



UNIVERSIDAD HISPANOAMERICANA

Faculty of Education

School of Language Teaching

Thesis submitted to obtain the licentiate degree in

English Teaching

**The Benefits of Implementing the Context-Based Learning Approach in Improving the
Comprehension and Usage of Idioms in EFL Students of Universidad Técnica Nacional in
Puntarenas during the Second Quarter of 2025**

Sustentant:

Manuel Alejandro Arias Medina

Tutor:

Licda. Yanory Arguedas Carballo

II Quarter, 2025

**UNIVERSIDAD HISPANOAMERICANA
CENTRO DE INFORMACION TECNOLOGICO (CENIT)
CARTA DE AUTORIZACIÓN DE LOS AUTORES PARA LA CONSULTA, LA
REPRODUCCION PARCIAL O TOTAL Y PUBLICACIÓN ELECTRÓNICA
DE LOS TRABAJOS FINALES DE GRADUACION**

San José, 23 de junio del 2025

Señores:

Universidad Hispanoamericana
Centro de Información Tecnológico (CENIT)

Estimados Señores:

El suscrito (a) Manuel Alejandro Arias Medina con número de identificación 604540725 autor (a) del trabajo de graduación titulado The Benefits of Implementing the Context-Based Learning Approach in Improving the Comprehension and Usage of Idioms in EFL Students of Universidad Técnica Nacional in Puntarenas during the Second Quarter of 2025 presentado y aprobado en el año 2025 como requisito para optar por el título de Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Inglés; Si autorizo al Centro de Información Tecnológico (CENIT) para que con fines académicos, muestre a la comunidad universitaria la producción intelectual contenida en este documento.

De conformidad con lo establecido en la Ley sobre Derechos de Autor y Derechos Conexos N° 6683, Asamblea Legislativa de la República de Costa Rica.

Cordialmente,

 604540725
Firma y Documento de Identidad

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
SWORN OF DECLARATION.....	xi
TUTOR’S LETTER.....	xii
READER’S LETTER	xiii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	xiv
ABBREVIATIONS	xv
ABSTRACT.....	xvi
CHAPTER I.....	1
1.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	2
1.1.1. Background of the Problem.....	3
1.1.2. Problem Statement.....	7
1.1.3. Justification.....	8
1.2. RESEARCH QUESTION.....	8
1.3. HYPOTHESIS	9
1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	9
1.4.1. General Objective	9
1.4.2. Specific Objectives	9
1.5. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS.....	9

1.5.1. Scope	9
1.5.2. Limitations.....	10
CHAPTER II.....	11
2.1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT	12
2.2. THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL CONTEXT	12
2.2.1. Context-Based Learning Approach (CBLA).....	12
2.2.1.1. Origins of the Context-Based Learning Approach.....	12
2.2.1.2. Context-Based Learning Approach key elements.....	13
2.2.1.3. Advantages of the Context-Based Learning Approach.....	15
2.2.1.4. Usages of literature using the Context-Based Learning Approach.....	17
2.2.2. Comprehension and usage of idioms.....	17
2.2.2.1. Definition of idiom	17
2.2.2.2. Integration of idioms in literature	18
2.2.2.3. Acquisition of idioms.....	19
2.2.2.4. Difficulties of idioms to EFL learners	21
2.2.3. Teachers' training.....	23
2.2.3.1. Importance of teachers' training	23
2.2.3.2. Ways to teach the Context-Based Learning Approach.....	24
2.2.3.3. Practical applications of the Context-Based Learning Approach	25
2.2.3.4. Difficulties of using the Context-Based Learning Approach.....	26

2.2.4. Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)	27
2.2.4.1. Origins of the CEFR	27
2.2.4.2. Importance of the CEFR	28
2.2.4.3. Language bands of the CEFR	29
2.2.4.4. Target band for graduate EFL students of Universidad Técnica Nacional (UTN)	31
CHAPTER III	33
3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK	34
3.1. TYPE OF RESEARCH	34
3.1.1. Purpose (Applied).....	34
3.1.2. Temporal Dimension (Transversal).....	34
3.1.3. Framework (Micro)	35
3.1.4. Nature (Mixed)	35
3.1.5. Character (Correlational and descriptive).....	36
3.2. SUBJECTS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION	37
3.3. SAMPLING AND TYPE.....	38
3.3.1. Non-probabilistic and stratified	38
3.4. OPERATIONALIZATION OF VARIABLES	39
3.5. TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS	41
CHAPTER IV	44

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA	44
4.1. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION	45
4.1.1. Analysis of the classroom observation checklist.....	45
4.1.2. Analysis of the teachers' survey	46
4.2. PRE-TEST ANALYSIS.....	48
4.2.1. Group A pre-test analysis	48
4.2.2. Group B pre-test analysis	50
4.2.3. Group A post-test analysis.....	52
4.2.4. Group B post-test analysis.....	53
4.3. STUDENTS' OPINION ANALYSIS.....	54
4.4. TEACHERS' OPINION ANALYSIS.....	58
CHAPTER V	61
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	61
5.1. CONCLUSIONS.....	62
5.1.1. Conclusion in reference to the general objective.....	62
5.1.2. Conclusion in reference to the first specific objective	62
5.1.3. Conclusion in reference to the second specific objective.....	63
5.1.4. Conclusion in reference to the third specific objective	63
5.1.5. Conclusion in reference to the fourth specific objective	64
5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS	64

CHAPTER VI.....	66
PROPOSAL	66
6.1. RESEARCH PROPOSAL	67
6.2. PLACE TO BE DEVELOPED	67
6.3. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR THE PROPOSAL.....	67
6.3.1. General objective for the proposal.....	67
6.3.2. Specific objectives for the proposal.....	67
6.4. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES AND LITERATURE	68
6.4.1. Activities.....	68
6.4.2. Suggested list of literature	69
References	71
ANNEXES	77

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	37
Table 2	38

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Years of experience.	46
Figure 2. Importance of idioms.	47
Figure 3. Syllabus at Universidad Técnica Nacional.	47
Figure 4. Idioms difficulty.	48
Figure 5. Group A pre-test results.	49
Figure 6. Idioms correctly identified by Group A.	50
Figure 7. Group B pre-test results.	51
Figure 8. Idioms correctly identified by Group B.	51
Figure 9. Group A post-test results.	52
Figure 10. Group A test comparison.	52
Figure 11. Group B post-test results.	53
Figure 12. Group B test comparison.	53
Figure 13. Students' opinion about idioms.	54
Figure 14. Students' opinion about UTN.	55
Figure 15. Students' opinion about researcher's class.	56
Figure 16. Students' opinion on literature.	56
Figure 17. Students' opinion on best form of literature to acquire idioms.	57
Figure 18. Students' opinion on methodology.	57
Figure 19. Students' opinion on CBL.	58

Figure 20. Teachers’ opinion about researcher’s approach to CBL. 59

Figure 21. Teachers’ opinion on best form of literature. 59

Figure 22. Teachers’ opinion about the researcher’s class. 60

TUTOR'S LETTER

CARTA DEL TUTOR

San José, 17 de junio , 2025

Universidad Hispanoamericana
Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés

Estimados señores:

El estudiante **Manuel Alejandro Arias Medina**, cedula de identidad número 604540725, me ha presentado para efectos de revisión y aprobación, el trabajo de investigación denominado **The Benefits of Implementing the Context-Based Learning Approach in Improving the Comprehension and Usage of Idioms in EFL Students of Universidad Técnica Nacional in Puntarenas during the Second Quarter of 2025**, el cual ha elaborado para optar por el grado académico Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés. En mi calidad de tutor, he verificado que se han hecho las correcciones indicadas durante el proceso de tutoría y he evaluado los aspectos relativos a la elaboración del problema, objetivos, justificación, antecedentes, marco teórico, marco metodológico, tabulación, análisis de datos, conclusiones y recomendaciones.

De los resultados obtenidos por el postulante se obtienen la siguiente calificación:

	<i>Descripción</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>% Obt</i>
a	Originalidad del tema	10%	10%
b	Cumplimiento de entrega de avances	20%	20%
c	Coherencia entre los objetivos, instrumentos aplicados y los resultados de la investigación	30%	30%
d	Relevancia de las conclusiones y recomendaciones	20%	20%
e	Calidad detalle del marco teórico	20%	20%
	Total	100%	100%

En virtud de la calificación obtenida, se avala el traslado al proceso de lectura

Yanory Arguedas Carballo

108710072

Yanory
Arguedas
Carballo

Firmado digitalmente
por Yanory Arguedas
Carballo
Fecha: 2025.06.17
20:35:25 -06'00'

READER'S LETTER

CARTA DE LECTOR

San José,

Universidad Hispanoamericana Sede Llorente

Carrera Estimado señor

El estudiante Manuel Alejandro Arias Medina, cédula de identidad 6-0454-0725, me ha presentado para efectos de revisión y aprobación, el trabajo de investigación denominado “The Benefits of Implementing the Context-Based Learning Approach in Improving the Comprehension and Usage of Idioms in EFL Students of Universidad Técnica Nacional in Puntarenas during the Second Quarter of 2025”, el cual ha elaborado para obtener su grado de Licenciatura en la carrera de Enseñanza del Inglés.

He revisado y he hecho las observaciones relativas al contenido analizado, particularmente lo relativo a la coherencia entre el marco teórico y análisis de datos, la consistencia de los datos recopilados y la coherencia entre éstos y las conclusiones; asimismo, la aplicabilidad y originalidad de las recomendaciones, en términos de aporte de la investigación. He verificado que se han hecho las modificaciones correspondientes a las observaciones indicadas.

Por consiguiente, este trabajo cuenta con mi aval para ser presentado en la defensa pública. Atte.

Firma

Jeffrey
Monter
o Nuñez



Firmado digitalmente por
Jeffrey Montero
Nuñez
Fecha: 2025.06.21
20:54:35 -06'00'

Nombre Jeffry Montero Nuñez

Cédula 116160408

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the culmination of many months of hard work that would not have been possible if not for the support of many people. As such, I would like to thank my mother who has provided me with consistent support throughout the entirety of my studies. Without her help, I would not be where I am now. Additionally, I would like to thank Hilda Morúa Torre, the director of the English as a Foreign Language major in the pacific branch of the UTN. She allowed me to work with the students of the UTN in order to conduct this investigation and without that help, no data would have been collected.

ABBREVIATIONS

UTN: Universidad Técnica Nacional

CBLA: Context-Based Learning Approach

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to determine the advantages of utilizing the Context-Based Learning Approach in English as a Foreign Language students in Universidad Técnica Nacional in Puntarenas to evaluate how effective it can be at allowing EFL learners at acquiring and understanding new idioms. As part of the learning approach selected, literature plays a crucial role in creating context-rich sentences that can provide an environment where students can attempt to acquire idioms on their own. The methodology used involves using a pre-test, post-test, and other instruments such as surveys to collect both quantitative and qualitative information that is analyzed extensively to conclude upon the benefits of this approach.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación busca determinar las ventajas de utilizar el Método de Aprendizaje Basado en Contexto en estudiantes de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera para evaluar que tan efectivo es en permitirle a los aprendientes de ILE a adquirir y entender nuevas expresiones idiomáticas. Como parte de esta metodología, la literatura juega un rol crucial al crear oraciones ricas en contexto que le proporcionen un ambiente al estudiante donde puedan intentar adquirir estas expresiones por sus propias cuentas. La metodología utiliza una prueba inicial de diagnóstico, una prueba final para medir aprendizajes obtenidos, y otros instrumentos como encuestas para recolectar tanto información cuantitativa como cualitativa que es analizada profundamente para concluir sobre los beneficios de este método.

CHAPTER I

RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

At Universidad Técnica Nacional, in order to graduate with a bachelor's degree, it is necessary to choose an institution to work in for an entire quarter as a part of the professional practicum. However, it is possible to be given the opportunity to teach English classes to students who are enrolled in their first year of their major with the assistance of the professors that were assigned to them in their respective courses. Therefore, there is a wonderful opportunity to work every day with many students at a college level for many months. And as such, someone can see firsthand how students have difficulties acquiring the language for the first time. Most notably, the understanding of idiomatic expressions.

Idiomatic expressions are commonly used in everyday speech by individuals with an advanced level of proficiency. This may create a situation where new learners face additional challenges, as they not only struggle to understand new grammar structures and vocabulary but also cannot rely on direct translation methods, given that most idiomatic expressions would drastically change their meaning. Observations in the classroom have shown that students often experience confusion when exposed to such expressions in spoken language. This is an idea supported by Asri and Rochmawati (2017) who stated that the understanding of idiomatic expressions is considered to be problematic for foreign language learners, or ESL students in this case.

Therefore, this research aims to explore how literature can be utilized to aid English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in improving their understanding and use of idiomatic expressions in everyday communication. Various forms of literature, such as short stories, poems, novels, and books, offer different learning opportunities. This study intends to determine which type of literature is most effective for teaching idiomatic expressions, with a particular

focus on the use of short stories by notable authors from universal literature in English. Additionally, literature can be a valuable tool as it promotes a deeper understanding of cultural and contextual elements. While the primary goal of this research is not necessarily the improvement of speaking skills, incorporating idiomatic expressions into speech may help students sound more natural in everyday conversations.

This study proposes an innovative application of the Context-Based Learning Approach, in which ESL students develop an understanding of idiomatic expressions through contextual exposure within literature. For example, students may be assigned to read a short story in class that includes multiple idioms and then evaluate whether they can infer the meaning of these expressions through context. The rationale behind this approach is that idioms often require an understanding of cultural, social, or situational nuances, which literature, particularly short stories, can naturally provide. Therefore, students could engage in comparative analysis between the literal and figurative meanings of idioms, as well as explore the cultural background of English-speaking countries to understand how these expressions originated.

