

ADAPTIVE TASKS IN TEACHING ENGLISH IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN EFL: METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

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Abstract

The teaching of idiomatic expressions in EFL contexts remains a challenging area due to their non-literal meaning, cultural specificity, and semantic opacity. Traditional instructional approaches often rely on memorization and isolated presentation, which limits learners' ability to understand and use idioms effectively in communication. This study aims to develop the methodological foundations of adaptive tasks for teaching English idiomatic expressions and to propose a structured model that enhances idiomatic competence. The research employs a mixed-methods design, combining theoretical analysis with pedagogical modeling and experimental validation. The results include the development of an adaptive task system consisting of recognition, interpretation, controlled production, and free production tasks, organized according to learners' proficiency levels and cognitive needs. The findings demonstrate that adaptive tasks facilitate deeper understanding, improve retention, and promote active use of idioms in communicative contexts. The results also indicate statistically significant improvements in learners' idiomatic competence, as evidenced by substantial gains in test scores and learner performance. The study concludes that integrating adaptive learning principles with task-based instruction provides an effective framework for teaching idiomatic expressions and contributes to the development of learners' communicative competence in EFL settings.

Keywords: idiomatic expressions; adaptive tasks; EFL instruction; idiomatic competence; task-based learning; differentiation; scaffolding

1. Introduction

The development of communicative competence in a foreign language is not limited to grammatical accuracy but also involves the ability to use language naturally, expressively, and appropriately in real communicative situations. In this regard, idiomatic expressions constitute an essential component of language proficiency, as they reflect the cultural, cognitive, and pragmatic dimensions of communication. Idioms enrich speech by adding imagery, emotional expressiveness, and cultural depth, thereby enabling learners to achieve a more authentic and native-like level of language use (Tursunnazarova et al., 2023).

The importance of idiomatic expressions is widely emphasized in phraseological and methodological research. Phraseological units function as powerful means of linguistic expression, allowing speakers to convey complex meanings concisely while enhancing the stylistic richness of speech. As noted in pedagogical studies, the use of idioms contributes to linguistic economy, expressiveness, and communicative effectiveness, which are essential characteristics of advanced language proficiency (Прокурова, 2006). Moreover, idioms embody national-cultural specificity and play a crucial role in intercultural communication, as they reflect the worldview, traditions, and values of a linguistic community (Чернышев, 2008).



Despite their significance, the acquisition of idiomatic expressions presents considerable challenges for EFL learners. One of the primary difficulties lies in the non-literal nature of idioms, since their meanings cannot be inferred directly from the meanings of their individual components. Learners often attempt to interpret idioms literally, which leads to misunderstanding or incorrect usage. In addition, idioms are characterized by strong cultural specificity, as many expressions are rooted in historical and cultural contexts unfamiliar to learners. As a result, students may fail to grasp their figurative meaning or use them inappropriately in communication (Прокурова, 2006).

Another important factor complicating idiom acquisition is their low degree of semantic transparency. Methodological research indicates that students frequently experience difficulties in both understanding and producing idiomatic expressions, often avoiding their use altogether in speech. This leads to a discrepancy between learners' linguistic knowledge and their ability to communicate effectively and naturally (Чернышев, 2008). Furthermore, insufficient attention to phraseological units in language instruction reduces learners' ability to develop expressive, emotionally rich, and culturally appropriate speech.

At the same time, traditional approaches to teaching idioms remain largely limited to memorization and isolated presentation of expressions, without sufficient emphasis on context, interaction, and learner variability. Although some studies highlight the effectiveness of contextualized instruction, storytelling, and activity-based methods in facilitating idiom comprehension (Tursunnazarova et al., 2023), these approaches are not always systematically structured or adapted to individual learner differences. In particular, they often fail to take into account variations in learners' proficiency levels, cognitive processing abilities, and learning pace.

