STRATEGIES USED IN COMPREHENDING ENGLISH

IDIOMS BY EFL STUDENTS FROM CHINA

WU MEI NA

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

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Name of Candidate: **Wu Mei Na**

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ABSTRACT

Idioms are essential parts of languages and for the English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners in The People's Republic of China (PRC), learning and comprehending English idioms are the bigger challenges. The study is to ascertain strategies employed by participants in comprehending English idioms, as well as to ascertain whether an individual's English vocabulary knowledge level would help him/her to comprehend the English idioms. Thus participants' Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) results were used to categorize participants into two groups by following Liu's (2010) method. In addition, three participants from each of the two groups were asked to do the Think-Aloud protocol (TAP) while they were doing the Idiom Recognition Test (IRT). The data for the first research question were analysed based on Lakoff's (1987) theory and Copper's (1999) and Liu's (2010) researches to investigate the types of strategies used by PRC EFL learners when they try to comprehend unfamiliar English idioms. The findings show that there are eleven (11) types of strategies used by PRC EFL learners. For the second research question, the data from the two groups were used to determine if an individual's English vocabulary knowledge level would help participant to comprehend the English idioms. The findings show that when participants had a higher level of English vocabulary knowledge, there was a corresponding high level of comprehension of idioms as well.

ABSTRAK

Simpulan Bahasa adalah satu aspek yang penting dalam bahasa dan bagi pelaja-pelajar daripada Republic China (PRC), memepelajari dan memahami simpulan bahasa bahasa Inggeris merupakan cabaran yang besar. Oleh itu kajian ini dilakukan untuk melihat pelbagai strategi yang digunakan pleh pelajar-pelajar PRC untuk memahami simpulan bahasa dan juga mengkaji sama ada tahap kosa kata seseorang pelajar membantu untuk memahami maksud simpulan bahasa tersebut. Oleh itu dalam kajian ini keputusan ujian tahap kosa kata (VLT) responden akan digunakan dengan membahagikan mereka kepada dua kategori seperti yang dilakukan oleh Liu (2010). Selain daripada itu, tiga responden daripada setiap kategori akan menjalani Protokol Think Aloud (TAP) semasa menduduki Ujian memahami simpulan bahasa (IRT). Data bagi soalan kajian pertama akan dianalisa menggunakan teori Lakoff (1987) serta kaedah yang digunakan oleh Copper (1999) dan Liu (2010) untuk mengkaji strategi yang digunakan poleh pelajar PRC untuk memahami simpulan Bahasa Inggeris. Hasil kajian menunjukkan pelajar menggunakan 11 strategi untuk melakukan ini. Bagi menjawab soalan kajian kedua , data bagi kedua-dua kategori digunakan untuk menentukan sama ada tahap kosa kata dapat membantu responden memahami makna simpulan bahasa tersebut. Hasil kajian menunjukkan sekiranya responden mempunyai tahap kosa kata yang tinggi kefahaman mereka terhadap simpulan bahasa Inggeris juga tinggi.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0   Background of Study

Language is a unique tool to express meanings and to exchange ideas among individuals (Han, 2004). Moreover, language is a system which consists of mainly syntax, morphology, phonology and semantics, thus it is regarded as a social phenomenon (Yang & Bai, 2000). In other words, language works as a medium of exchange in varying cultural contexts. Specifically, a language may reflect the culture of a country and idioms are an integral aspect of a language, as they not only have certain cultural connotations, but they are also closely linked to one's cultural knowledge. Thus, idioms can be said to reflect a particular nation's religion, history, customs, lifestyles and values.

According to Polio, Barlow and Fine (1977), most native English speakers utter about twenty million (200000000) idioms in their lifetime, or seven thousand (7000) idioms per week. Their investigations also indicated that the use of idioms penetrated various fields, for instance, arts, politics, economy, natural science technology and sports. This finding indicates the obvious importance of idioms in our lives.