1.1.1. Background of the Problem

There are several topics of investigation that this research covers that have already been researched extensively in the past through different perspectives. As such, it is important to go over some of the other investigations that are related to the use of literature in ESL learners, or the importance of cultural awareness for basic language comprehension. Moreover, this is an important first step in order to understand the underlying problem behind the lack of comprehension of idiomatic expressions and idioms in everyday use. Additionally, this section will go over what approaches were used by these researchers, as well as the conclusions that they arrived at.

One of these investigations was performed by Guido in February 2023 in a thesis named “Culture and its Relation to the Interpretation of Conversational Implicatures of Senior Students from the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional and Universidad Hispanoamericana”. In this thesis, Guido (2023) found that cultural barriers are one of the most important determining factors for students to understand a second language. She also states that the lack of cultural knowledge can negatively impact a student’s performance. This supports the claim of this investigation that literature can be used to improve a student's understanding of idioms or idiomatic expressions because if culture plays such a significant role, then exposure to literature can reduce that gap.

The problem formulated by the author is about what the impact of cultural courses’ contents is on the ability to interpret conversational implicatures in students that were studied by her, which were senior students from the English Teaching major at Universidad Nacional and Universidad Hispanoamericana. The general objective was to determine the impact of those courses on conversational implicatures from a cultural perspective. The importance of such research is big because a new ESL student might not know as much from American or British culture to adequately understand an idiom or idiomatic expression.

In regard to the scope and limitations of this study, the author selected students that had already approved of the cultural related courses in both universities. However, she did mention that it would have been optimal to have subject students undergo a linguistic competence examination such as the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) to more adequately measure and compare the English proficiency level of her subjects. However, the results that were found are exciting. On her research, Guido (2023) found that “in both populations, the majority of responses indicated that media represents the primary source of

cultural knowledge”, which could indicate that the use of technology is key to help students understand about different cultures. This could mean that for the purposes of this research, reading short stories through the use of an electronic device could be beneficial.

However, there could be merit of using a different type of literature, such as authentic reading passages that were not taken from any existing literature. For example, another investigation consulted prior to this research is the work done by García on her thesis “The Use of Authentic Reading Passages as a Resource to Improve Reading Comprehension of the Fifth Grade Students at Escuela Centro América during the Third Period of the Year 2017”. In this study, García (2017) aims to share how authentic reading passages can improve reading comprehension on fifth grade students. Although the target population is quite different to the one of adults that is intended to be used in this research, several correlations can be made. Such as the acquisition of English as a second language with the use of literature. Reading is a very important skill to possess and the subject students that she used showcased that very well.

She underlined the importance of using authentic reading passages that can be understood by her target audience. This highlights how choosing the correct reading passages improved how much her students could understand. Therefore, with the correct selection of literature, it is possible to facilitate the understanding of idioms and idiomatic expressions on ESL students. Her general objective was to determine the effectiveness of the use of authentic reading passages as a resource to improve students’ reading comprehension in the English class at Escuela Centro America, during the period the third period of 2017. As part of her research, García (2017) states that one of the limitations that she encountered was the reduction of English classes to only 3 per week due to a particular circumstance that happened in the institution where she worked at. However, this will not be a limitation for this investigation because the population will be

university students that do not follow Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP)'s weekly hours. As such, students from Universidad Técnica Nacional (UTN) take classes that last 4 hours each, which takes plenty of time to cover this proposal.

As part of the conclusions and recommendations that García (2017) claimed, she states that “the use of authentic materials in the classroom is worth reading, allowing students the opportunity to narrow the gap between class knowledge and real life”. This is also supported by her last conclusion that states that “authentic reading passages help to develop English classes in a positive way, improving reading comprehension”. Regarding recommendations, she reiterates that reading passages in only a few lessons is not advisable, and that she would recommend MEP to allow teachers to adjust the syllabus depending on the quantity of lessons that schools could offer. Additionally, she recommends heavily to use authentic literature instead of only using literature from an English-speaking country.

Lastly, it is worthwhile to mention Ugalde's thesis “Teaching Literature as a Pedagogical Strategy Using the Short Story “The Happy Prince” by Oscar Wilde to Improve Linguistic and Grammatical Competences in Students of Seventh Grade at Centro Educativo Horizonte 2000 in the First Period of the Year 2017”. This thesis states how there are different ways to teach literature inside of a classroom. Most notably, the author mentions how Task-Based Learning (TBL) can be used by having students perform a task in the target language where those tasks are based on learning objectives. This proposal considers using a mixture of both Context-Based Learning (CBL) and TBL, so this thesis gave a lot of insight into how this can be done.

The author reiterates how important literature is because of all the advantages that it provides. Moreover, the subject being studied here is seventh graders, who are still not the same

as the target audience in this proposal; however, it is still insightful to know how students from different ages react to literature and what improvement there is, if any.

The general objective of this thesis is to develop linguistic competences through the use of literature, and in this particular case, through the use of “The Happy Prince” by Oscar Wilde. Additionally, as a specific objective she wanted to determine what pedagogical techniques help with teaching literature, which is also quite useful for my own research.

Moreover, in terms of limitations, the author mentioned something that might be relevant to my research which is the lack of English bases for some new students in her research. This is good for the purposes of this research because this proposal aims to discover if literature can be used to teach new ESL students about idioms and idiomatic expressions.

In terms of recommendations, she advises increasing the level of the short stories used in order to make students acquire more vocabulary, as well as to encourage the use of the speaking skill by making the students read more. This is all valid and something for this investigation to take into consideration.

1.1.2. Problem Statement

Lack of understanding of idiomatic expressions and cultural awareness in new and advanced ESL learners at Universidad Técnica Nacional during the second quarter of 2025.

1.1.3. Justification

After revising the existing literature available in the Universidad Hispanoamericana's repository for thesis of the English Teaching major at a licentiate degree, and after firsthand experience teaching students of Universidad Técnica Nacional, this research proposes to bring a practical solution to understand idiomatic expressions through literature using a Context-Based Learning Approach to enhance critical thinking and cultural awareness in ESL students of Universidad Técnica Nacional. This is an important study that is worthwhile to explore in detail because idioms are a core component in becoming proficient in English. As Lieber, (2024) stated:

To truly become proficient, it's essential to understand the cultural nuances of the language. Idioms and slang are key components of everyday English that can often confuse ESL learners. By grasping these elements, you can improve your communication skills and better understand native speakers. (p. 1)

Therefore, if specific forms of literature such as short stories can prove to be beneficial in students' understanding and usage of idiomatic expressions, then it is important to determine how effective it is and how to implement it into EFL classes.

1.2. RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the benefits of implementing the Context-Based Learning Approach in improving the comprehension and usage of idioms in EFL students at Universidad Técnica Nacional in Puntarenas during the second quarter of 2025?

1.3. HYPOTHESIS

By implementing the Context-Based Learning Approach at Universidad Técnica Nacional in Puntarenas during the second quarter of 2025, EFL students can improve the comprehension and usage of idioms significantly.

1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.4.1. General Objective

To determine the benefits of implementing the Context-Based Learning Approach in improving the comprehension and usage of idioms in EFL students at Universidad Técnica Nacional in Puntarenas during the second quarter of 2025.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

1. To analyze EFL students' knowledge of idioms at Universidad Técnica Nacional during the second quarter of 2025.
2. To determine the best form of literature for EFL students to acquire new idioms at Universidad Técnica Nacional during the second quarter of 2025.
3. To determine the effectiveness of literature as a medium of learning new idioms for EFL students at Universidad Técnica Nacional during the second quarter of 2025.
4. To specify the results obtained through the statistics analysis of EFL students' comprehension of idioms at Universidad Técnica Nacional during the second quarter of 2025.

1.5. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

1.5.1. Scope

This study takes place at the pacific campus named Juan Rafael Mora Porras of the Universidad Técnica Nacional (UTN), located in El Roble, Puntarenas, Costa Rica. The population consists of several groups of EFL students from different levels who are all enrolled in the English as a Foreign Language major. One group of students are first-year juniors that just enrolled in this major the present year, whereas the other groups are students that are more advanced in their major such as second- or third-year students.

The results of this research aim to improve the manner in which idioms or idiomatic expressions are taught in this university, and to discover techniques that prove to be effective through the use of literature such as short stories. This study takes place during the second quarter of 2025.

1.5.2. Limitations

In terms of limitations, as it was pointed out by a different study that was referenced before in this study, it would be ideal to have students participate in a standardized language proficiency test such as the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). This would be useful because it showcases students' proficiency level prior to the study, as well as after the pedagogical techniques have been used. However, the economic cost and the logistics of mobilizing such an extensive population is beyond the scope of this research.

Additionally, it is worth noting that this study is taking place during the second quarter of 2025 exclusively, and even though this research is considering students from different years within their major, the results obtained might not be representative of the entire population of the Universidad Técnica Nacional.

CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Universidad Técnica Nacional (UTN) is the youngest public university in Costa Rica, and was created on June 4th, 2008 under the organic law 8636 of the UTN in the “Diario Oficial La Gaceta” (Universidad Técnica Nacional, 2025, para. 1). As such, it is far less experienced than other public universities; however, during the course of the present investigation the UTN reached its 17th birthday.

It has five main regional branches, with one extra one dedicated exclusively to the major in teaching of the technical specialty. These branches all have a campus and are: Sede Central, Sede Regional de Atenas, Sede Regional de San Carlos, Sede Regional de Puntarenas, Sede Regional de Guanacaste, and Centro de Formación Pedagógica y Tecnología Educativa (Universidad Técnica Nacional, 2025, para. 4). This research takes place in one of those five branches, specifically the pacific branch or Sede Regional de Puntarenas, located in El Roble, Puntarenas.

By the time of its creation, the UTN offered a total of 33 majors, and as of the time of this investigation, it offers 26 validated majors by the Consejo Nacional del Sistema de Acreditación de la Educación Superior (SINAES). Furthermore, English as a Foreign Language is one of those validated majors (Universidad Técnica Nacional, 2025, para. 6).

2.2. THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL CONTEXT

2.2.1. Context-Based Learning Approach (CBLA)

2.2.1.1. Origins of the Context-Based Learning Approach

There are a great number of learning approaches out there, but this research focuses on the Context-Based Learning Approach; however, it is often simply called Context-Based Learning or CBL for short. It used to be called Problem-Based Learning, but this was changed due to a negative perception from the presence of the word “problem”. According to Alexander, McDaniel, & Baldwin (2005), CBL is “a learning concept that originated in Canada in the 1960s at McMaster University and was used initially to prepare medical students for practice”. Albeit now, it is used in a variety of different educational fields such as English. Of course, over time things change, but since it is an approach to learning, the practical applications will vary and will largely depend on how the teacher implements it in his or her class.

CBL is a therefore on the newer side of learning approaches and has a goal of being closer to reality, which in turn could result in a better acquisition of knowledge. As noted by Tatal (2023) in his meta-analysis of this approach:

In recent years, educational researchers and practitioners have shown a growing interest in exploring innovative approaches to enhance students' academic achievement and promote long-term learning retention. One such approach that has gained considerable attention is context-based learning (CBL). CBL is an instructional approach that recognizes the importance of both the social context within the learning environment and the practical, real-world context in the acquisition and comprehension of knowledge. (p. 2).

Clearly, there is some theory out there to support how this approach can improve retention and comprehension of knowledge when the student is presented with a bigger picture.

2.2.1.2. Context-Based Learning Approach key elements

Context-Based Learning (CBL) is also often called contextual learning for ease of use. Although it is simple to understand in theory, the practical uses are basically endless. According to JCS Online Resources, the following is said about CBL:

Many think contextual learning is simply using context to illustrate a point, but it's so much more than that. Contextual learning is a student-centered teaching method. Instead of memorisation, it actively engages learners by exploring curriculum topics through real-world scenarios. Examples include Relating and teaching lessons that highlight recent, real-world events, Guest speakers and TED talks, Reading case studies, Going on school trips, Projects that work towards solving community issues. (2024).

In short, this learning approach is the use of real-life situations or context in teacher's explanations and activities to promote more real scenarios for students. However, contextual learning also has key cultural and social elements that must be taken into account. According to Overton (2016):

Context-based learning (CBL) in its broadest sense describes the cultural and social environment within which students, tutors and institutions operate. This context is influenced by communications media to provide the academic community with a common culture. Hansman states that adult learning only takes place when this context and learning tools or methodologies come together to promote interaction between learners. Another aspect of context-based learning is the use of applications to illustrate and illuminate the curriculum. For science students this usually means providing them with opportunities to test theories with real world examples. The use of meaningful and appropriate context has been shown to motivate and enthuse learners. (p. 1).

On the other hand, Problem-Based Learning must also be analyzed in order to properly differentiate the approach that is the focus of this study. A definition can be as follows:

Problem-based learning (PBL) can be considered to be a subcategory of context-based learning. In PBL, as in CBL, the curriculum is organized and driven by real life contexts. In PBL these contexts are presented in the form of problem scenarios. An important feature of PBL is that the problems or scenarios are encountered before all the relevant learning has taken place and act as the driver for new learning. Thus, PBL is distinct from problem solving where problems are generally encountered after learning has taken place. A course that is delivered entirely by PBL would have no lectures and students would work in groups throughout the process, with tutors acting as facilitators. (Overton, 2016, p. 8).

2.2.1.3. Advantages of the Context-Based Learning Approach

The most important aspect that teachers and professors all around the world should consider is how much students are actually learning from their explanations. Therefore, Context-Based Learning can prove to be a viable choice for teachers to address this issue. According to Tatal (2023):

Students often find themselves questioning the relevance and practicality of the subjects covered in their lessons, wondering why they should learn them and how they can apply the acquired knowledge in real-life situations. CBL addresses these concerns effectively by establishing a meaningful connection between everyday experiences and educational content, enabling students to discover the answers they seek. (p. 2).