This situation reveals a significant gap in contemporary EFL pedagogy: the lack of a coherent methodological framework for teaching idiomatic expressions based on adaptive and differentiated instruction. Given the complexity of idiom acquisition, there is a clear need for instructional models that combine contextualized learning with adaptive task design, allowing learners to gradually develop idiomatic competence in accordance with their individual needs.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to develop the methodological foundations of adaptive tasks for teaching English idiomatic expressions in EFL contexts. The study seeks to design and theoretically justify an adaptive task system that enhances learners' ability to understand, retain, and appropriately use idiomatic expressions in communication.

To achieve this aim, the following research questions are addressed:

- How can adaptive tasks improve idiom acquisition in EFL?
- What methodological principles should underlie the design of adaptive tasks for teaching idiomatic expressions?

By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to the development of more effective, learner-centered approaches to teaching idioms, thereby improving learners' communicative competence and enabling more natural and contextually appropriate language use.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Nature of Idiomatic Expressions

Idiomatic expressions constitute a central component of phraseology and are widely recognized as complex linguistic units characterized by semantic, structural, and pragmatic specificity. They are typically defined as multi-word expressions whose meanings are not fully predictable from the meanings of their individual components (Moon, 1998; Wray, 2002). This



property, often referred to as non-compositionality, distinguishes idioms from free word combinations and makes them particularly challenging for language learners.

One of the defining features of idiomatic expressions is their semantic opacity, which refers to the degree to which the meaning of an idiom cannot be inferred from its constituent parts. For example, expressions such as “spill the beans” or “kick the bucket” illustrate how idiomatic meaning diverges from literal interpretation. According to phraseological theory, idioms exist along a continuum from transparent to opaque, which has important implications for language acquisition (Cowie, 1998).

Another important characteristic of idioms is their relative fixedness. While some idiomatic expressions allow limited variation, many are structurally stable and resist modification. This fixedness contributes to their recognizability but also limits learners’ ability to manipulate them productively (Wray, 2002). At the same time, variability exists in certain contexts, particularly in spoken discourse, where idioms may undergo lexical or syntactic adaptation.

From a functional perspective, idioms serve not only as linguistic units but also as carriers of cultural meaning. They reflect the historical experience, values, and worldview of a speech community, thereby playing a crucial role in intercultural communication (Прокупова, 2006). As noted in pedagogical studies, idioms contribute to expressiveness, emotional coloring, and stylistic richness, enhancing both spoken and written discourse (Чернышев, 2008).

2.2. Idiom Acquisition in EFL

The acquisition of idiomatic expressions in EFL contexts is widely regarded as a cognitively demanding process. One of the main challenges lies in the need to process figurative meaning, which requires learners to move beyond literal interpretation and engage in abstract conceptualization. Research suggests that idiom comprehension involves complex cognitive mechanisms, including metaphor processing and mental imagery (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

The role of metaphor is particularly significant in idiom acquisition. Many idiomatic expressions are based on conceptual metaphors that structure human thought and experience. Understanding these underlying metaphors can facilitate the interpretation and retention of idioms (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Similarly, the use of mental imagery has been shown to enhance learners’ ability to remember and use idiomatic expressions effectively (Boers and Lindstromberg, 2008).

Another major factor influencing idiom acquisition is L1 interference. Learners often rely on their native language when interpreting idioms, which can lead to negative transfer, especially when idiomatic expressions differ significantly across languages. Comparative studies have shown that learners tend to translate idioms literally or substitute them with equivalent expressions from their L1, which may not be appropriate in the target language (Tursunnazarova et al., 2023).

In addition, the importance of context in idiom learning cannot be overstated. Contextualized instruction enables learners to infer meaning, understand usage, and develop pragmatic competence. Studies have demonstrated that idioms presented in authentic contexts are more easily understood and retained than those taught in isolation (Ellis, 2003). Context also provides clues about register, collocation, and communicative function, which are essential for appropriate idiom use.

Despite these insights, empirical evidence indicates that learners often avoid using idioms due to uncertainty and lack of confidence. This avoidance behavior results in reduced communicative effectiveness and limited expressive capacity (Прокупова, 2006). Therefore, there is a need for instructional approaches that support both comprehension and production of idiomatic expressions.



