

**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' COMPETENCE IN USING ENGLISH IDIOMS AT
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG**

THESIS

*Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain Strata One (S1)
Degree*



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2016

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Idioms at English Department of Universitas Negeri
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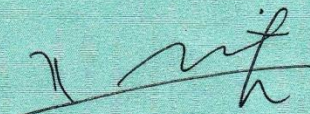
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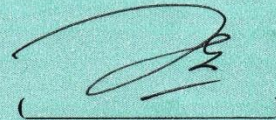
**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' COMPETENCE IN USING ENGLISH
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PADANG**

Padang, 29 Januari 2016

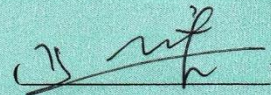
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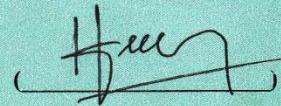
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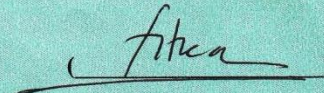
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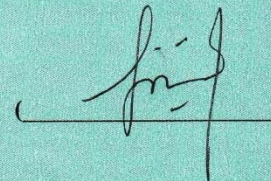
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ABSTRAK

Putri, Irma. 2016. “An Analysis of Students’ Ability in Using English Idioms at English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang”. *Skripsi. Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris. Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni. Universitas Negeri Padang.*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kemampuan mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris dalam menggunakan *English Idioms* serta masalah-masalah yang mereka hadapi dalam menggunakannya. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif dengan populasi mahasiswa tingkat IV tahun masuk 2012, Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris, Universitas Negeri Padang. Sampel penelitian berjumlah 30 mahasiswa yang diambil sebanyak 5 mahasiswa dari 6 kelas, 4 kelas kependidikan dan 2 kelas non-kependidikan yang diambil dengan menggunakan teknik *proportional random sampling*. Instrumen penelitian adalah *Idiom Test* dan *Interview* sesuai dengan indikator yang diberikan. Waktu yang diberikan untuk mengerjakan tes adalah 90 menit. *Interview* diberikan hanya kepada mahasiswa yang memiliki skor rendah dalam menjawab tes (6 orang). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menggunakan *English Idioms* adalah bagus (67.90%). Masalah-masalah yang dihadapi mahasiswa dalam menggunakan *English Idioms* yaitu ketidakharfiahan dari idiom-idiom bahasa Inggris rumit, kekurangan *exposure* terhadap idiom-idiom bahasa Inggris, penggunaan idiom di situasi yang tepat dan dalam bentuk yang tepat sangat menantang, perbedaan formalitas dari idiom-idiom bahasa Inggris, banyak idiom bahasa Inggris yang memiliki *grammatical constraints*, kekurangan materi pembelajaran, menganalisis makna dari beberapa idiom sulit, kekurangan pengetahuan tentang idiom-idiom bahasa Inggris, bingung membedakan antara *English idioms* dan *English proverbs*, kekurangan media atau *ways* dalam menggunakan idiom-idiom bahasa Inggris, dan ketidakterbiasaan dalam menggunakan idiom-idiom bahasa Inggris. Penulis mengharapkan mahasiswa untuk dapat lebih banyak menyediakan waktu dalam membaca buku-buku berbahasa Inggris guna meningkatkan pemahaman dan memperbanyak pengetahuan tentang idiom-idiom bahasa Inggris.

Keywords: *English Idioms, English Students, Competence*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

By saying '*Alhamdulillahirabbil 'Alamin*', the writer sends the biggest thanks to Allah *subhanahuwata'ala* for His marvelous guidance which has led the writer to accomplish this thesis entitled "An Analysis of Students' Competence in Using English Idioms at English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang". Shalawat and Salam to Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him.

This thesis is submitted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements to obtain Strata One (S1) Degree in English department in majoring English Language Teaching Study Program, the Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang. In accomplishing this thesis, the writer has worked with a number of great people. It is a pleasure to convey the deepest gratitude to them in this acknowledgments.

In the first place the writer would like to express her gratitude and appreciation to her advisors, Prof. Dr. Hermawati Syarif, M.Hum as the First Advisor and Yuli Tiarina, M.Pd as the Second Advisor, who have patiently given their ideas, suggestions, corrections, beneficial opinions, great willingness and time to support this thesis. It is a pleasure to be allowed to pay tribute to Reviewers in thesis proposal seminar as well as the Examiners in thesis comprehension test, Dr. Hamzah, M.A., M.M, Drs. Don Narius, M.Si, Fitrawati, S.S., M.Pd, and Leni Marlina, S.S., M.A for their beneficial time, contribution of thoughtful ideas toward the development and the improvement of this thesis.