With the founding of New China, large changes have been evident. Along with the adoption of reforms and opening-up policies, China's English education has flourished with a growing number of professionals involved in English textbook reforms and innovations as well as emphasis on teaching PRC learners basic knowledge of English

and basic skills of teaching English. Thus with these reforms, English has taken an increasingly important role in education in China. The People's Republic of China (henceforth PRC) students are also more motivated to improve their English language. As Adamson indicated:

> At present, the role and status of English in China is higher than ever in history as evidenced by its position as a key subject in the curriculum, with its growing use as a medium of instruction as many schools adopt a bilingual approach to education; and as a crucial determinant for university entrance and procuring well-paid jobs in the commercial sector.

(Adamson, 2004)

In 2011, The Chinese Ministry of Education enforced English as a compulsory subject in primary school. PRC students are required to study English from the third grade until they complete high school, and if they choose English as a major in university, students are then exposed to English for at least nine (9) years or even longer, otherwise, they only study English for six (6) years in school. However, due to PRC's exam-oriented education system, both PRC teachers and students, unfortunately, tend to focus more on fulfilling the examination criteria and not on how well communication is carried out in English.

1.1   Statement of the Problem

PRC students who learn English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL) or English as a second language (henceforth ESL), also have to be exposed to learning English idioms. However, they soon realise that learning English idioms is an enormous challenge (Liu, 2010) as they do not have an English speaking environment and the English learners in China are further disadvantaged because they lack the English cultural background

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knowledge. Understanding English idioms is a serious problem for PRC's learners of EFL, and helping learners to understand English idioms correctly poses an enormous challenge for English teachers.

There are a few reasons why idioms pose to be a big challenge for EFL students and ESL students. Firstly, there are significant differences between Chinese and English in the pronunciation rules, syntax and morphology. Secondly, understanding the meaning directly from each component of the idioms is rather challenging (Wang, 2005), thus, in turn they find it difficult to understand the real meaning of the idioms. Thirdly, the English vocabulary is also another stumbling block. A large section of PRC EFL learners arbitrarily guess the meaning of a particular idiom once they do not know the meaning of the vocabulary in the idiom or in the context. Fourthly, PRC EFL learners lack the strategies to comprehend English idioms, since the English teachers in China are highly inclined towards the traditional method of repeating the idiom with its meaning to teach students. Thus, students tend to use repetition to recall the meaning of idioms without any analysis or using other strategies.

PRC university students who study abroad also face similar problems with learning English idioms. Misunderstandings can occur when students do not understand English idioms used in their daily lives especially when there is a huge disparity between the literal meaning and figurative meaning of an English idiom. In order to deter misunderstanding, EFL learners and ESL learners should avoid interpreting the meaning of words literally. Historically, researchers on idioms have focused on syntactic features. However, more recently, cognitive psychologists, cognitive linguists and psychological linguists have also focused on the processes involved in understanding idioms.

1.2   Purpose of Study

Liu (2010) indicated that anyone who has tried to learn a foreign language will soon realise that idioms tend to be stumbling blocks. Unfortunately, EFL learners cannot avoid learning idioms as they are an integral aspect of the English language.

Specifically, there are two aims of this study. The first aim is to ascertain strategies employed by participants in comprehending English idioms. Another purpose of the study is to ascertain whether an individual's English vocabulary knowledge level would help him/her to comprehend the English idioms.

1.3   Research Questions

Based on purpose of the study, the research questions designed for the current study are as follows:

- What are the strategies used by the Chinese EFL learners to comprehend English idioms?

- How does the English vocabulary knowledge level of PRC EFL learners correlate with their understanding of English idioms?

1.4   Significance of the Study

The significance of this study can be identified from three aspects. Firstly, the researcher aspires for the finding of this study to be a guide for EFL teachers and students on how to learn English idioms. Secondly, the researcher plans to examine if participants' vocabulary level would influence their understanding of English idioms or not. The most important contribution of this research is to fill the gap in the literature.

Many researchers have carried out research in the ESL/EFL students' comprehension of English idiom, but only a few have focused on how different vocabulary proficiency level of PRC EFL learners interpret English idioms.