2.3. Adaptive Learning and Task-Based Teaching

In recent years, adaptive learning and task-based language teaching have emerged as influential approaches in EFL pedagogy. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) emphasizes the use of meaningful tasks that require learners to engage in authentic communication (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). This approach aligns well with idiom instruction, as it promotes contextualized use and communicative practice.

Adaptive learning, on the other hand, focuses on tailoring instruction to individual learner needs. It involves the use of differentiated tasks, continuous feedback, and flexible learning pathways to accommodate variations in learners' abilities, preferences, and learning pace (Tomlinson, 2014). Adaptive tasks are particularly relevant in idiom teaching, as they allow learners to progress gradually from recognition to production.

A key distinction within adaptive pedagogy is that between differentiation and scaffolding. Differentiation refers to the adjustment of instructional content and tasks based on learner characteristics, while scaffolding involves providing temporary support to facilitate learning. Both strategies are essential for effective idiom instruction, as they help learners overcome cognitive difficulties and build confidence (Tomlinson, 2014).

Another important consideration is cognitive load. Idiom learning imposes a significant cognitive burden due to the need to process figurative meaning, cultural context, and structural constraints simultaneously. According to cognitive load theory, instructional design should minimize unnecessary cognitive demands and provide structured support to facilitate learning (Sweller, 2011).

Recent studies also highlight the role of adaptive technologies and feedback systems in enhancing language learning. Dynamic feedback and personalized instruction have been shown to improve learner engagement and performance, particularly in complex areas such as idiom acquisition (Plass and Pawar, 2020).

Overall, the integration of task-based and adaptive approaches provides a promising framework for teaching idiomatic expressions in EFL contexts. However, there remains a need for systematic methodological models that combine these approaches in a coherent and practical way.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods experimental design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the effectiveness of adaptive tasks in teaching English idiomatic expressions in an EFL context. The use of a mixed-methods approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of both measurable learning outcomes and the cognitive processes underlying idiom acquisition.

The methodological framework is informed by contemporary developments in adaptive learning, task-based instruction, and idiom pedagogy. Recent research highlights that idiomatic expressions present significant challenges to EFL learners due to their figurative nature, cultural specificity, and contextual dependence (Nguyen and Bui, 2025; Rahmtallah, 2024). Moreover, current studies emphasize the importance of contextualized and adaptive instructional approaches in improving idiomatic competence and learner engagement (Suhodolli and Lama, 2024; Valizadeh, 2025).

3.1. Research Context and Participants



The empirical study was conducted at the Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages within the undergraduate English philology program. The participants consisted of first-year students, as this stage represents a critical period for the development of foundational communicative and phraseological competence.

The participants were divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group was taught using adaptive task-based instruction, while the control group followed traditional methods. This design enabled a comparative evaluation of instructional effectiveness.

The selection of participants and the organization of the experimental process were based on established pedagogical principles and institutional conditions.

3.2. Research Design and Procedure

The experimental procedure was implemented in three stages: diagnostic, formative, and summative.

Diagnostic stage

The diagnostic stage (September–October 2025) aimed to determine learners' initial level of idiomatic competence and identify major learning difficulties. Previous research indicates that learners often struggle with interpreting figurative meanings and applying idioms appropriately in context (Nguyen and Bui, 2025).

Data were collected through diagnostic testing, questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews. The diagnostic test was based on a 60-point scale and assessed learners' ability to recognize, interpret, and use idiomatic expressions. The results enabled the classification of learners into proficiency levels and informed the design of adaptive instructional tasks.

Formative stage

The formative stage (November–December 2025) involved the implementation of an adaptive task system in the experimental group. Instruction was supported by the author-developed resource *Mastering English Idioms through Context*, which integrates contextualized, interactive, and differentiated tasks.

The instructional design was based on adaptive learning principles, which emphasize personalization, continuous feedback, and alignment with learners' cognitive needs. Recent studies demonstrate that adaptive and AI-supported learning environments significantly enhance language acquisition by providing individualized feedback and contextualized practice.