Aside from this, Tatal's meta-analysis also found encouraging results in improving academic achievements. This is due to the fact that CBL provides a more authentic experience for students

as they have something to relate information to. By presenting knowledge in authentic contexts, CBL promotes deep learning and conceptual understanding. When students can see the connections between what they learn and real-world applications, they are more likely to engage in critical thinking, problem-solving, and higher-order cognitive processes (Hmelo-Silver, 2004).

Tutal (2023) also states in his conclusions that:

Another reason why CBL can increase academic achievement is that it fosters the development of transferable skills. These transferable skills are essential for academic success and future career readiness, enabling students to apply their knowledge across disciplines and solve complex problems. Also, CBL often involves active and experiential learning approaches, such as hands-on experiments, field trips, and simulations. (p. 11).

In his own words, this happens because student engagement, and critical thinking skills are all promoted and enhanced by this learning approach. However, there are other social benefits to using this approach such as “CBL often incorporates collaborative learning and social interaction, encouraging students to work together to solve problems or complete projects” (Tutal, 2023, p. 11). Likewise, knowledge retention is also promoted. The same meta-analysis states that:

Learning retention, on the other hand, the ability to recall and apply learned information over time is a critical aspect of education. CBL provides students with meaningful and relatable learning experiences, linking abstract concepts to real-world contexts. By connecting learning to practical applications, CBL enhances the relevance and personal significance of the content, leading to improved retention. (Tutal, 2023, p. 11).

Therefore, it can be said that CBL is advantageous to use in classrooms as it improves students' academic feats, transferable skills, social interaction, and knowledge retention. All of these skills are essential in the learning process.

2.2.1.4. Usages of literature using the Context-Based Learning Approach

The main purpose of CBL is the use of rich contexts that often simulate scenarios that students might actually face in real life. Furthermore, in order to do this, it is essential to provide students with activities that allow them to immerse themselves in whatever context is being studied. One way to do this is with the use of literature that can provide meaningful teachings. As Hossain (2024) mentions, "Literature-based language learning (LBL) provides an immersive, context-rich approach to language education that helps learners develop both linguistic proficiency and cultural competence".

Other authors have also explored this idea such as Kramsch (1993) who said that "unlike more traditional approaches focused on grammar and structure, LBL emphasizes exposure to authentic, culturally relevant texts that engage learners on multiple levels—linguistically, cognitively, and emotionally". However, LBL is not the focus of this study. The present paper aims to integrate literature into the Context-Based Learning approach without making it its main focus.

2.2.2. Comprehension and usage of idioms

2.2.2.1. Definition of idiom

In order to analyze the acquisition of idioms, it is necessary to first define what an idiom is. According to O'Reilly (2022), the definition is as follows:

An idiom is a phrase that, when taken as a whole, has a meaning you wouldn't be able to deduce from the meanings of the individual words. It's essentially the verbal equivalent of using the wrong math formula but still getting the correct answer. (par. 1).

The same author goes on to demonstrate this with the idiom of "killing two birds with one stone". These set of words cannot be taken at face value as that would mean literally harming two birds lethally with the use of one stone. However, the actual meaning of this idiom is to achieve two separate tasks at the same time by performing one action. Although this might sound logical for a native English speaker, it is not the case for a student that is learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, we can say that an idiom is "a type of phrase or expression that has a meaning that can't be deciphered by defining the individual words" (O'Neilly, 2022).

Idioms are normal and sound natural to native speakers, but strange to foreigners. They also often have cultural connotations and can be affected by geographical region. As O'Neilly (2022) explains, there are four types of idioms:

Pure idiom: This is your typical idiom, the meaning of which can't be deduced by its

individual components. Binomial idiom: This idiom is a phrase that contains two words

joined by a conjunction or a preposition. Partial idiom: This idiom is one that's been

shortened into one part, with the second part generally being understood by fluent speakers.

Prepositional idiom: This idiom is a phrase that combines a verb and a preposition to create a verb with a distinct meaning. (par. 8).

2.2.2.2. Integration of idioms in literature

Idioms are present everywhere in literature because most literary texts often have many connections to the real world, even in fantasy genres. According to Padalík (2008), "we should

not view literary texts as having no association to the “real world”. If this would be true, we, as readers, would not be able to identify with them” (p. 22). In other words, literature can often provide a rich environment where idioms can thrive because there are multiple links that can be built between what is written and what is real in our world.

Padalík also cites another author with a beautiful explanation as to why literature works great with idioms, and it reads as follows:

Another peculiarity that is attributed to literary discourses is that words, phrases or sentences which would seem meaningless in “real world” and the speaker (writer) will try to avoid using them, can normally function in a literary discourse. For instance, when considering the following utterance “The elephant is a funny bird”, obviously it is nonsense in the world we live in, since an elephant is a mammal and not a bird. However, when we contextualize the utterance into a poem or a fantasy story it may function without any constraints. In cases similar to our example, contextualization is based on the non-linguistic background or situational (exophoric) reference. (Wales, 2001: 82). Situational reference represents a very broad term and thus we should specify it to some degree, though we will not manage to list all the features which characterize it. (2008, p. 23).

It is therefore implied that a writer has free reign over a literary text and can create situations where a reader paints a picture of what is being described. This same logic could theoretically apply to the acquisition of idioms because for an EFL learner, the student might be unaware that they are reading an idiom but could be able to infer its meaning from context.

2.2.2.3. Acquisition of idioms

The importance of the acquisition of idioms relies on the sheer frequency in which they appear, as well as how much they improve a speaker's fluency. In the words of Yunus & Hmaidan "the main reason for the importance of idioms is that they are pervasive in everyday language, and thus acquisition of them is essential for successful communication and reaching native-like fluency" (2021, p. 125). This reinforces the idea that idioms are a necessity for any speaker to appear more natural and to better understand others.

As Nation & Meara (2020) stated, "idioms are an important component of language, and they contribute to fluency". This is imperative to understand as this research studies the acquisition of idioms. Moreover, Yunus & Hmaidan concluded that:

Idioms are so prevalent in the English language that, in order to enhance students' fluency, students need to get familiar with the most common idioms for situations they aim to use the language in. Acquisition of idioms can be considered as an essential part of language learning since idiomatic language helps learners to speak and write fluently. Therefore, these figurative expressions should be taught in EFL contexts in order to enhance the fluency and naturalness of students' language. The study concluded that idioms are an important part of English language acquisition and an indicator of second language fluency. Mastery of these formulaic sequences has been considered as an important indicator of communicative competence, enabling speakers to use the language both fluently and idiomatically. (2021, p. 131).

Therefore, if students must get familiar with the use of idioms, it is equally important to provide an environment as teachers that allows them to acquire these in the most natural way possible. Furthermore, students will constantly face situations in real life where idioms are present and if they are not familiarized with them, it will create a barrier of communication.

Besides this, “the ability to learn and use idioms is considered to be the largest barrier to fluency in second language acquisition, and one of the language aspects that students struggle with” (Yunus & Hmaidan, 2021).

2.2.2.4. Difficulties of idioms to EFL learners

The biggest difficulty for an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learner compared to an English as a Second Language (ESL) learner when it comes to the acquisition and understanding of idioms is the amount of exposure to the second language or L2. This is better explained by Yunus & Hmaidan (2021) in their paper that compiled information from different authors about this subject where they said:

While such expressions are pervasive in the native language, they are much less frequently used by L2 learners in their L2 (Güngör and Uysal, 2020). Even proficient L2 learners experience difficulties in understanding and using idioms (Ellis et al., 2008). This difficulty arises from the fact that L2 learners are less exposed to the L2 and particularly to L2 idioms (Wray, 2002) than native speakers do. It is not surprising, then, that English language learners usually struggle to speak fluently. Considering that native speakers use idioms naturally that they are generally unaware of their special nature, whereas idioms usually constitute a major stumbling block for non-native speakers.

However, it is in the teacher’s best interest to teach about idioms or idiomatic expressions in their classes, particularly if they are so important. According to Nadeem & Almowalad:

Figurative language, particularly idioms, receives very little attention in English classes at both the university and English language institutes level. Teaching English idioms is avoided in English classes because most EFL instructors lack sufficient knowledge of English idioms

and do not understand the importance of idiomatic expressions in everyday communication. (2022, p. 56).

This creates a breach between the students' best interest and the capabilities that the teacher might possess. However, it is not necessary for every teacher to know every idiom in order to effectively teach their students about idiomatic expressions. As long as the main principles behind idioms are covered, students should be able to acquire them over time. In the same study, Nadeem & Almowalad (2021) explain:

In general, students frequently do not know whether to consider the idiomatic or literal meaning of idioms in different contexts. This may be the case when idioms vary in their level of formality, especially that most idioms have literal counterparts. (p. 58).

This is a problem and a blessing at the same time because if a student is unsure if something must be taken for its literal meaning, it probably means that it is an idiomatic expression and therefore, analyze it and evaluate what the meaning could be through inference. In Nadeem & Almowalad's study, it was concluded that:

The findings of this study showed that idioms were difficult due to a number of factors that started from understanding English figurative expressions and ending with the complex process of interpreting idioms. Additionally, differences in meaning between components and overall meaning was one of the factors that affect students' understanding of the idioms. The participants also used various strategies while processing Idioms. The most successful strategies were guessing the meaning from the context as well as Learning idioms outside the classroom, and breaking idioms into parts and guessing the meaning of each component. (2021, p. 64).

2.2.3. Teachers' training

2.2.3.1. Importance of teachers' training

Teachers' training is crucial to ensure that students receive high quality education. As stated in Transfera, “there are many factors that go into a high-quality education, from the culture of the school and parental involvement to the technology provided and beyond. But more important than any of these is the effectiveness of educators themselves” (2024). If the educators themselves are not adequately trained to perform their duty, it is illogical to assume that the students can fully achieve their target goal.

This is the reason why in Costa Rica it is required to have a diploma or degree in education aside from the degree on the specific field in order to teach classes in the Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP). However, this is also the case worldwide. According to Santhanam (2012):

In most countries, besides a degree in the chosen field of study, a diploma or degree or certificate in the art and science of teaching is mandatory. A novice is usually put under the tutelage and mentorship of a senior pro and thus begins the beautiful process of professional teaching. (p. 1).

Furthermore, Santhanam also explains the following :

At the kindergarten or higher levels, educators need to possess a degree in the science and art of teaching and also get trained to teach the subject of their choice, be it Math, Physics or Chemistry. A post graduate degree is mandatory at the school level. In the past, teachers with M.Ed. were held in great esteem but at higher levels, especially engineering, this training to teach a certain subject has been dispensed with and conveniently ignored. (2012, p. 1).

Needless to say, this makes sense. Therefore, it could be stated that in order to guarantee as much excellence as possible, it is imperative that teachers receive good enough training and with the appropriate frequency. This regular frequency is because parameters change, and teachers should be ahead of students as much as possible. As stated by Santhanam:

It is in this context that we touch up on the need to train the trainer. The new age mantras are re skill or perish, update or be outdated, acquire or expire and the litany goes on. A vocation of the tallest order necessitates the revitalized cliché that it be taken seriously and, in all earnestness, that the teacher be the ‘be all and know all’. (2012, p. 1).

2.2.3.2. Ways to teach the Context-Based Learning Approach

This approach relies heavily on the ability of the teacher to introduce context into the classroom. De Jong (2008) states that “contexts can be defined in several ways. Very often, contexts are described as situations that help students to give meaning to concepts, rules, laws, and so on”. (p. 1). This has to be properly elaborated and carefully planned by the teacher to better match the topics that the teacher must teach to a background that students can understand.

The ideas are presented by De Jong, come from a chemistry background as he is a chemistry professor, however, his observations are as follows regarding Context-Based Learning:

In many traditional context-based approaches, contexts follow concepts. For instance, after teaching the first ten hydrocarbons (from methane to decane), the role of these hydrocarbons in society is addressed. In this teaching, contexts often have two functions. Firstly, contexts are presented as illustrations of concepts that already have been taught, especially in the case of abstract concepts. Secondly, contexts are presented to offer the possibility to students of

applying their knowledge of a concept. This can lead to the transformation of the existing meaning of a concept or to the addition of a new meaning to the concept. (2008, p. 3).

Furthermore, De Jong (2008) adequately states:

In this teaching, two other functions of contexts are often emphasized. Firstly, contexts are presented as the starting point or rationale for teaching concepts. Secondly, these contexts not only have an orienting function, but can also enhance motivation for learning new concepts. In some most recent context-based approaches, contexts not only preceded concepts, but these concepts are also followed by (other) contexts. (p. 4).

This is often true, as students become suddenly more engaged when a teacher relates what is being taught to a real-life situation that they are familiar with. Additionally, the use of the context-based learning approach incentivizes students to go beyond by applying their knowledge to a concept. Precisely, this is what this study intends to exploit with the association of idioms to students' diverse backgrounds. This is in line with existing theory that supports that teaching through context can be very helpful to students. Therefore, a valid way of teaching idioms can be through the use of the Context-Based Learning approach.

2.2.3.3. Practical applications of the Context-Based Learning Approach

The most relevant practical application of this approach for the purpose of this study is the involvement of context in classrooms at the moment of teaching. As mentioned by Osika et. al (2022) in their online article about contextual learning:

Context counts. Learning in context can help students appreciate the relevance of disciplinary knowledge and skills, increasing their motivation and engagement. Meanwhile, learning that takes place outside the context in which knowledge and skills are to be applied can limit or

reduce a student's capacity to transfer and use that knowledge in the real world or in a new environment (para. 1).

