations, reflective field notes, and open-ended questions from a semi-structured questionnaire. The qualitative data will allow for a deeper understanding of students' interactions with idioms, the challenges they face, and the methods they develop in practice.

Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to ethical standards to protect and respect participants. All students were informed of the need to provide informed consent before participating in the study, with particular emphasis on the fact that participation was not mandatory and that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed, as the data collected were not used for any other purpose but were presented in aggregate form to prevent the identification of individuals.

The Action Research Plan

During the planning stage, communicative activities were programmed using everyday idiomatic expressions with a transparent semantic level, coordinated with clearer and culturally accessible language. This strategy emphasizes the findings of Hajiyeva (2024), who states that semantic transparency is key to achieving linguistic comprehension. The activities included role-playing, simulated dialogues, oral storytelling, and dramatizations, providing students with the space and guidelines to incorporate idioms in relevant contexts. During the intervention, contextualized activities were carried out to promote the use of idioms, thus facilitating the understanding of their meanings and, in turn the communicative praxis.

The observation phase aims to evaluate oral expressions in a controlled way through oral recordings, field notes, and quantitative rubrics to analyze aspects such as vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and, in turn, spontaneity when integrating idioms into spoken discourse. Attitudes, participation, and group responses to the presentation of these expressions were also

recorded, according to the criteria developed by Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2016), who consider affective factors fundamental to the acquisition of idioms.

Throughout the process, the interactive use of idiomatic expressions was encouraged, and feedback was provided, adjusting strategies according to the needs and the semantic and pragmatic level of the idioms. A detailed timeline is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Detailed timeline

Day	Experimental
1	Pre-test
2	Introduction of the Idiomatic Expressions
3	Idiomatic expressions useful in everyday life + Recordings
4	Idiomatic expressions by Emotions + Recordings
5	Key concepts (Literal meaning, figurative meaning, cultural meaning, pragmatics and semantics)
6	Idiomatic expressions by colors + Role play
7	Idiomatic expressions by weather + Role play
8	Idiomatic expressions of friendships and relationships + Recordings
9	Idiomatic expressions by personality + Role play
10	Post-test
11	Semi-structured questionnaire

RESULTS

The findings indicate no statistically significant improvement in oral skills after the implementation of the Idiomatic Expressions. A paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the participants' pre-test and post-test scores.

There was not a significant difference in the scores for the pre-test ($M = 11$, $SD = 1.30$) and post-test ($M = 12$, $SD = 2.50$) conditions ($p > 0.001$), which does not reject the null hypothesis.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and significance values.

Table 2

Paired Sample T-test

(N = 15)					
Test	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev.	Sig. (P).
Pre	8	13	11	1.30	0.13
Post	6	15	12	2.50	

Note: N=sample M= mean Sd= standard deviation Min= Minimum Max= Maximum Sig (P): Significance

The quantitative results show no statistically significant changes. The findings described indicated a relative trend in students' oral performance after the introduction of idiomatic expressions into instruction. The reduction in the average score tells us that the students presented shortcomings when incorporating idiomatic expressions into oral discourse.

However, the standard deviation was higher in the post-test, which reflects that several students were able to integrate idiomatic expressions into their linguistic repertoire and benefited after the intervention; however, many students needed much more time for practice and, in turn, understanding them to store and incorporate this new linguistic tool into their spoken discourses. This phenomenon occurs due to the cultural, semantic, and pragmatic complexity of idiomatic expressions; also, due to the brevity of the intervention and the cognitive overload for A2-level students.

Quantitatively, the Likert scale items show a moderate, though significant, effect of idiomatic expressions on students' oral English development, particularly in the areas of perceived naturalness and emotional expressiveness, as well as in overall speech development. Quantitatively, the items on the Likert scale show a moderate, but significant, effect of idiomatic expressions on students' oral English development, especially in the areas of perceived naturalness and emotional expressiveness, as well as on general speech development. A recurrent pattern of items results in a high percentage of neutral responses (between 40% and 53%). This shows that students present a cognitive overload in the transition when they want to add idiomatic expressions to their spoken speech; however, when implementing idioms, they present a slight lexical improvement in their spoken speech. In addition, (70%) of the students agreed or strongly agreed that idiomatic phrases allow them to express themselves more naturally.

However, (53%) of the students say that they do not show an improvement in fluency. Finally, 53.3% of participants confirmed that the activities positively affected their oral skills (Item 7). Although improvements in fluency were not immediately apparent, students still considered idioms an important tool in their oral development. These findings could be related to the fact that studies show idioms are effective in promoting the pragmatic and expressive levels of spoken language before they become automatic, which constitutes a significant challenge in the process.

The qualitative report, which is based on open and closed questions, allows the perspective of the impact of idiomatic expressions on the oral skills of the students, using the same theme, that is, analyzing from a semantic, pragmatic, and affective perspective. When analyzing item 8, which is framed in the difficulties and challenges present when using idiomatic expressions. The students marked semantic opacity, pragmatic use, and cultural load as turning points, demonstrating that integrating idioms demands cognitive overload in A2 level students. This confirms that idiomatic language helps students to move beyond literal meaning and to consider contextual and cultural information.

In item 9, which is related to emotional reactions, feelings, and experience. of the students at the time of expressing the idiomatic phrases, their answers revealed an affective component, relative to feelings of anxiety, nervousness, frustration and fear, but in most cases, these are accompanied by positive feelings (happiness, confidence and satisfaction) when achieving successful communication. While idiomatic expressions are known to temporarily remove the affective filter, they also offer a sense of accomplishment and communicative reality. In addition, item 10 addresses the impediments to vocalizing and constructing the pragmatic dialect that form oral expression, such as a lack of vocabulary related to idiomatic phrases, excessive memorization, pronunciation difficulties, lack of contextual practice, and pressure to act when speaking.