The adaptive task system was structured according to the following principles:

- differentiation based on learner proficiency
- gradual increase in cognitive complexity
- integration of scaffolding strategies
- emphasis on contextual and communicative use

Instruction incorporated interactive methods such as contextual teaching, brainstorming, case-based learning, and metacognitive strategies (e.g., INSERT). These approaches are consistent with recent findings that contextualization and learner engagement significantly improve idiomatic comprehension and retention (Suhodolli and Lama, 2024).

Summative stage

The summative stage (January–March 2026) focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the adaptive methodology. Post-tests were administered to both groups, and the results were analyzed statistically.



The findings demonstrated that the experimental group achieved significantly higher results in idiomatic competence. Similar results have been reported in recent studies, where adaptive and context-rich instruction led to statistically significant improvements in learners' understanding and use of idiomatic expressions (Valizadeh, 2025) .

3.3. Data Collection Methods

The study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Quantitative data were collected through diagnostic and achievement tests, allowing for statistical comparison between groups. Qualitative data were obtained through classroom observations, interviews, questionnaires, and pedagogical monitoring.

In addition, dynamic feedback sessions were conducted throughout the instructional process. Contemporary research emphasizes that continuous feedback plays a crucial role in adaptive learning environments by enabling real-time adjustment of instruction and supporting learner autonomy (Aldawsari, 2025) .

3.4. Instructional Design: Adaptive Task System

The central component of the methodology is the adaptive task system, designed to address individual learner differences and promote active engagement.

The system included:

- recognition tasks
- contextual interpretation tasks
- controlled production tasks
- communicative tasks

The design of these tasks reflects the current understanding that idiomatic expressions are best acquired through contextualized and communicative practice rather than isolated memorization (Rahmtallah, 2024) .

Furthermore, recent research highlights the importance of integrating cultural and contextual elements in idiom instruction, as these significantly enhance learners' comprehension and pragmatic competence (Nguyen and Bui, 2025; Suhodolli and Lama, 2024) .

3.5. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using statistical and comparative methods, including percentage analysis and group comparison.

The results indicated that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group. In particular, adaptive instruction contributed to improved comprehension, more accurate usage of idioms, and increased communicative flexibility.

These findings are consistent with recent empirical studies demonstrating that adaptive and technology-enhanced learning environments positively impact EFL learners' language proficiency and engagement.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with institutional academic standards. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were informed about the purpose of the research.

4. Results

The results of the present study include both the development of an adaptive task model for teaching English idiomatic expressions and its experimental validation in an EFL context. This



dual perspective allows for a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed methodology, combining pedagogical design with empirical evidence.

4.1. Model of Adaptive Tasks for Teaching Idioms

The study resulted in the development of a structured model of adaptive tasks aimed at improving the acquisition of English idiomatic expressions. The model is based on the integration of task-based language teaching principles and adaptive learning strategies, enabling the gradual development of idiomatic competence from recognition to free communicative use.

The proposed system reflects the cognitive and linguistic complexity of idioms and addresses key challenges such as semantic opacity, cultural specificity, and learner variability. The model is organized into four main types of tasks, each corresponding to a specific stage in idiom acquisition.

4.1.1. Recognition Tasks

Recognition tasks represent the initial stage of idiom acquisition and are aimed at developing learners' ability to identify idiomatic expressions and associate them with their meanings. These tasks include matching exercises and multiple-choice questions, which help learners establish form–meaning connections in a controlled environment.

Such tasks reduce cognitive load and support the transition from literal to figurative interpretation, thereby forming the foundation for further learning.

4.1.2. Interpretation Tasks

Interpretation tasks require learners to actively construct meaning based on context. At this stage, learners engage in inferencing, contextual analysis, and metaphor decoding.

Typical activities include contextual guessing tasks, where idioms are embedded in short texts, and learners infer their meanings based on situational cues. This stage promotes deeper semantic processing and reduces reliance on direct translation.

4.1.3. Controlled Production Tasks

Controlled production tasks serve as a bridge between comprehension and active use. Learners produce idiomatic expressions within structured contexts, such as sentence completion and guided rewriting exercises.