However, perhaps the most practical application of CBL occurs within science classrooms. As stated by Gungor, B. et. al "in the 1970s, education for science teaching, which is associated with daily life, began to be preferred instead of education in which only knowledge is transferred without practice" (2023). Teaching science subjects by associating them with daily life instead of transferring science subjects to students in an abstract way can contribute to students' science literacy levels by making science lessons more understandable (Ayas, 1995; DeBoer, 2000; Gilbert, 2006).

2.2.3.4. Difficulties of using the Context-Based Learning Approach

Designing classes using CBL can prove to be difficult. However, according to Osika et. al (2022) "while contextualizing learning can present challenges for educators and designers of learning experiences, leveraging context can enhance the learning experience and learner outcomes". This sentiment is further emphasized in a different study by Gungor, B. et. al (2023) where they concluded that:

In the research, it was seen that the participating teachers had limited knowledge about the CBL approach. Although the CBL approach has limitations in determining the appropriate context, think that they provide advantages in many ways such as interest in the lesson, motivation, active participation in the lesson, knowledge transfer, and being able to put forward creative ideas. According to the teachers, the CBL approach can be used with different methods and techniques in teaching many subjects, but there may be problems in finding time, suitable samples, and materials in practice. Teachers do not consider themselves

competent about the CBL approach and its use in science teaching, and they think that they need individual and institutional support in this regard. (p. 44).

2.2.4. Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

2.2.4.1. Origins of the CEFR

According to the Council of Europe (2025), the development of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) dates all the way back to the 1960s, when all language projects set up during this period were:

...all focused on language learning for communication, promoting a learner centered, actional and positive approach. The purpose was to ensure that all citizens would have the opportunity to learn other languages (in addition to their first language), that their specific communicative needs would be considered and that methodologies would be based on real communication tasks. In order to promote learner autonomy based on self-confidence and motivation, the approach needed to be positive, valuing all that learners could do in a foreign or second language, even at modest levels. (para. 1).

In the 1970s, the Council of Europe (2025) stated that there are some important projects such as the creation of specifications for certain “Threshold Levels”. These happened language by language starting with English and went up to nearly 30 languages. These became the foundation for how we now know language bands, as they specify objectives that must be attained in order to have independent communication in the target language.

The presence of this public record demonstrates that the creation of such an important document was the end result of many decades of iterations upon a system that could be integrated worldwide, not just Europe. Moreover, the Council of Europe (2025) mentions that in

the 1990s some important advancements were made in terms of developing a CEFR, such as a working party that was set up in 1992 with the goal of developing descriptors of language proficiency. Additionally, four members from this original group were chosen to be authors of the CEFR. (para. 3).

However, the true point of no return happened in the following decade when the CEFR was started to be adopted beyond Europe. The Council of Europe (2025) offers this to say about the adoption of the CEFR:

Even before its publication in 2001, the CEFR started to have a strong influence on curriculum design in member states. Translated into 40 languages during the decade and adopted as a reference by almost all countries in Europe and many beyond, a survey of member states conducted in 2007 suggested that the CEFR had already become possibly the most influential publication in language education, being used worldwide to inform innovation in curriculum, teaching, and assessment. Adoption was helped by the fact that the CEFR is applicable to all languages, and provides both the pragmatic, real world functional objectives increasingly demanded, but combines these with the promotion of plurilingualism, interculturality and education for democratic citizenship. (para. 5).

2.2.4.2. Importance of the CEFR

The CEFR is a staple across many institutions worldwide, not just Europe. In regard to its purpose and importance, the Council of Europe (2025) states that the CEFR holds the purpose of providing a shared basis for reflection and communication among professionals such as educators, and to provide support for those involved in the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, textbooks or other forms of education-related documents. (para. 2). This

allows users to co-ordinate their efforts and to appropriately contextualize their content to their language learners.

This vision set by the CoE allows individuals to utilize the framework as the foundation for their needs. The CEFR is according to the Council of Europe (2025) “a flexible tool to be adapted to the specific context of use – a fundamental aspect fully reflected in the level system which can be adapted and exploited flexibly for the development of learning /teaching objectives and for assessment”. (para. 3). This idea is supported by most institutions, including Cambridge (2025) that states:

This makes it easy for anyone involved in language teaching and testing, such as teachers or learners, to see the level of different qualifications. It also means that employers and educational institutions can easily compare our qualifications to other exams in their country. (para. 1).

However, the CEFR was made with the intention of allowing teachers to build upon it for their own particular needs. The CEFR does not set out to tell practitioners what to do, or how to do it. It raises questions but doesn't provide ready-made answers (Council of Europe, 2025).

2.2.4.3. Language bands of the CEFR

Regarding the language bands or levels, the Council of Europe states that:

The CEFR organises language proficiency in six levels, A1 to C2, which can be regrouped into three broad levels: Basic User, Independent User and Proficient User, and that can be further subdivided according to the needs of the local context. (2025, para. 2).

Furthermore, there are very specific criteria that have to be met in order to qualify for a specific proficiency level, both for the students and professors. In order to meet the teaching and certification requirements, the level concept as defined was extended to cover specification of levels lying immediately below and above the threshold level (Council of Europe, 2025, para. 4). More importantly, they can be measured, which in turn can provide a way for institutions to make sure that the teachers have a higher minimum level of proficiency. This is a key component of the framework.

According to the Council of Europe (2025) the global scale goes as follows:

A1: Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

A2: Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

B1: Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on

topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

B2: Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

C1: Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

C2: Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

Additionally, there are multiple tests that are available worldwide to test an individual's language proficiency according to these levels such as the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and Cambridge.

2.2.4.4. Target band for graduate EFL students of Universidad Técnica Nacional (UTN)

Universidad Técnica Nacional (UTN) offers a major in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). A student who graduates with a Bachelor's degree in English as a Second Language will develop linguistic abilities in the different areas of communication of the language with a level equal to C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (Universidad Técnica Nacional, 2025).

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter covers the methodology that is used to reach the objectives stated in the first chapter, as well as information regarding the population, how the sampling was conducted, type of research performed, instruments used, and overall framework of the study. Therefore, this chapter is crucial in order to understand the investigation.

3.1. TYPE OF RESEARCH

3.1.1. Purpose (Applied)

This investigation aims to put a teaching approach into practice using real English as a Foreign Language students in order to provide results that could be useful to other teachers or researchers. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is applied research. According to the Eurostat's glossary, applied research refers to "an original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge. It is, however, directed primarily towards a specific practical aim or objective." (2025).

The methodology described in this chapter will be applied in the real world and although the basis of this investigation is theoretical in nature, the research carried out has the sole purpose of being used in a practical way. Furthermore, no new theories are explored. All results obtained come from the foundation of knowledge set by other researchers that came prior to this one.

3.1.2. Temporal Dimension (Transversal)

The present study takes place entirely in the second quarter of 2025, and as such, it is a transversal study. There are other names for these types of investigations such as cross-sectional

studies. According to Scribbr (2020), a cross-sectional study is “a type of research design in which you collect data from many different individuals at a single point in time”. This is unlike longitudinal studies that focus on analyzing data through different periods of time, which is not the case here.

3.1.3. Framework (Micro)

The framework of this investigation is at a micro level because the study takes place entirely in one institution, and in particular, in just two groups within that institution. Although Universidad Técnica Nacional has multiple campuses and locations throughout Costa Rica, only the one in El Roble, Puntarenas is considered for the purposes of this research. This is because of logistical reasons, as well as the small scope of the investigation.

Furthermore, a micro-level study examines the behavior and interactions of small groups and individuals (Gougherty, M. & Puentes, J., 2025). It also places a strong emphasis on context, and analyzing what people say and do, which falls in line with the purpose of this research.

3.1.4. Nature (Mixed)

The nature of this investigation is mixed. This is because the data collected is both quantitative and qualitative in nature. According to Tenny, S, et al. we can classify qualitative research as “a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems” (2022). Additionally, they state:

Instead of collecting numerical data points or intervening or introducing treatments just like in quantitative research, qualitative research helps generate hypotheses to further investigate and understand quantitative data. Qualitative research gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior. It answers the how's and why's instead of how

many or how much. It could be structured as a standalone study, purely relying on qualitative data, or part of mixed-methods research that combines qualitative and quantitative data. (2022, par. 1).

The explanation as to why it is important for this research to consider both qualitative and quantitative data is related to what information will be collected to be further analyzed in the following chapters. The effectiveness of the approach used can be measured with instruments that collect quantitative data; however, the experiences and perceptions of students are also relevant, and as such, are taken into account in this investigation.

3.1.5. Character (Correlational and descriptive)

The character of this research is both correlational and descriptive. According to Bhandari, P. (2023), correlational research “investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them”. Furthermore, it analyzes the strengths of the relationship between two variables which is needed in this investigation. The aim is to provide results that can show how the understanding and usage of idioms in EFL students (a variable) is affected by the use of the Context-Based Learning Approach (another variable). This relationship between these two is explored throughout the research.

On the other hand, descriptive research aims to accurately and systematically describe a population or phenomenon (McCombes, S., 2023). It can answer what, where, when and how questions, which is one of the objectives of this investigation as students are observed and their situations are described and measured in a quantitative way.

3.2. SUBJECTS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The present section of the paper aims to describe the subjects and sources of information. Therefore, some key concepts must be explained. First, according to Butler, S., the universe is defined as all individuals, groups of people or organizations that are being studied (2008). The universe changes depending on the research and it is never fully studied, which is why it is important to select a population and a sample.

On the other hand, a population can be defined as follows:

The research population, also known as the target population, refers to the entire group or set of individuals, objects, or events that possess specific characteristics and are of interest to the researcher. It represents the larger population from which a sample is drawn. The research population is defined based on the research objectives and the specific parameters or attributes under investigation. (Thomas, R., 2023).

Additionally, the present section aims to elaborate the types of sources of information that were consulted during the making of the research paper. In the following tables, the main sources of information will be categorized, as well as shown in detail. The sources contain primary and secondary sources, depending on how the information was obtained. Some came directly from interviews, whereas others came from consulting books, magazines and articles online.

Table 1

Primary Sources of Information Consulted

Author	Institution	Country	Year
Hilda Morúa Torre	Universidad Técnica Nacional	Costa Rica	2025

Note. The information gathered from this source came from an in-person interview.

Table 2*Secondary Sources of Information Consulted*

<i>Author</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Year</i>
<i>No author</i>	<i>Cambridge</i>	<i>No country</i>	<i>2025</i>
<i>No author</i>	<i>Counsel of Europe</i>	<i>No country</i>	<i>2025</i>
<i>Lieber, K.</i>	<i>Midwestern Career College</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>2024</i>
<i>Tutal, Ö.</i>	<i>Hakkari University</i>	<i>Turkey</i>	<i>2023</i>

3.3. SAMPLING AND TYPE

3.3.1. Non-probabilistic and stratified

In this section, the sample used and how it was selected are explained. According to Scribbr (2025), a sample is “a subset of individuals from a larger population. Sampling means selecting the group that you will actually collect data from in your research. In regard to how the sample was selected, a non-probabilistic method was used because the sample was not selected at random. The researcher meticulously divided the population (the EFL students of Universidad Técnica Nacional in Puntarenas) into subgroups by using stratification. This means that the EFL students from Universidad Técnica Nacional were divided into beginners (first year students), intermediate (second year students), and advanced (third year students).

Second, one group was selected at random from the beginners that take classes during the second quarter of 2025, and another group was selected at random from the advanced students. In total, this means that around 30 first year students and around 25 third year students were selected as a sample for this research.

3.4. OPERATIONALIZATION OF VARIABLES

The present study has different variables that are meant to be measured and analyzed in detail. Therefore, the following chart has an in-depth explanation of the variables and how they are studied.

VARIABLES CHART

- General Objective:** To determine the benefits of implementing the Context-Based Learning Approach in improving the comprehension and usage of idioms in EFL students at Universidad Técnica Nacional in Puntarenas during the second quarter of 2025.

Specific Objectives	Variable	Conceptual Definition	Instrumental Definition	Operational Definition
To analyze EFL students' knowledge of idioms at Universidad Técnica Nacional during the second quarter of 2025.	EFL students' knowledge of idioms.	All the prior knowledge and understanding that EFL students at Universidad Técnica Nacional possess about idioms.	Instrument: Questionnaire I. Technique: Diagnostic Test. I – The Questionnaire I is a diagnostic test that asks about the meaning of certain idioms without any	In the Questionnaire I, the variable is valid if at least 70% of students answer correctly in 70% of the questions. This means that at least 70% of students know the meaning of the idioms presented in the instrument.

			context. This is done to collect data about students' prior knowledge.	
To determine the best form of literature for EFL students to acquire new idioms at Universidad Técnica Nacional during the second quarter of 2025.	The best form of literature for EFL students to acquire new idioms.	The form of literature (short story, poem, novel, etc.) that is best suited for teaching idioms to EFL students at Universidad Técnica Nacional during the second quarter of 2025 in Puntarenas.	Instrument: Questionnaire II. Technique: Survey. Questionnaire II is an online survey that students can complete near the end of the investigation where they can some questions to select the best type of literature for acquiring idioms	In the Questionnaire II, the variable is considered valid if a form of literature is selected by at least 65% of students.

<p>To determine the effectiveness of literature as a medium of learning new idioms for EFL students at Universidad Técnica Nacional during the second quarter of 2025.</p>	<p>The effectiveness of literature as a medium for learning new idioms.</p>	<p>The perception that students have of literature as a whole to learn new idioms.</p>	<p>Instrument: Questionnaire II. Technique: Survey. Questionnaire II is an online survey where qualitative information can be collected on how students feel about literature as a medium to learn new idioms.</p>	<p>In the Questionnaire II, the variable is considered valid if at least 80% of students consider literature to be a good option to learn new idioms.</p>
--	---	--	--	---

3.5. TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS

This section describes the instruments and techniques used in the research to collect all the data needed for the data analysis. Additionally, it explains how each instrument was validated and by whom.

