ABSTRACT

This study is intended to examine the teaching and learning of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English in the context of Sudan. It arises out of a deep and prolonged dissatisfaction which the researcher has felt with both the past and present status of teaching / learning of these multi-word lexical items in the context of Sudan. Our main objective, in this research, is, therefore, to provide those engaged in English Language teaching and learning in Sudan with the suitable means for preempting and solving the problems and difficulties of teaching and learning idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English. The following general and interrelated questions have been formulated on the basis of the hypotheses of this study:

a. What are exactly the problems / difficulties facing the teaching / learning of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs in the context of Sudan?
b. What are the possible causes of these problems / difficulties?
c. How to solve these problems and eliminate these difficulties?

In order to test our hypotheses and answer the associated questions, two questionnaires were distributed for the teachers of English and the students in Sudan universities. This was followed up with an experiment in which 100 Sudanese university students at the 3rd level were given a course of explicit instruction on idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English for 4 months, including a pre-test as well as a post-test. In analysing the data quantitatively, I have used the percentage statistics known otherwise as the relative frequency.

The results and findings of the present study are the following:
1. The Sudanese learners of English have problems / difficulties with idiomatic expressions / multi-word verbs. In this area, the students commit frequently errors at the orthographical, semantic, grammatical and stylistic levels such as:

a. The use of the wrong particle and / or preposition with verb.

b. Not being able to understand the multi-word verbs, which are also idiomatic expressions.

c. Generally, problems arising from the special nature of the multi-word verbs (their difficult structural patterns, e.g., with pronouns, their special stress patterns and so on.)

d. Unless one knows what an idiomatic expression means, they cannot, as rule, guess its meaning.

e. One understands every word in a text and still fails to grasp what the text is all about.

f. One does not know whether for example, the words *fall out* form a unit of meaning (an idiom) or not.

2. These problems and difficulties are due to various reasons including:

a. The absence of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs from syllabuses.

b. Lack and dearth of relevant / suitable materials.

c. Lack of attention and awareness of the importance of these multi-word lexical items.

d. Unfamiliarity of the learners with those two components of vocabulary.

e. Unfamiliarity of some of the lecturers themselves with the literature dealing with their teaching / learning.
f. The scarcity of MWV in the students' L1 (Arabic).

g. Others: causes which could be related to the general situation of English Language and ELT in Sudan.

3. The solutions of those problems and the elimination of difficulties reside in the following:

a. The introduction of a separate course on these two multi-word lexical items in the tertiary level syllabus in Sudan. This course could have the title 'idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs' or any similar suitable one.

b. The provision / selection of necessary and relevant materials especially those which could be used as teaching and learning aids (dictionaries, textbooks, supplementary materials, workbooks etc.).

c. To direct the attention to their importance and raise the awareness of their position and status in language.

d. To familiarize the learners with those two complex and crucial but overlapping components of vocabulary.

e. To equip the lecturers with the recent literature dealing with the teaching and learning of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English.

f. To train the learners in the strategy of guessing the meaning from context.

Overall, the study revealed that the teaching / learning of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English in the context of Sudan faced various and different problems and difficulties which are as a result of several external and internal factors such as the inherent / potential difficulty and complexity of these multi-word lexical items in the system of the target language (English) as well as those related to the students' mother tongue (Arabic) and the general situation of English and ELT in Sudan.
The possible means for solving these problems and eliminating these difficulties seem to reside in introducing an explicitly taught course on IEX / MWV working within the framework of the mentalistic / cognitive view of language teaching / learning among other suggested ways to improve the situation. The evidence of the effectiveness of the course is the significant difference between the subjects' performance in the pre-test and the post-test. In the PRT the total number and percentage(s) of correct / wrong answers are as follows: 6942 (38.57%) / 11058 (61.43%) respectively while for the POT they are: 17025 (94.58%) / 975 (5.42%).

The study runs into two main parts (theoretical and empirical / practical) divided further into seven chapters.

Chapter one incorporates mainly the research methodology and procedures adopted for obtaining the required data. It starts with a brief introduction about the place of the present study in applied linguistics, then it gives a concise account of the importance of the research, objectives and methodological questions, hypotheses and research questions. Moreover, there is clarification of the sampling procedures, the conditions during the study and the statistical analysis used here.

Chapter two is solely devoted to provide a detailed and thorough review of the literature on idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English. In spite of the large amount of literature on these multi-word word lexical items, no research has been carried out on the teaching and learning of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English in the context of Sudan. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill a gap and provide a starting point for further research on this topic.
In chapter three, the researcher has tried to show the position (status) of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English in language and in the existing English language syllabuses in Sudan. Moreover, an attempt has been made to indicate how these two components are taught and learnt in the universities in Sudan and demonstrate the importance of these complex expressions for the native speakers and the second / foreign language learners alike.

In chapter four, an attempt has been made to equip the reader with a general linguistic description of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English (with special emphasis on the semantic aspects) in order to establish and provide a theoretical background which could serve, besides chapters two and three, as a framework for the practical and empirical part of this study.

Chapter five mainly tries to answer the following set of questions: What are the problems and difficulties of teaching / learning of idiomatic expressions / multi-word verbs in the context of Sudan? What are the causes of these problems and difficulties?

Chapter six attempts to outline as to how to solve the problems and eliminate the difficulties of teaching and learning of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English in the context of Sudan.

And finally, chapter seven presents the summary and conclusions as well as suggestions and recommendations. It is followed by references and appendixes.