Through classroom observation, it was evident how students found it difficult to use idiomatic expressions, because for most students, they were new expressions. During the process of implementing, pronouncing, remembering, and processing idiomatic expressions, most A2-level students temporarily lost fluency, which was affected by the number of pauses, hesitations, paraphrasing, and nervousness. This difficulty was largely because idioms are not literal phrases and require greater dedication, concentration, and mental clarity when pronouncing to regain fluency and use them. However, despite the constant alterations in fluency, a significant improvement was observed in the students' lexicon, allowing them to speak more naturally and expressively in students who managed to incorporate idioms effectively into their spoken speeches. These results show that the use of idiomatic expressions contributes significantly to oral ability, improving lexical factors, and, in turn with practice, a clear transition of idioms can be achieved, which is a key factor to achieve fluency.

Reflective field notes also captured the affective and experiential aspects of students' interaction with idiomatic expressions in role-playing and communicative practices. Some students also showed signs of insecurity and anxiety, especially when they were unsure of the correct meaning or pronunciation of an idiom; however, emotional difficulties were always accompanied by an evident satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment when students were able to implement idiomatic expressions correctly.

Another suggestion from the notes was that students began to show greater interest in using idioms to convey feelings and thoughts more naturally, which could indicate that they began to understand the value of this means of communication. However, the repetitive challenges were attributed to the lack of experience with idiomatic language in previous learning processes, since it is never acquired systematically in the teaching-learning processes of the English language. In turn, the findings indicate that there is a structural error in current language teaching practices, since the absence of contextualized integration of idiomatic expressions limits the possibility for students to acquire fluency in oral skills.

DISCUSSION

The results of the research show that instructional intervention based on idiomatic expressions failed to lead to a statistically significant change in oral fluency, which could be identified based on the t-test outcomes. This finding is consistent with the past studies that have indicated that the introduction of figurative language at lower levels of proficiency can temporarily interfere with the speech flow because of the heightened cognitive requirements. In the process of oral production, A2-level learners tend to devote a lot of cognitive resources to retrieving idiomatic expressions, which may lead to more pauses, hesitations, and slow speech (Hajiyeva, 2024).

The cognitive overload, as opposed to the inefficacy of instruction, can be viewed as the cause of the absence of improvement in fluency. Idiomatic expressions are not subjected to literal semantic patterns, and the learner has to process language as a whole. According to (Mehdi, 2024), when learners are not used to using idioms in their daily activities, the burden to memorize and use the terminologies in conversation interferes with other aspects of oral production, e.g., with pronunciation and syntactic structure. Therefore, students can compromise fluency for semantic accuracy, especially in the initial phases of idiom acquisition.

Although there are no quantifiable improvements in fluency, the qualitative results of classroom observations and role-play activities indicate that the students were able to show progress in lexical richness and expressive capacity. When learners tried to use idiomatic expressions to express feelings and intentions, they did it even though this introduces anxiety or insecurity. This trend confirms the argument that acquisition of oral skills is not linear and that temporary fluency decline can happen when learners are trying more structured language forms (Yucedal & Kara, 2023).

The other reason that contributes to the less effect on fluency is the low use of idiomatic expressions in normal EFL teaching. According to the literature, the idioms themselves are not usually covered on the basic level, which limits learners in terms of knowledge and fluent use of figurative language. According to (Hajiyeva, 2024), learners cannot absorb idioms in their arsenal of spoken language unless it is done through exposure and repetition. Therefore, in cases where the introduction of the idioms is undertaken as part of short-term interventions, the learners might develop interest and motivation but fail to develop automatic processing of the automatic use.

Emotional influences were also key to the development of oral expression in students. They also exhibited anxiety when using new expressions, which aligns with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis. However, these negative emotions were accompanied by intense feelings of accomplishment and motivation, enabling students to communicate successfully using idiomatic expressions. This duality suggests that emotional challenge is an integral part of

developing oral skills, especially as students' progress toward more authentic forms of spoken language (Mehdi, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This article explored the effect of idiomatic expressions on the development of oral English skills in A2-level students using an action research approach based on a mixed-methods approach. The results of this study indicate that the students' intervention focused on learning to use idiomatic expressions in context. These expressions, which become complex over time, did not result in a statistically significant increase in the oral fluency of the A2-level students. The quantitative findings indicate that adding idiomatic expressions to oral tasks added a cognitive load that temporarily hindered speech. Because the students were attempting to memorize and use idiomatic expressions with a figurative rather than a literal meaning, they experienced greater hesitation and pauses, which limited their progress in fluency. This finding suggests that, at less proficient levels of oral development, such development is not necessarily accompanied by an immediate improvement in fluency, and that more complex language can initially interfere with automatic speech production.

However, classroom observations and performance results in communicative activities showed a qualitative change in the students' oral expression. Despite the decrease in fluency, the students were more willing to experiment with new forms of language and were able to communicate their ideas and emotions more accurately. Attempting to use idiomatic expressions helped improve oral expression, despite feelings of insecurity or anxiety.

Finally, the findings show the need to integrate idiomatic expressions on a regular basis as part of learning. The difficulty that arises when integrating idioms is directly linked to the lack of use of them, resulting in a loss of fluency: this phenomenon not only appears due to the complexity of idiomatic expressions, but also due to the lack of integration in the teaching-learning process in educational environments. When idiomatic expressions are introduced in brief sessions, students do not have enough time to make them a habit or practice using them automatically. Therefore, instead of viewing the lack of direct improvement in fluency as an obstacle, this research highlights the importance of reframing oral development as a process that requires time and where transient problems are polished day by day until overcome through a more natural, assertive, and articulate verbal expression.

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