The first instrument is a diagnostic test called Questionnaire I. This instrument has a list of idioms that are isolated without any context and a question for each one that asks whether or not the student knows the meaning of the idiom. The technique is a diagnostic test because it is

performed before any teaching approach is applied and in the very first session between the researcher and the students. This means that the answers provided by students are based on their prior knowledge.

The second instrument is a classroom observation checklist. This checklist collects data about students' behavior, their teacher's behavior, as well as general classroom observations such as technology that they have available. The purpose of this instrument is to accurately record the classroom environment for future statistic analyses. This checklist is completed in full by the researcher during the first visit to each group.

The third instrument is a survey called "Teacher survey" created on Google Forms that collects data about the experience they possess, certified English proficiency, as well as qualitative information of how they feel about the Context-Based Learning Approach and idiomatic expressions. The information collected serves the purpose as part of a statistic analysis.

The fourth instrument is the post-test. This test is designed to measure students' knowledge about idioms after the Context-Based Learning Approach was used in class. The purpose of this test is to collect data at the end of the research and perform a comparison between this instrument and how students performed in the pre-test.

The fifth instrument is a survey called Questionnaire II. This instrument is for collecting qualitative data regarding students' perceptions of literature as a whole as a tool to acquire and understand new idioms. Additionally, it collects data regarding how students feel about the Context-Based Learning Approach and the class taught by the researcher. The technique used is an online survey in Google Forms where students can answer a mix of both close and open-ended questions.

The sixth and last instrument used is a survey called “Teachers’ opinion” created in Google Forms that collects data about the teacher’s perception of the class taught by the researcher. In this survey, information about whether or not they liked the pedagogical approach is collected.

All instruments were validated by MA. Hilda Morúa Torre and MA. Rosibel Matamoros Hernández prior to the first visit of the researcher. This was done in order to ensure that the instruments used were of high quality and to verify any possible grammatical mistakes.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

In this section, the researcher performs an overview of the classroom observations that were done, as well as an in-depth analysis of the data, and the teacher's opinion about idioms and CBL. First and foremost, it is indispensable to accurately categorize the two groups of students that were selected as a sample in order to understand the data and the differences between them. The group of students that were enrolled in their second quarter of their major, and thus, are undergraduate students, will be labeled as **Group A**. On the other hand, the group of students that were enrolled in their eighth quarter in their major, and thus, will soon become bachelor's, and can be considered as advanced level learners will be labeled as **Group B**.

4.1.1. Analysis of the classroom observation checklist

Group A was visited for the very first time by the researcher on May 23rd, 2025. There were 23 students enrolled, with a distribution of 8 male students (34,78%) and 15 female students (65,22%). On the other hand, Group B was visited for the first time by the researcher on May 21st, 2025. There were 25 enrolled in the class, but only 21 attended on that day. The distribution for that group was of 10 male students (47,62%) and 11 female students (52,38%). In both cases, students were predominantly female.

Both groups had similar classrooms with good learning conditions. Classrooms were equipped with a smart screen that allowed teachers to present multimedia such as PowerPoint presentations by sharing the screen of their laptop computers. Additionally, both classrooms had two whiteboards for the teachers to use in case they needed to. Furthermore, both teachers spoke exclusively in English and students from both groups were participative. However, no idioms were used by a single student at the time of the classroom observations.

4.1.2. Analysis of the teachers' survey

In both groups, the professor in charge has many years of experience at teaching to English as a Foreign Language students, as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Years of experience.

For how long have you been a professor at Universidad Técnica Nacional?

2 responses



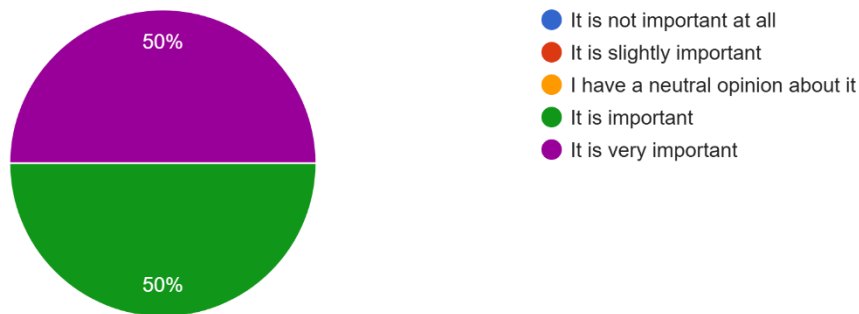
Source: data collected from instrument #3: teachers' survey.

Furthermore, both professors have an up-to-date international English certificate from TOEIC with a result of C1. This accurately demonstrates that they are highly qualified to teach English at a university level. In regard to their thoughts about the use of idioms or idiomatic expressions, they both believe that they are important in order to sound like a native speaker as seen in Figure 2. This is not unexpected because they both used some in their speech throughout the classes they taught.

Figure 2. Importance of idioms.

What level of importance do you think that idiomatic expressions or idioms have in making a learner sound more like a native English speaker?

2 responses



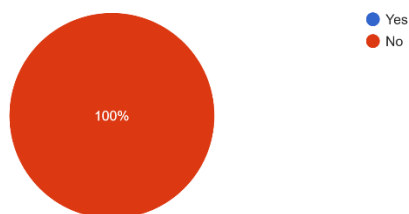
Source: data collected from instrument #3: teachers' survey.

However, both professors consider that the university does not give enough attention to idiomatic expressions as seen in Figure 3. In fact, the English as a Foreign Language major had a major shift this year as new students will no longer have to take the classes of “Idiomatic Expressions I” and “Idiomatic Expressions II” because they were taken out of the curriculum.

Figure 3. Syllabus at Universidad Técnica Nacional.

Do you think that the course syllabi used at Universidad Técnica Nacional gives enough attention to idiomatic expressions or idioms?

2 responses



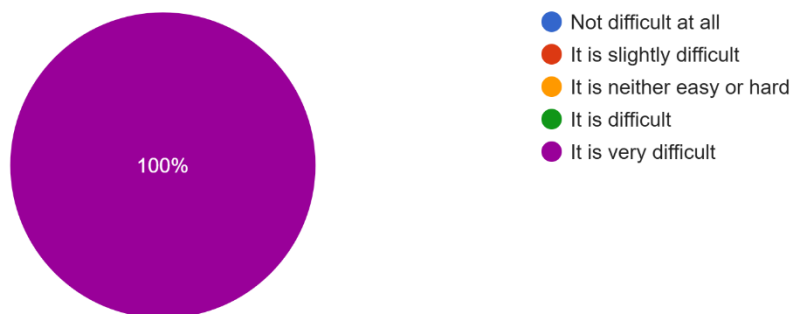
Source: data collected from instrument #3: teachers' survey.

Finally, both professors pointed out that idiomatic expressions or idioms are very difficult to understand for EFL students as seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Idioms difficulty.

How difficult do you think that learning idiomatic expressions or idioms is for an English as a Foreign Language student?

2 responses



Source: data collected from instrument #3: teachers' survey.

4.2. PRE-TEST ANALYSIS

In this section, the researcher performs an in-depth analysis of the test results students obtained in the diagnostic test or pre-test that corresponds to instrument #1. Results will be analyzed for each group individually, and some comparisons will be made.

4.2.1. Group A pre-test analysis

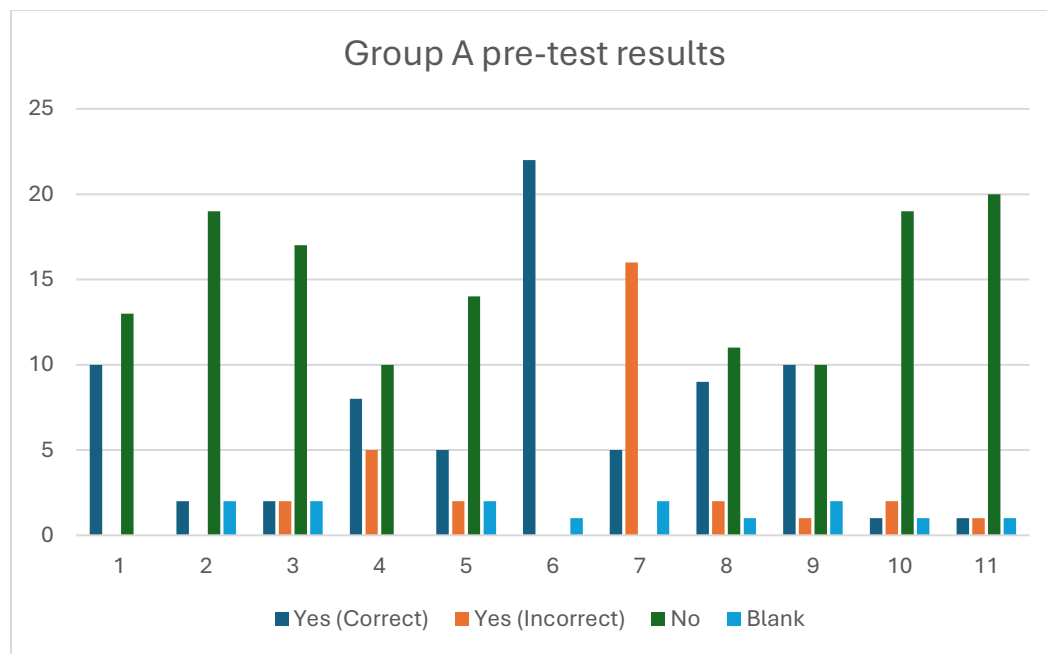
Of the total number of students in that group (23), 100% of them did the pre-test as they were all present on the day it was applied. The results were as follows.

Question 1 asked students whether or not they knew what an idiom or idiomatic expression is. Out of 23, 10 students said yes, and 13 students said no. This is not too surprising

considering the fact that Group A were first-year students in their second quarter in their major. This means that for most of them, their English learning journey was just beginning.

As for the test results, the majority of students did not know most idioms, as seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Group A pre-test results.

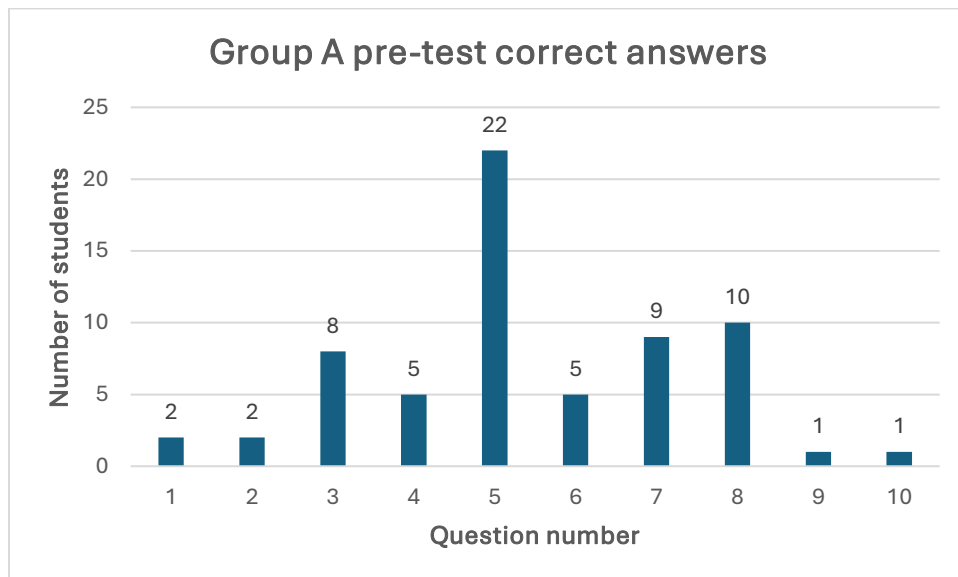


Source: data collected from the pre-test (instrument #1).

The answers that say “Yes (correct)” represent those students that selected that they knew the idiom that was presented and were able to accurately tell the meaning of the idiom. Answers that say “Yes (Incorrect)” represent those students who selected that they knew the idiom that was presented but were not able to state the meaning of the idiom. Answers that say “No”, represent those students who said that they did not know the idiom that was presented. Finally, the answers that say “Blank”, represent those students who left the question unanswered and did not specify whether or not they knew the idiom that was presented.

The following results shown in Figure 6 represent the number of students that were able to correctly identify the idioms in each of the questions.

Figure 6. Idioms correctly identified by Group A.



Source: data collected from the pre-test (instrument #1).

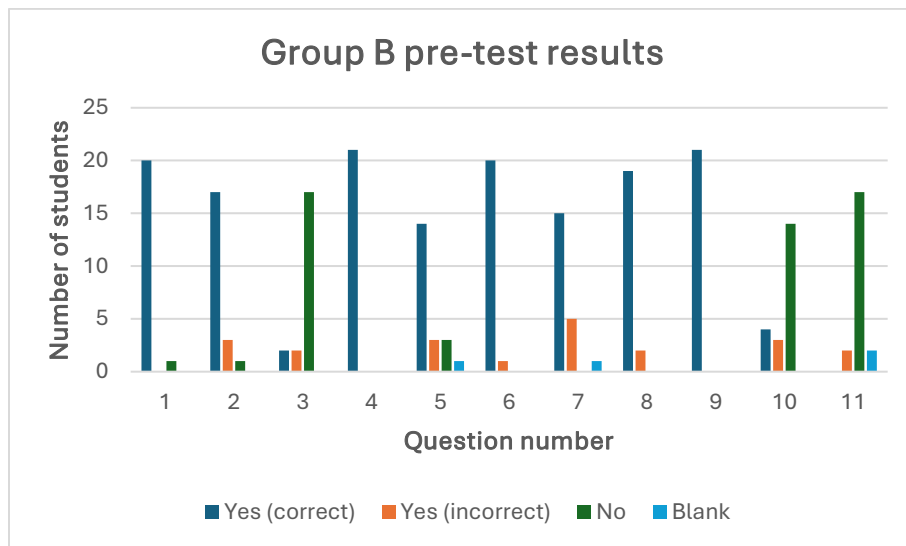
As it can be seen, students had a particularly easy time with identifying the idiom in question 5 “to let my guard down”. However, apart from that exception, students from Group A had a very difficult time answering most of the questions.