In addition, the writer would like to send gratitude to the Chair Person and Secretary of English Department of UNP Dr. Refnaldi, S.Pd., M. Litt. and Fitrawati, S.S., M.Pd. The writer would also like to send her gratitude to her Academic Advisor, Drs. Saunir, M.Pd for his support, advice, attention, and care given to the writer during her study. The writer's best gratitude is also expressed to Ingrid Brita Mathew, B.A., Dip.Ed., M.App Ling for her good willingness and contribution of being the

validator for her research. Moreover, collective and individual acknowledgments are also owed to all of English Department Lecturers who had taught her during her study in English Department and had shared their inspirational experiences to her.

Besides, this thesis would have never been accomplished without the cooperation given by the students from English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang year 2012 where this research was conducted. In accomplishing this thesis, enormous thanks are also addressed to the writer's parents, the beloved Mother, Mimi Fariati and Father, Drs. Sudirman, beloved siblings, Ario .T. Sudirman, S.Psi and Tria Hanifah and other families and friends for the support and encouragement, boundless love and prayers.

All comments and suggestions are welcomed in order to make this thesis better. The writer hopes that this thesis is useful especially for English Language Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Art, Universitas Negeri Padang.

Padang, February 2016

The Writer

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

Language is a tool for communication. It is used to convey message, meaning, idea, information, etc. In communicating, basically there are two general ways, spoken and written. Language for communicating can be done literally and non-literally (figuratively). This happens to all languages in the world including English. Based on Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, the literal meaning of a word is its original, basic meaning. On the contrary, the non-literal/figurative meaning of a word is used not with their basic meaning but with a more imaginative meaning. Communicating in a literal way means the speaker uses the basic and original meaning of words to convey the message. Meanwhile, communicating in a figurative way means the speaker uses not the basic and original meaning of the words but with a more imaginative meaning to convey the message. There are many ways to do the communication figuratively which is by using figures of speech. Idiom is one of them.

In learning a language especially English, the students have to know that language is not all literal. Based on the writer's preliminary observation, most of the English students in English department of Universitas Negeri Padang do translation in order to understand English. It means that they look at the dictionary to look for the literal meaning of words they do not know. This way can succeed if the phrases or

sentences or utterances which they have been working are in the literal form. However, the students can come to a wrong understanding: students do not get the actual meaning of the sentences/utterances if the sentences/utterances are in non-literal/figurative form. For example, the students analyze *pulling my legs* as its literal meaning, the action of moving or taking someone legs. Whereas, *pulling my legs* actually means to try to persuade someone to believe something which is not true as a joke. Here, it can be seen that students are lack in knowledge about non-literal meaning, especially about idiom.

Seidl and McMordie (1978:4) state that an idiom is a number of words which are taken together and means something different from the individual words of the idiom when they stand alone. The students, even if they know the meaning of each word, they still cannot get the real meaning. Most of the students do not know what idiom is. They somehow do not recognize some idiom-containing sentences/utterances. Therefore, to get the meaning of the sentence, they merely translate it by looking at each word meaning in Bahasa. In addition, they even mistake idiom as slang or proverb. The reason why this problem occurs is because idiom is not taught inclusively in class. Some subject matters may include idiom as sub-topic to be discussed, but it is not given a serious concern. As the result, students do not give a great attention to it.

However, there are some idioms that students frequently use in the class such as *it's just a piece of cake, out of blue, on the way, by the way*, etc but they do not realize that those expressions are called idioms. There are also some idioms that students have learned in structure/grammar classes such as *get along with, keep up with, take care of*, etc. Celce-Murcia (2008) argues that the ability to use idioms helps establish figurative competence in the communicative competence. It means that the more students can use idioms in communicating, the more they sound like native speakers. Seidl and McMordie (1978:1) say that the tendencies of present-day English are toward more idiomatic usage. The language is developing to be more figurative rather than literal.

Idioms can be found in every kind of English language exposure/source such as through literatures, movies, songs' lyrics, one's speech, etc. Students do not meet the understanding expected if they do not know and do not understand the idiom. Many idioms are also included in TOEFL listening test. It can be an obstacle for students to reach the score required if they do not understand idioms. Therefore, this research focuses on the students' self development in learning and using English idioms.