These tasks provide scaffolding and allow learners to practice idiom usage with reduced risk of error, thereby increasing accuracy and confidence.

4.1.4. Free Production Tasks

Free production tasks represent the highest level of idiom acquisition and focus on communicative competence. Learners use idioms in authentic communicative situations through activities such as dialogue creation, role-play, and storytelling.

These tasks promote fluency, creativity, and pragmatic appropriateness, enabling learners to integrate idioms into their active vocabulary.

4.1.5. Adaptation Criteria

The effectiveness of the adaptive model is ensured through several criteria:

- differentiation based on proficiency level
- gradual increase in cognitive complexity
- scaffolding and reduction of support over time
- consideration of cultural familiarity



These criteria allow the instructional process to be tailored to individual learner needs, enhancing both engagement and learning outcomes.

4.1.6. Sample Task Model

A sample task model (B1 level) demonstrated the practical implementation of the framework, combining:

- contextual input
- guided interpretation
- communicative output

This structured progression supports the development of idiomatic competence in a systematic and effective manner.

4.2. Experimental Results and Statistical Analysis

While the adaptive task model provides a theoretical and methodological framework, its effectiveness must be validated empirically. Therefore, this section presents the results of the experimental study conducted to evaluate the impact of adaptive task-based instruction on learners’ idiomatic competence.

4.2.1. Initial Diagnostic Results

At the diagnostic stage, both experimental and control groups demonstrated comparable levels of idiomatic competence, confirming the validity of the experimental design.

Level	Score Range	Experimental (%)	Control (%)
High	46–60	12%	11%
Medium	31–45	28%	30%
Low	16–30	40%	39%
Very Low	0–15	20%	20%

Group	Mean Score (out of 60)
Experimental Group	27.4
Control Group	27.9

These results indicate that most learners initially possessed low to medium levels of idiomatic competence, with significant difficulties in interpretation and contextual use, as also observed in the experimental implementation data.

4.2.2. Post-Test Results

Following the instructional intervention, substantial differences were observed between the two groups.

Level	Score Range	Experimental (%)	Control (%)
High	46–60	38%	18%
Medium	31–45	42%	34%
Low	16–30	15%	32%



Level	Score Range	Experimental (%)	Control (%)
Very Low	0–15	5%	16%

Group	Mean Score (out of 60)
Experimental Group	44.8
Control Group	34.2

The experimental group demonstrated a significant increase in higher-level performance, indicating improved idiomatic competence.

4.2.3. Learning Gains

Group	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain
Experimental Group	27.4	44.8	+17.4
Control Group	27.9	34.2	+6.3

The results show that the improvement in the experimental group was approximately 2.7 times greater than in the control group, confirming the effectiveness of adaptive instruction.

4.2.4. Development of Idiomatic Skills

Skill Type	Experimental (%)	Control (%)
Recognition	88%	72%
Interpretation	82%	65%
Controlled Production	76%	58%
Free Production	68%	49%

The most notable improvements were observed in **interpretation and productive use**, indicating that adaptive tasks effectively support the transition from passive knowledge to active communication.

4.2.5. Reduction of Learning Difficulties

Difficulty Type	Before (%)	After (%)
Literal translation errors	62%	21%
Context misuse	58%	24%
Misinterpretation	55%	19%

These results demonstrate that adaptive instruction significantly reduces common barriers to idiom acquisition, particularly those related to literal interpretation and contextual misunderstanding.

4.2.6. Statistical Significance



Indicator	Value
Difference in means	10.6
t-value	4.8
Significance level	$p < 0.01$

The statistical analysis confirms that the observed differences are **significant**, indicating that the improvements are directly attributable to the adaptive task-based methodology.

4.3. Summary of Results

The combined analysis of pedagogical modeling and experimental data demonstrates that:

- adaptive tasks significantly improve idiomatic competence
- learners progress from recognition to communicative use more effectively
- common learning difficulties are substantially reduced
- learner engagement and communicative activity increase

Overall, the findings confirm that adaptive task-based instruction provides a comprehensive and effective approach to teaching English idiomatic expressions in EFL contexts.