4.2.2. Group B pre-test analysis

Group B had 25 students enrolled in the class that the researcher visited. However, only 21 students (84%) attended class the day of the visit, in which the pre-test was conducted. Out of those 21 students, 20 were familiar with what an idiom or idiomatic expression is. Moreover, this is twice as many students that knew what an idiomatic expression is compared to Group A, but it is concerning that 1 student did not know what an idiom is, eight quarters into his or her major.

The results of the pre-test can be seen in Figure 7 below.

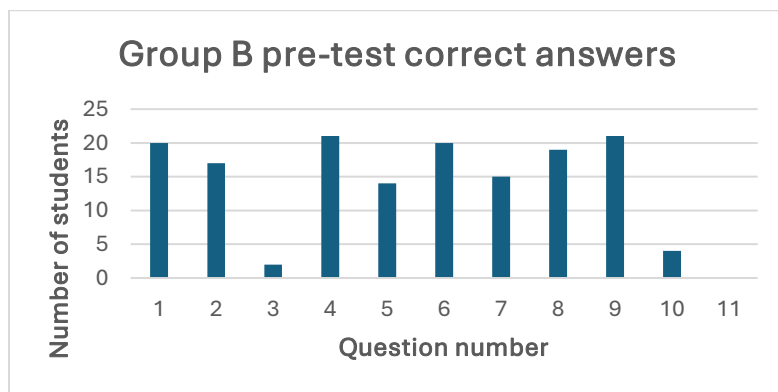
Figure 7. Group B pre-test results.



Source: data collected from the pre-test (instrument #1).

These results show higher numbers in terms of students' knowledge when compared to Group A's numbers. However, this makes sense since the students from this group are much more advanced in their major. The specific number of correct answers can be seen in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Idioms correctly identified by Group B.

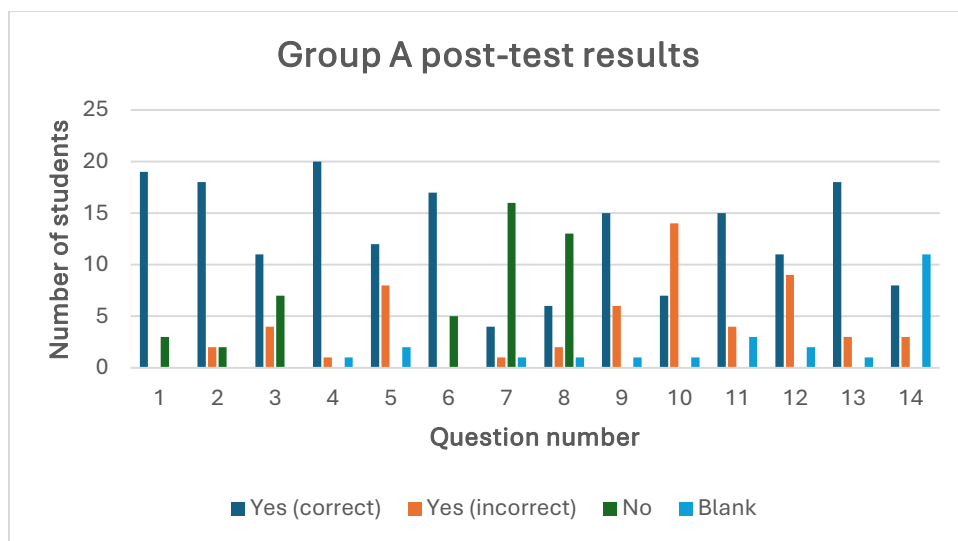


Source: data collected from the pre-test (instrument #1).

4.2.3. Group A post-test analysis

Group A had 23 students enrolled in the class that was visited by the researcher, but only 22 students (95,65%) attended class the day that the post-test was conducted. The results of the post-test are promising as shown in Figure 9.

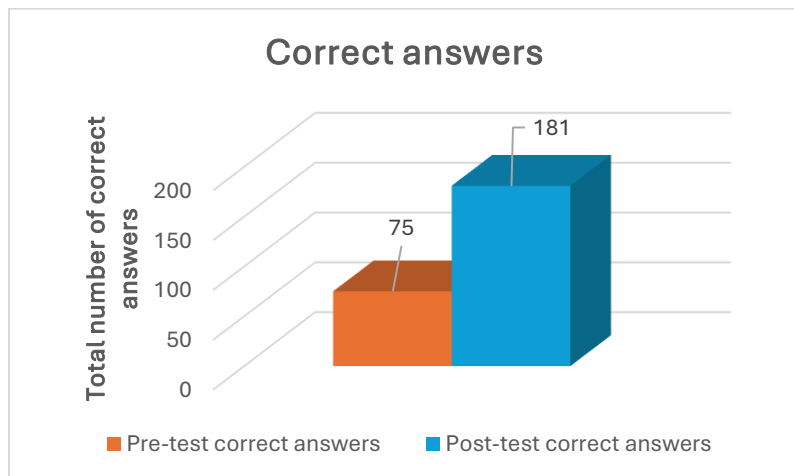
Figure 9. Group A post-test results.



Source: data collected from the post-test (instrument #4).

The data collected shows impressive results when compared to how students from this group performed in the pre-test. A comparison of correct answers showing students' knowledge of idioms can be found in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Group A test comparison.

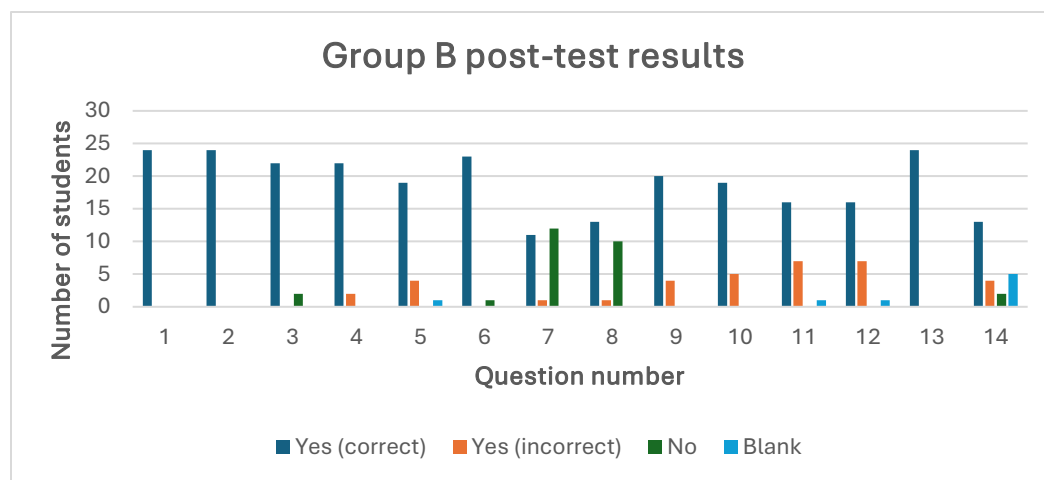


Source: data collected from the pre-test and post-test (instrument #1 and instrument #4).

4.2.4. Group B post-test analysis

Group B had 25 students enrolled in the class visited by the researcher, but at the time of the visit, in which the post-test was conducted only 24 students (96%) were present. The post-test results can be seen in Figure 11.

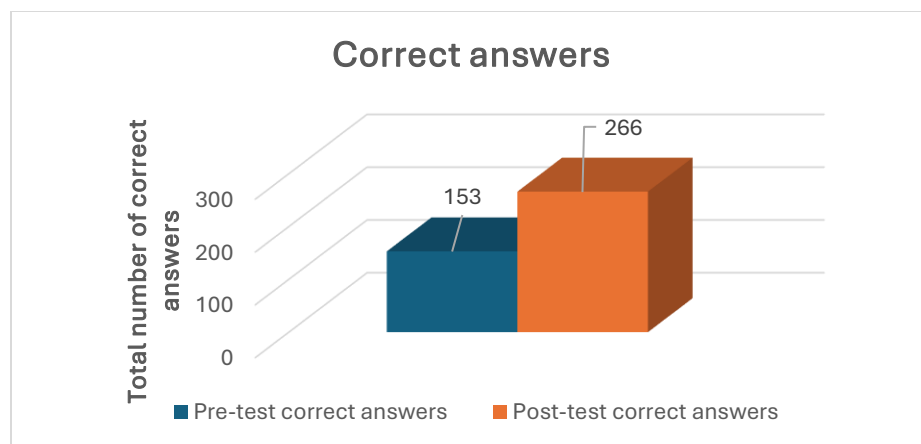
Figure 11. Group B post-test results.



Source: data collected from the post-test (instrument #4).

As can be seen above, the vast majority of students from Group B were able to answer most of the questions correctly in regard to idioms. However, even though the students of Group B performed better than those of Group A in the pre-test, the ones from Group B still showed a major improvement as well. The comparison between Group B's pre-test and post-test can be seen in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Group B test comparison.



Source: data collected from the pre-test and post-test (instrument #1 and instrument #4).

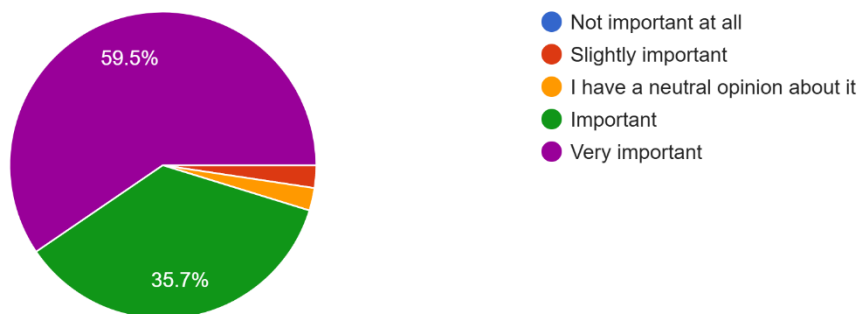
4.3. STUDENTS' OPINION ANALYSIS

Instrument #5 was conducted during the researcher's last visit to each of the groups. This survey shows opinions from the students' point of view about the Context-Based Learning Approach, as well as general thoughts about idioms and the researcher's job. Both groups answered the same survey and a total of 42 responses were received out of a possible total of 48 responses since some students decided not to participate in the survey or were not present at the time it was conducted. The survey shows that the majority of students consider idioms to be at least important when learning English as seen in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Students' opinion about idioms.

How important do you think that learning about idioms or idiomatic expressions is?

42 responses



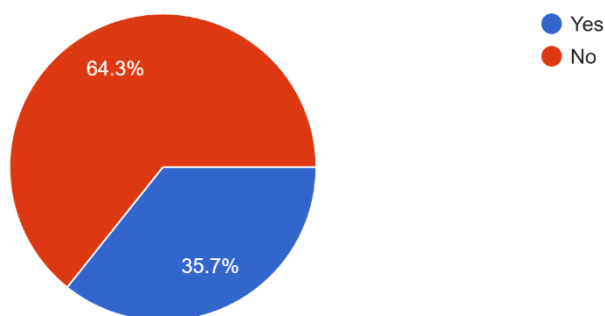
Source: data collected from instrument #5 (students' opinion) on Google Forms.

Additionally, students were asked if they consider that Universidad Técnica Nacional gives enough attention to idioms and it can be seen in Figure 14, majority disagrees with that sentiment.

Figure 14. Students' opinion about UTN.

Do you think that Universidad Técnica Nacional gives enough attention to idioms or idiomatic expressions?

42 responses



Source: data collected from instrument #5 (students' opinion) on Google Forms.

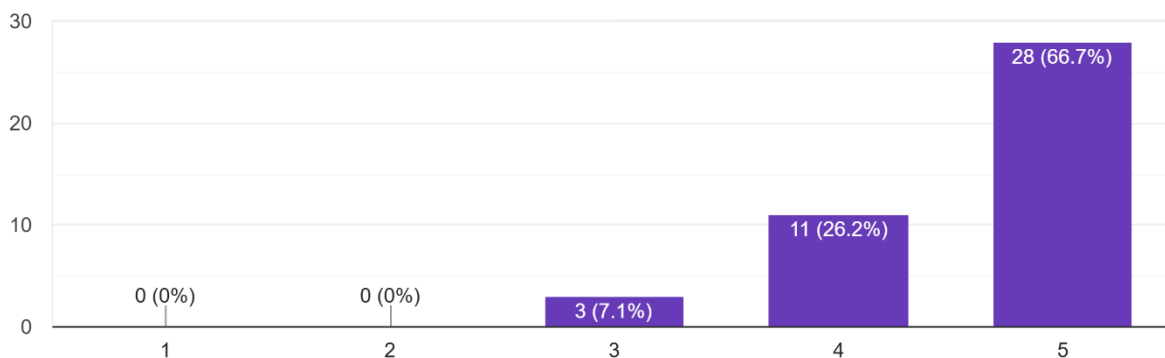
However, Universidad Técnica Nacional primarily works using the Task-Based Learning Approach. This opens the question of whether or not students consider CBL as a viable method

of learning. In regard to this, students showed a very positive satisfaction level with the class and methodology used by the researcher as can be seen in Figure 15.

Figure 15. Students' opinion about researcher's class.

On a scale from 1 to 5, how much did Manuel Arias' class about idioms help you understand them better?