Many researches about idiom matter have been conducted. They are divided into three main categories. Firstly, the researchers were concerning about the constitution of idioms (e.g., Fernando, 1996; Grant & Bauer, 2004; Makkai, 1972). Secondly, they focused on the methods of teaching idioms (e.g., Buckingham, 2006; Copper, 1999; Lennon, 1998; Tran, 2012; Vasiljevic, 2011; Wray, 2000; Zyzik, 2009). Thirdly,

researchers are interesting in the selection of idioms to be learned (e.g., Liu, 2003; Simpson and Mendis, 2003). However, there are not many researches that focus on the EFL students' competence in using idioms. Hence, it is perceived important to conduct a research to analyze the students' competence on using English idioms at English department Universitas Negeri Padang as well as the contribution to fill the gap in idiom-related research on language learning and use.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the problem above, there are two possible problems that can be identified. First is the students' lack in knowledge about English idioms. They do not know what idiom is. They are not aware of the idioms existence in English. As the result, they do not recognize idiom-containing sentences or utterances while learning English. Second, they do not often use some commonly used idioms. Students usually speak in English in literal way. They hardly use figure of speech to communicate in English especially idioms. All of the problems above need to be analyzed in order to find out the students' competence on using English idioms at English department Universitas Negeri Padang.

C. Limitation of the Problem

Based on the identification of the problem above, the researcher analyzed the English department students' competence in using English idioms. This research focused on the fourth year students registered in 2012 academic year in English

department who have taken grammar 1, grammar 2, and grammar 3 classes to see their competence in using English idioms. By knowing this fact, the fourth year students of English department have already had adequate background knowledge on the study of meanings in a language, in this case, English language.

D. Formulation of the Problem

The formulation of the problem in this research is: “How is the students’ competence in using English idioms at English department Universitas Negeri Padang?”

E. Research Questions

Based on the formulation above, there are some research questions as follow:

1. How is the students’ competence in using English idioms at English department Universitas Negeri Padang?
2. What are the problems faced by English department students of Universitas Negeri Padang in using English idioms?

F. Purposes of the Research

Based on the research questions given, the purposes of this research are as follow:

1. to find out the students’ competence in using English idioms at English department Universitas Negeri Padang.
2. to find out the problems faced by English department students of Universitas Negeri Padang in using English idioms.

G. Significance of the Research

It is expected that this research finding can give contribution both in theoretical significance and practical significance. In theoretical significance, it is hoped that the research findings can give contribution and enrich the knowledge on idiom-related research on language learning and use focusing on the students' ability in using English idioms. It is also expected that the result findings can be useful information and reference for the next researcher or writer who conducts further research about the students' ability in using English idioms in more detail research. In practical significance, the result of this research can give information to English department of Universitas Negeri Padang about how is the students' ability in using English idioms at English department Universitas Negeri Padang.

H. Definition of Key Terms

Idiom	means a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word understood on its own.
Competence	means the physical and or mental power or skill needed to do something.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusions

Based on the findings, first it can be concluded that the fourth year English department students of Universitas Negeri Padang have shown quite good ability in using English idioms. Eventhough the finding showed good ability of English department students in using English idioms, still there were several problems students faced in using them. Second, the problems students have stated such as the complexity of the non-literalness of idioms, the lack of exposure to idioms, and the correct use of idioms in appropriate situations in correct forms is extremely challenging. Students also had problem because of the formality of idioms differs, many idioms have grammatical constraints, and they are lack of sufficient teaching materials. Other problems students had mentioned such as analyzing the meaning of certain idioms is difficult, the lack of knowledge of English idioms, the confusion between English idioms and English proverbs, the lack of media and ways in using English idiom, and the last problem is they are not being used to use English idioms.

B. Suggestions

Based on the findings, it can be suggested that English department students should learn more about English idioms and spend more time in reading many English books or literatures in where they can find many idioms. They also should motivate themselves to be more actively using English idioms in both writing and speaking to improve their English especially in figurative language such as idioms.

The lectures can also provide learning and discussion about several idioms that sometimes come up in class activities. Perhaps having a class session which focuses on the learning of English idioms can be useful and interesting, since learning about English idioms is also interesting.

Suggestion for the next researcher who may be also interested on the research about English idioms can do the research about other types of English idioms that this research did not mention. As stated earlier, this research focuses on the idioms which are regarded as the frequently used ones. Perhaps, the next researcher can do the research about other types of idioms defined by other linguists.

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