5. Discussion

The findings of the present study provide both **theoretical and empirical evidence** that adaptive task-based instruction significantly enhances the teaching and learning of English idiomatic expressions in EFL contexts. The integration of a structured pedagogical model with experimental validation demonstrates that the proposed approach not only addresses long-standing challenges in idiom acquisition but also produces measurable improvements in learners' performance.

One of the central problems in traditional idiom instruction is the overreliance on memorization. Learners are often required to acquire idiomatic expressions as fixed lexical units without fully understanding their figurative meaning or contextual usage. As reflected in the initial diagnostic results, the majority of learners in both groups demonstrated low to medium levels of idiomatic competence, with a substantial proportion exhibiting difficulties in interpretation and contextual application. This confirms that traditional approaches lead to superficial knowledge that is difficult to retain and apply in real communication.

In contrast, the adaptive task model developed in this study promotes deeper cognitive processing by integrating contextual interpretation and metaphor-based understanding. The significant improvement observed in the experimental group—where mean scores increased from 27.4 to 44.8, compared to a more modest gain in the control group—indicates that adaptive instruction facilitates meaningful learning. As suggested in cognitive linguistic theory, meaningful learning occurs when learners actively construct meaning rather than passively receive information (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). The incorporation of interpretation tasks and metaphor decoding in the adaptive model directly supports this process, leading to enhanced comprehension and retention.

Another important issue addressed by adaptive tasks is the transition from passive recognition to active use of idiomatic expressions. The results demonstrate that learners in the experimental group showed substantial progress not only in recognition (88%) but also in interpretation (82%), controlled production (76%), and free production (68%). In contrast, the control group remained significantly lower across all categories. This finding is particularly



important, as it confirms that adaptive instruction successfully bridges the gap between receptive and productive competence, a challenge widely noted in phraseological research (Прокыпова, 2006).

The gradual progression from recognition to free production tasks, as implemented in the adaptive model, appears to be a key factor in this improvement. By providing structured scaffolding and gradually increasing task complexity, the model enables learners to develop confidence and accuracy before engaging in communicative use. As a result, learners are better equipped to integrate idiomatic expressions into their active vocabulary and use them appropriately in real-life situations.

The comparison with traditional teaching methods further highlights the advantages of adaptive task-based instruction. While both groups showed some improvement, the learning gains in the experimental group (+17.4) were approximately 2.7 times greater than those in the control group (+6.3). In addition, the proportion of high-level learners increased significantly (from 12% to 38%), while the number of very low-level learners decreased from 20% to 5%. These results provide strong empirical support for the effectiveness of adaptive instruction and confirm that it leads to more substantial and consistent learning outcomes.

Moreover, the data indicate a significant reduction in common learner difficulties. Errors related to literal translation decreased from 62% to 21%, while context misuse and misinterpretation were also substantially reduced. These findings suggest that adaptive tasks effectively address key cognitive barriers in idiom acquisition, particularly those related to semantic opacity and contextual dependence. Such improvements were also observed during pedagogical monitoring and classroom implementation.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study support cognitive linguistic approaches to language teaching. The emphasis on metaphor decoding and conceptual understanding reflects the view that language is grounded in cognitive processes and conceptual structures (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). By helping learners uncover the underlying conceptual metaphors of idiomatic expressions, adaptive tasks facilitate deeper semantic processing and more meaningful learning, which is reflected in the significant improvement in interpretation skills.

At the same time, the results reinforce the principles of communicative language teaching. The improvement observed in free production tasks demonstrates that learners are able to use idioms more naturally and appropriately in communicative contexts. This aligns with the view that language acquisition is most effective when learners engage in meaningful interaction and real-life communication (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). The adaptive model enhances this approach by ensuring that communicative tasks are aligned with learners' proficiency levels and cognitive readiness.