42 responses



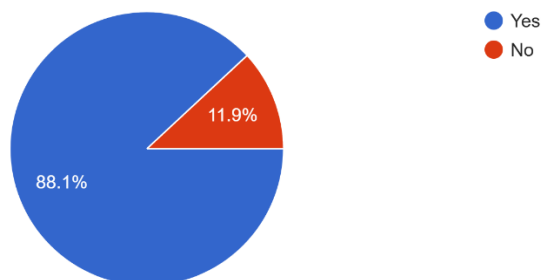
Source: data collected from instrument #5 (students' opinion) on Google Forms.

Moreover, the vast majority of students liked the use of literature as a way to learn and acquire new idioms as seen in Figure 16.

Figure 16. Students' opinion on literature.

Do you think that using literature was a good way to learn about new idioms?

42 responses

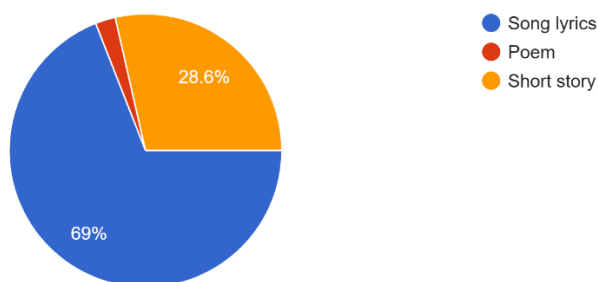


Source: data collected from instrument #5 (students' opinion) on Google Forms.

In terms of the preferred form of literature, results show that song lyrics were the overwhelming choice as seen in Figure 17.

Figure 17. Students' opinion on best form of literature to acquire idioms.

Which form of literature do you think that worked the best for helping you understand new idioms?
42 responses



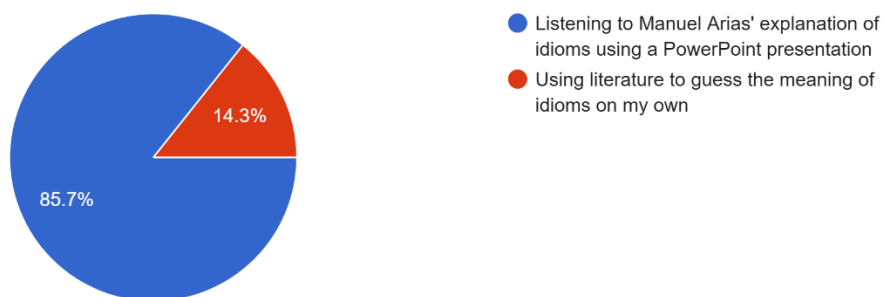
Source: data collected from instrument #5 (students' opinion) on Google Forms.

However, students also listened to the researcher's explanation about some idioms using CBL and a PowerPoint presentation, so not all learning came directly from their own findings. When asked about what methodology they preferred, most students liked listening to someone explain idioms within context as seen in Figure 18.

Figure 18. Students' opinion on methodology.

Which learning approach did you prefer for learning about idioms?

42 responses



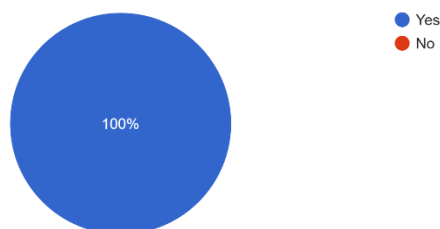
Source: data collected from instrument #5 (students' opinion) on Google Forms.

Finally, students were asked if they liked CBL and answers can be seen in Figure 19.

Figure 19. Students' opinion on CBL.

Did you like the Context-Based Learning Approach?

42 responses



Source: data collected from instrument #5 (students' opinion) on Google Forms.

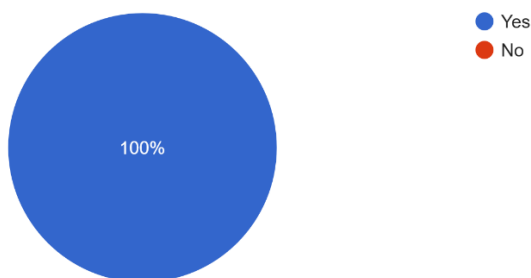
4.4. TEACHERS' OPINION ANALYSIS

Instrument #6 answers questions of interest to the researcher about the teachers' point of view of how the classes were conducted. The first question was in relation to whether the researcher appropriately used CBL to help students better understand idiomatic expressions and their answers can be seen down below in Figure 20.

Figure 20. Teachers' opinion about researcher's approach to CBL.

Do you think that the pedagogical approach used by the researcher (Manuel Arias) was effective at helping EFL students acquire new idioms?

2 responses



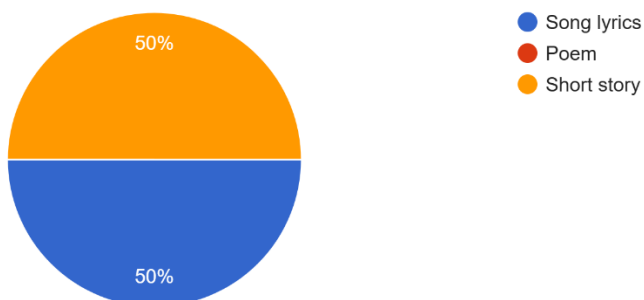
Source: data collected from instrument #5 (students' opinion) on Google Forms.

In regard to their opinion about the best form of literature from the ones employed, they were split between the song and the short story as seen in Figure 21. This makes sense since those two were also the preferred forms of literature by students.

Figure 21. Teachers' opinion on best form of literature.

Which form of literature did you like the most for teaching new idioms to EFL students?

2 responses



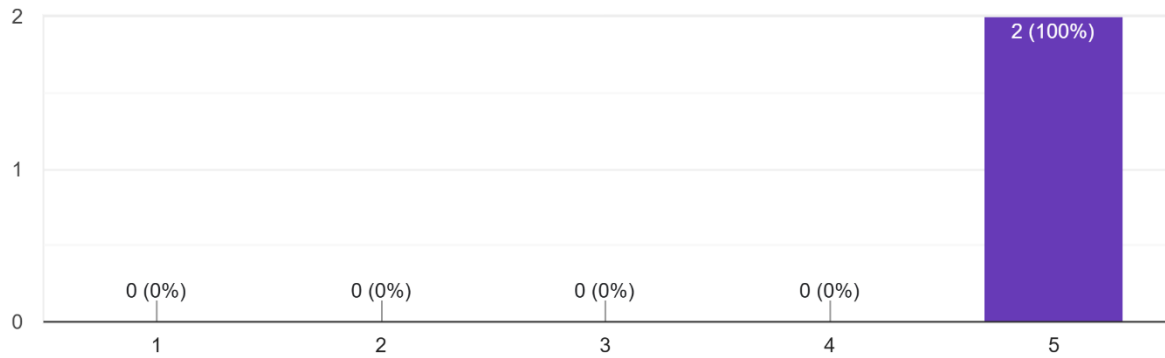
Source: data collected from instrument #5 (students' opinion) on Google Forms.

Finally, both professors believe that the quality of the researcher's class was very good as seen in Figure 22.

Figure 22. Teachers' opinion about the researcher's class.

On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you rate the class taught by the researcher (Manuel Arias)?

2 responses



Source: data collected from instrument #5 (students' opinion) on Google Forms.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides all the conclusions in reference to each of the objectives that were developed for this research. All information provided in this chapter shows the final thoughts of the research after performing all three visits to each of the groups that were selected as part of the sample, as well as all the analysis and interpretation of data collected with the use of the six instruments created for this investigation.

5.1.1. Conclusion in reference to the general objective

First, the general objective of this investigation aimed to determine the benefits of implementing the Context-Based Learning Approach in order to understand and acquire new idioms on English as Foreign Language students at UTN. In regard to this objective, the benefits were a massive improvement in their understanding and acquisition of new idioms. From general comments that came directly from students, as well as class observations that were constantly done by the researcher week by week, it was evident that students improved a lot.

Suffice to say, numbers demonstrate that students did acquire new idioms and were able to understand the meaning of certain sentences in the song, short story, and poem because of the implementation of this approach.

5.1.2. Conclusion in reference to the first specific objective

Second, the first specific objective aimed to analyze student's knowledge about idioms prior to the CBL class taught by the researcher. In regard to this, it is clear that a deficiency exists in EFL students at UTN about idiomatic expressions. The results from the pre-test show that even in advanced students, there is very little attention given to idioms from the university itself and even professors recognized this. In terms of first-year students such as those from Group A,

it is to be expected that they might encounter more issues when asked about the meaning of an idiom since they are new to the language. However, there is some improvement in their knowledge about them as they move up in quarters since Group B did significantly better in the pre-test.

5.1.3. Conclusion in reference to the second specific objective

Third, the second specific objective aimed to determine the best form of literature for EFL students to acquire new idioms. In regard to this objective, students and professors both agreed that the song lyrics worked surprisingly well. Even though it cannot be considered literature in the purest form, students had a sheet with the lyrics to the song as they were listening to it and they were reading it simultaneously. Even if it cannot be considered literature in the same way that other forms can, it was the most effective and validated the variable as over 50% of students chose it as their preferred form of literature for acquiring new idioms.

5.1.4. Conclusion in reference to the third specific objective

Fourth, the third specific objective aimed to determine the effectiveness of literature as a medium to acquire new idioms for EFL students. In regard to this objective, the variable was considered validated if at least 80% of students considered that literature was effective for them to acquire new idioms. Therefore, the variable was validated since 88,1% of students considered it to be effective. Moreover, students seemed to enjoy using literature in a whole new way as they were not necessarily looking for the plot of a story per say, but rather the inference of a phrase used within literature itself. It is clear that it should be used with innovative approaches and should be considered by professors as a very valid and valuable way to teach their students about idioms.

5.1.5. Conclusion in reference to the fourth specific objective

Finally, the fourth specific objective aimed to specify the results obtained by all instruments selectively in order to perform a statistical analysis of the data. In regard to this objective, the results were clear and easy to understand for the researcher and the professors consulted. Therefore, many different graphs full of interesting and valuable information were created and presented in this research paper.

5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of recommendations, some issues were evident throughout the investigation. First, it is clear that new English as a Foreign Language students require some Spanish in order to understand. At some points during the visits performed by the researcher, Spanish had to be used for Group A to provide direct translations of some words or idioms. However, this seemed appropriate since it happened in very short and specific situations that merited the use of Spanish, and students still continued to use English when asking any questions.

Second, from a university point of view, there is a lot of benefit in using technology appropriately when available. Students seemed to show more interest when a PowerPoint presentation was used rather than the paper that was handed to them with literature. Therefore, it could be recommended to give those forms of literature to students in a digital format such as a pdf for them to open on their phones. However, this is only possible because education technological tools at UTN are very good. This might not be the case in more traditional classes where a smart screen or projector is available.

Third, it is recommended to use multiple songs, not just one since students preferred that over other forms of literature by a lot. This means that by implementing multiple songs, they can

be spaced out throughout the allotted time for the class which would allow students to have multiple spikes of interest over a long period of time. Additionally, songs take much less time to listen to when compared to the time that is needed for a student to read a short story or a poem and analyze it.

CHAPTER VI

PROPOSAL

6.1. RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This chapter aims to provide the reader with a detailed proposal that any professor at a university level can implement in their class if he or she wants to improve the understanding and comprehension of idioms in EFL learners. This proposal is intended to be used in university level students since it is critical that students have an environment where they take English classes everyday and can understand basic meaning of sentences within literature which can be a bit too complex for younger learners in high school or schools.

6.2. PLACE TO BE DEVELOPED

This proposal is intended to be used in any university where a major that teaches English is used, whether it is English as a Foreign Language, English teaching, etc. Moreover, any major from a university whether public or private should work well with this methodology, as long as the main focus of the major is English.

6.3. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR THE PROPOSAL

6.3.1. General objective for the proposal

To increase significantly the understanding and acquisition of idioms in English as a Foreign Language students at a university level.

6.3.2. Specific objectives for the proposal

1. To use song lyrics to improve idiom comprehension skills in English as a Foreign Language students.
2. To use short stories as a medium for English as a Foreign Language students to learn and acquire new idioms.
3. To analyze students' improvement in understanding of idioms.

6.4. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES AND LITERATURE

The following activities are recommended based on the results that were obtained in this thesis, comments received from both the professors and students, as well as the researcher's own criteria of what worked well. It is important to keep in mind that these activities are flexible, and the proposed choice of literature is just a recommendation and could be ignored in favor of other literature or songs at each researcher's own discretion.

6.4.1. Activities

First, a PowerPoint presentation is recommended that will work as the general guide for the duration of the class. It will include a small introduction to idioms, where the exact definition will be explained, as well as easy examples for learners that have Spanish as their L1 such as “a piece of cake” or “break the ice” since those have direct comparisons in Spanish that are almost exact translations.

Second, it is recommended to tell students that a song will be played and to provide students with a sheet with the song lyrics that has the idioms highlighted in color for students to recognize. Additionally, a pdf of this exact sheet should be given to students in a digital format for those students that prefer it. After the song finishes playing, some critical thinking questions can be asked such as “What is the song about?”, or if they think that the song is about happy or sad feelings. Moreover, at this point questions about the meaning of specific idioms within the song can be asked and give time for students to try to infer from context. After that, the meaning of each idiom can be explained on the board or in the presentation.

Third, explain the meaning of other idioms that are included in the short story that will be used by showcasing them in the presentation within sentences that will serve as context.

Afterwards, a sheet with the short story selected can be handed out to students in order to have them read and try to understand the story. Try to ask them the same questions as it was done with the song lyrics.

Continue to repeat the same process alternating between songs and short stories according to the duration of the classes for as many days as needed to teach all desired idioms. The more, the merrier.

6.4.2. Suggested list of literature

In this section, both songs and short stories will be recommended. However, keep in mind that short stories work best if created by an artificial intelligence (AI) tool since those texts will be rich in idiomatic expressions and not longer than one page in length.