Furthermore, the findings confirm the importance of learner-centered instruction. As emphasized in differentiated instruction theory, effective teaching requires adaptation to individual learner differences (Tomlinson, 2014). The adaptive task system operationalizes this principle by adjusting task complexity, providing scaffolding, and gradually reducing support. This not only improves learning outcomes but also increases learner motivation and engagement, as observed during the experimental implementation.

In addition, the integration of contextual and activity-based learning strategies reflects recent developments in idiom pedagogy. Previous studies have shown that learners benefit from context-rich and interactive activities (Tursunnazarova et al., 2023). The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that such approaches become significantly more effective when combined with adaptive learning principles.



Overall, the discussion of the results indicates that adaptive task-based instruction offers a comprehensive and empirically validated solution to the challenges of teaching idiomatic expressions in EFL contexts. By combining cognitive, communicative, and learner-centered principles, the proposed model enables learners to move beyond memorization toward meaningful understanding, accurate usage, and effective communication.

6. Conclusion

The present study has examined the methodological foundations of adaptive tasks in teaching English idiomatic expressions in EFL contexts and proposed a structured model for their implementation. The findings, supported by both theoretical analysis and empirical data, indicate that idiomatic competence can be effectively developed through a systematic progression of tasks that move from recognition to interpretation, controlled production, and free communicative use. This staged approach enables learners to gradually overcome the inherent difficulties associated with idioms, including non-literal meaning, cultural specificity, and semantic opacity.

The experimental results provide clear evidence of the effectiveness of the proposed methodology. The significant improvement observed in the experimental group—where mean scores increased from 27.4 to 44.8, compared to a more modest gain in the control group—demonstrates that adaptive task-based instruction leads to substantially better learning outcomes. In addition, the proportion of high-level learners increased from 12% to 38%, while the number of very low-level learners decreased from 20% to 5%. These results confirm that adaptive tasks not only enhance comprehension but also promote the active and accurate use of idiomatic expressions.

The study further demonstrates that adaptive tasks play a crucial role in transforming idiom learning from a process based primarily on memorization into one grounded in meaningful understanding. By incorporating contextualization, metaphor awareness, and guided practice, the proposed model supports deeper cognitive processing and enhances retention. Moreover, the observed improvement in productive skills—particularly in controlled and free production—indicates that adaptive instruction effectively bridges the gap between passive knowledge and communicative competence.

Another important finding is the reduction of common learning difficulties. Errors related to literal translation, contextual misuse, and misinterpretation decreased significantly during the experimental phase, suggesting that adaptive tasks successfully address key cognitive and linguistic barriers in idiom acquisition. This highlights the importance of context-based and learner-centered approaches in teaching phraseological units.

The value of adaptive tasks lies in their flexibility and responsiveness to individual learner needs. By adjusting task complexity, support level, and content according to learners' proficiency and cognitive abilities, adaptive instruction creates more inclusive and effective learning environments. This learner-centered approach not only improves language outcomes but also increases motivation, engagement, and confidence in using idiomatic expressions in real-life communication.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study highlights the importance of integrating task-based instruction with adaptive learning principles. Such integration provides a comprehensive framework for teaching idioms, ensuring that learners are supported at each stage of acquisition while gradually developing independence. The proposed model also emphasizes the role of context, interaction, and communicative practice, which are essential for achieving functional language proficiency.



Based on these findings, several practical recommendations can be made. First, language teachers should incorporate adaptive task systems into idiom instruction, ensuring a balanced progression from comprehension to production. Second, idioms should be taught in meaningful and culturally relevant contexts rather than in isolation. Third, teachers should employ differentiation and scaffolding strategies to address individual learner differences and facilitate gradual skill development. Finally, further research may explore the integration of digital tools and adaptive technologies to enhance the effectiveness of idiom teaching in diverse educational settings.

In conclusion, adaptive task-based instruction represents a theoretically grounded and empirically validated approach to teaching English idiomatic expressions in EFL contexts. By combining cognitive, communicative, and learner-centered principles, it contributes significantly to the development of learners' idiomatic and communicative competence, enabling them to use language more naturally, accurately, and contextually appropriately.

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