In terms of songs, I suggest “Someone you loved” by Lewis Capaldi, “Let her go” by Passenger, “Break my heart” by Dua Lipa, “Stop crying your heart out” by Oasis. In terms of short stories, I recommend the following created by AI:

I woke up at the crack of dawn, feeling under the weather, but today was too important to call in sick. It was my first day at my new job, and I didn't want to blow it.

I grabbed my coffee, but of course, I spilled the beans—literally. My cup tipped, and hot coffee soaked my shirt. “Just my luck,” I muttered, trying not to lose my cool. I changed in record time and ran out the door.

Traffic was a nightmare. I was cut off twice, and a slow truck made me miss the boat—I arrived ten minutes late. My boss didn't look happy. “You're on thin ice,” she warned. I

nodded, trying to keep a straight face and not bite my tongue. It wasn't the best first impression.

But by lunchtime, things turned around. I broke the ice with my coworkers over tacos and even made them laugh. By the end of the day, my boss said, "You really hit the ground running."

I may have started the day on the wrong foot, but I ended it on cloud nine.

References

- Asri, A. and Rochmawati, D. (2017). Innovative Teaching Of English Idiomatic Expressions For EFL Learners. *Journal of English Teaching Adi Buana*, 2 (1), 47-58.
- Bhandari, P. (2023). Scribbr. *Correlational Research | When & How to Use*.
<https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/correlational-research/#:~:text=A%20correlational%20research%20design%20investigates,be%20either%20positive%20or%20negative.>
- Butler, S. (2008). Universe. In *Encyclopedia of survey research methods* (Vol. 0, pp. 930-930). Sage Publications, Inc., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963947.n610>
- Cambridge. (2025). *About the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*. International language standards. <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/cefr/#:~:text=About%20the%20Common%20European%20Framework,who%20have%20mastered%20a%20language.>
- Counsel of Europe. (2025). *Global scale - Table 1 (CEFR 3.3): Common Reference levels*. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>
- Counsel of Europe. (2025). *Historical overview of the development of the CEFR*. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/history>

Council of Europe. (2025). *Purposes of the CEFR*. European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/uses-and-objectives#:~:text=The%20CEFR%20is%20intended%20to,of%20the%20Council%20of%20Europe.>

De Jong, O. (2008). *Context-based chemical education: how to improve it?* ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/27713937_Context-based_chemical_education_how_to_improve_it_Chemical_Education_International_2008_8_1-7

Eurostat. (2025). Statistics Explained. *Glossary: Applied research*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Applied_research#:~:text=Applied%20research%20is%20an%20original,operations%2C%20methods%2C%20or%20systems.

García Zapata, C. (2017). *The Use of Authentic Reading Passages as a Resource to Improve Reading Comprehension of the Fifth Grade Students at Escuela Centro América during the Third Period of the Year 2017*. [Thesis, Universidad Hispanoamericana]. Repositorio Institucional Sapiencia. <https://dspace-uh-tmp.igniteonline.la/handle/cenit/5279>

Guido Suárez, N. (2023). *Culture and its Relation to the Interpretation of Conversational Implicatures of Senior Students from the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional and Universidad Hispanoamericana*. [Thesis, Universidad Hispanoamericana]. Repositorio Institucional Sapiencia. <https://dspace-uh-tmp.igniteonline.la/handle/123456789/7961>

- Gougherty, M., Puentes, J. (2025). OpenOregon Educational Resources. *Sociology in Everyday Life*. <https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/soceveryday/chapter/1-5-levels-of-analysis-macro-level-and-micro-level/>
- Gungor, B., Saracoglu, S., Metin, M. (2023). Perspective of Teachers to Context-Based Learning and Its Use in Science Education. University of Toronto. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42330-023-00266-1>
- Hossain, K., I. (2024). *Literature-based language learning: Challenges, and opportunities for English learners*. Ampersand. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2024.100201>
- JCS Online Resources. (2024). *What is contextual learning – and why is it so important for students?* <https://jconlineresources.org/blog/what-is-contextual-learning/>
- Lieber, K. (2024). *Cultural Tips for ESL Learners: Understanding Idioms and Slang*. Midwestern Career College. <https://mccollege.edu/english-as-a-second-language/about-english-as-a-second-language/cultural-tips-for-esl-learners-understanding-idioms-and-slang/#:~:text=To%20truly%20become%20proficient%2C%20it's,and%20better%20understand%20native%20speakers.>
- McCombes, S. (2023). Scribbr. *Descriptive Research | Definition, Types, Methods & Examples*. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/descriptive-research/>
- Nadeem, N., & Almowalad, S. (2021). *Challenges and Strategies of Acquiring English Idioms for EFL Undergraduate Saudi Students*. Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research. <https://www.jallr.com/index.php/JALLR/article/download/1259/1365>

O'Reilly, A. (2022). *What Is an Idiom? Definition and Examples*. Grammarly.

<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/idioms/what-are-idioms/>

Osika, A., MacMahon, S., Lodge, J., Carroll, A. (2022). *Contextual learning: linking learning to the real world*. Times Higher Education.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/contextual-learning-linking-learning-real-world>

Overton, T. (2016). *Context and problem-based learning*. New Directions in the Teaching of Physical Sciences. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29311/ndtps.v0i3.409>

Padalík, O. (2008). *Idioms in Context of a Literary Text*. [Thesis, Masaryk University].

<https://is.muni.cz/th/egfo5/Lodge.pdf>

Santhanam, D. (2012). *The Importance of Teacher Training in Professional Colleges*. K.L. University.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236645768_The_Importance_of_Teacher_Training_in_Professional_Colleges

Ugalde Salazar, C. (2017). *Teaching Literature as a Pedagogical Strategy Using the Short Story "The Happy Prince" by Oscar Wilde to Improve Linguistic and Grammatical Competences in Students of Seventh Grade at Centro Educativo Horizonte 2000 in the First Period of the Year 2017*. [Thesis, Universidad Hispanoamericana]. Repositorio Institucional Sapiencia. <https://dspace-uh-tmp.igniteonline.la/handle/cenit/2889>

Universidad Técnica Nacional. (2025). *Inglés como Lengua Extranjera*.

<https://www.utn.ac.cr/content/ingles-lengua-extranjera>

Universidad Técnica Nacional. (2025). Reseña de la Universidad Técnica Nacional.

<https://www.utn.ac.cr/content/rese%C3%B1a-hist%C3%B3rica-de-la-universidad-t%C3%A9cnica-nacional>

Tenny, S., Brannan, J., Brannan, G. (2020). National Library of Medicine. *Qualitative Study*.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470395/>

Thomas, L. (2020). Scribbr. *Cross-Sectional Study | Definition, Uses & Examples*.

<https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/cross-sectional-study/>

Thomas, R. (2023). Enago Academy. *Unraveling Research Population and Sample:*

Understanding their role in statistical inference. [https://mccollege.edu/english-as-a-second-language/about-english-as-a-second-language/cultural-tips-for-esl-learners-understanding-idioms-and-](https://mccollege.edu/english-as-a-second-language/about-english-as-a-second-language/cultural-tips-for-esl-learners-understanding-idioms-and-slang/#:~:text=To%20truly%20become%20proficient%2C%20it's,and%20better%20understand%20native%20speakers)

slang/#:~:text=To%20truly%20become%20proficient%2C%20it's,and%20better%20understand%20native%20speakers

Trimmer, W., Laracy, K., Love-Gray, M. (2009). *Seeing the bigger picture through context-based*

learning. Good Practice Publication Grants. [https://ako.ac.nz/assets/Knowledge-](https://ako.ac.nz/assets/Knowledge-centre/Seeing-the-bigger-picture-through-context-based-learning/Seeing-the-bigger-picture-through-context-based-learning.PDF)

[centre/Seeing-the-bigger-picture-through-context-based-learning/Seeing-the-bigger-picture-through-context-based-learning.PDF](https://ako.ac.nz/assets/Knowledge-centre/Seeing-the-bigger-picture-through-context-based-learning/Seeing-the-bigger-picture-through-context-based-learning.PDF)

Tutal, Ö. (2023). *Does Context-Based Learning Increase Academic Achievement and Learning*

Retention?: A Review based on Meta-Analysis. Journal of Practical Studies in Education.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.46809/jpse.v4i5.71>

Yunus, K., & Hmaidan, M. (2021). *THE INFLUENCE OF IDIOMS ACQUISITION ON ENHANCING ENGLISH STUDENTS FLUENCY*. International Journal of Education Psychology and Counseling. 6(40), 124-133. <http://dx.doi.org/10.35631/IJEPC.640010>

ANNEXES

Annex 1

Instrument #1: Diagnostic test

Student's name: _____

Instructions: This questionnaire has been designed to evaluate the current knowledge of the sample about idioms and their meaning. The information collected is strictly confidential and will be used for research purposes only by the author of the thesis *"The benefits of implementing the Context-Based Learning Approach in improving the comprehension and usage of idioms in EFL students of Universidad Técnica Nacional in Puntarenas during the second quarter of 2025"* of Universidad Hispanoamericana.

Please take your time to read all of the questions thoroughly and answer them honestly to the best of your ability.

1) Are you familiar with the meaning of an "idiom" or "idiomatic expression"?

- Yes
 No

2) Do you know the meaning of the following idiom?

"Beat around the bush"

- Yes
 No

What does it mean?

3) Do you know the meaning of the following idiom?

"A blessing in disguise"

- Yes
 No

What does it mean?

4) Do you know the meaning of the following idiom?

"Piece of cake"

- Yes
- No

What does it mean?

5) Do you know the meaning of the following idiom?

"Drive me crazy"

- Yes
- No

What does it mean?

6) What is the meaning of **"To let my guard down"**?

- To open a door
- To relax and stop being careful
- To disappoint a close friend or family member
- To drop something on the floor

7) What is the meaning of **"Call it a day"**?

- Calling someone on the phone later
- Naming a day of the week
- When the sunlight drops and it becomes nighttime
- Ending a period of time or stopping an activity

8) Do you know the meaning of the following idiom?

“Better late than never”

- Yes
- No

What does it mean?

9) Do you know the meaning of the following idiom?

“Break the ice”

- Yes
- No

What does it mean?

10) Do you know the meaning of the following idiom?

“Get my act together”

- Yes
- No

What does it mean?

11) Do you know the meaning of the following idiom?

“Wing it”

- Yes
- No

What does it mean?

Annex 2

Instrument #2: Classroom observation checklist

Instructions: This checklist is solely for observation purposes and all information collected is strictly confidential. This instrument is part of a series of instruments used in the research process of the thesis “The benefits of implementing the Context-Based Learning Approach in improving the comprehension and usage of idioms in EFL students of Universidad Técnica Nacional in Puntarenas during the second quarter of 2025” of Universidad Hispanoamericana.

Group observed: _____ **Date of the observation:** _____

Number of students in that group: _____

Number of students that attended class: _____

Number of present male students: _____ **Number of present female students:** _____

Checklist

Aspect observed	Yes	No	Comments
Students use computers.			
Students write in their notebooks.			
The classroom has a smart screen.			
The classroom has a projector.			
The classroom has at least 1 whiteboard.			
The professor speaks only in English.			
Students show interest in what the teacher says.			
Students speak only in English.			
Students stay in the classroom for the duration of the entire class.			
Students follow instructions when given to them.			
Students write down notes of what the teacher says.			
Students use idioms as part of their speech when they speak.			

Additional observations:

Annex 3

Instrument #4: Post-test

Student's name: _____

Instructions: This questionnaire has been designed to evaluate the knowledge of the sample about idioms and their meaning after the Context-Based Learning Approach has been used. The information collected is strictly confidential and will be used for research purposes only by the author of the thesis *"The benefits of implementing the Context-Based Learning Approach in improving the comprehension and usage of idioms in EFL students of Universidad Técnica Nacional in Puntarenas during the second quarter of 2025"* of Universidad Hispanoamericana.

Please take your time to read all of the questions thoroughly and answer them honestly to the best of your ability.

1) Do you know what an idiom or idiomatic expression is?

- Yes
- No

2) Do you know the meaning of the idiom "piece of cake"?

- Yes
- No

What does it mean?

3) Do you know the meaning of the idiom "drive me crazy"?

- Yes
- No

What does it mean?

4) What is the meaning of the idiom **"to let my guard down"**?

- To open a door
- To relax and stop being careful/to be vulnerable
- To disappoint a close friend or family member
- To drop something on the floor

5) What is the meaning of the idiom **"call it a day"**?

- Calling someone on the phone later
- Naming a day of the week
- When the sunlight drops and it becomes nighttime
- Ending a period of time or stopping an activity

6) Do you know the meaning of the idiom **"break the ice"**?

- Yes
- No

What does it mean?

7) Do you know the meaning of the idiom **"get my act together"**?

- Yes
- No

What does it mean?

8) Do you know the meaning of the idiom **"wing it"**?

- Yes
- No

What does it mean?

9) What is the meaning of the idiom **"to pull the rug"**?

- to betray someone
- to clean the floor
- to lie to someone
- to sleep on the floor

10) What is the meaning of the idiom **"out of the blue"**?

- to pick the color blue
- to look at the sky
- to feel sad
- to happen unexpectedly

11) What is the meaning of the idiom **"hit the ground running"**?

- to run really fast
- to have a good start
- to fall on the floor
- to be optimistic

12) What is the meaning of the idiom **"on cloud nine"**?

- to jump high
- to get good grades
- to be very happy
- to think about something a lot

13) What is the meaning of the idiom **"to cry over spilled milk"**?

- to worry about something you cannot change
- to get someone pregnant
- to do things that you do not want to do
- to discuss something with someone

14) Use the idiom **"painted myself into a corner"** in a sentence.