1.5   Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, the results of the study are limited by its small sample size. Although there were forty-five (45) participants in this study, only six (6) participants did the Think-Aloud protocol. In other words, the strategies figured out were based on data collected from six (6) participants' Think-Aloud protocol. If the number of participants was increased for the Think-Aloud protocol, the findings could have been more interesting.

Vocabulary Level Test paper is a test for English vocabulary, and is not an evaluation of one's English proficiency level. However, since only (10 participants) twenty-two percent (22%) participants had IELTS or TOEFL result, the researcher had no option but use the Vocabulary Level Test as supporting resource to measure their proficiency in vocabulary, although the Vocabulary Level Test may not be completely reliable.

Besides, the study only focuses on two (2) main aspects which are English vocabulary knowledge level and strategies. The other variables that were not considered in this study include field of study of participants, age, gender and length of stay in Malaysia.

In this study, the theoretical framework which is conceptual metaphor did not play an important role in helping participants comprehend English idioms. Firstly, participants hardly used them and most of the participants did not even know or were even aware of

the concept of conceptual metaphor. It was even worse among the low proficiency group participants. Secondly, conceptual metaphor that is required by participants is helpful when it is at a native speaker's level. However, PRC EFL learners have yet to acquire the particular level. Thirdly, PRC EFL learners lacked opportunities to communicate or practise conceptual metaphor in their daily lives.

Despite these limitations, the researcher hopes this study would be an initial platform which can benefit ESL and EFL learners, teachers and researchers.

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CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter relevant literature on characteristics and various types of idioms will be presented and previous studies on idioms and strategies employed in learning idioms will be reviewed.

2.1 Definitions of Idioms

Fotovatnia & Khaki (2012) defined idioms as fixed expressions that belong to the traditional repertoire of native languages. The meaning and form of idioms are standardised; it is seldom adjusted to make changes. Fixed expressions would include phrasal units, and can be divided into a few categories such as idiomatic expressions, proverbs, phrasal verbs, sayings and restricted collocations.

Liu states that idioms can be defined as a mirror of a nation that reflects national historical and cultural attitudes as well as the way of life (2010). From another perspective, idioms are viewed as the colourful side of a particular language and are reflective of thoughts and feelings when one communicates (Turkay & Celik, 2004). In other words, idioms reflect all aspects of our lives, integrating notions and imagery from all fields of human life. Some examples are ' pouring *oil on troubled waters', 'a dark horse', 'throw good money after bad', 'between the devil and the deep blue sea', 'forbidden fruit',* and '*throw dust in someone's eyes'.* Although both English as first language (L1) and English as the second language (L2) learners agree that idioms are an

important part of language, the concept of idioms does not have a uniformed definition (Fan, 2011).

Cooper (1999) stated that people cannot always work out the meaning of an idiom from its individual elements. The literal meaning of each vocabulary unit in the idiom does not always give the meaning of the idiom. As in the example "kick the bucket" where the literal meaning is in no way assonated to the figurative meaning of the idiom 'to die'.

The researcher opines that learning idioms is an important and a rather challenging aspect of English learning for ESL and more so for EFL learners. This is because learners cannot simply get the figurative meaning from the words in the idiom. ESL and EFL learners are required to learn the historical and cultural knowledge behind the idioms in their pursuit to understand idioms.

2.2 Characteristics of Idioms

There are five notable characteristics of idioms, as stated by Weinreich (1969):

• Its meaning is not the compositional sum of its constituent.

• It is a unit that either has a homonymous literal counterpart or at least
  individual constituents that are literal, although the expression as a whole
  would not be interpreted literally.

• It is transformationally deficient in one way or another.

• It forms part of a set of expressions in a given language.

• It is institutionalised.

(Weinreich, 1969)

For example the idiom "There's no such thing as a free lunch" means that you do not get things for free, so if something appears to be free, there is a catch and you will have to pay for it in a certain way. The figurative meaning of the idiom is not directly linked to the literal meaning of its components. Secondly, the meaning of the idiom should be taken as a whole and not word by word. The words "no", "free", "lunch" convey the whole meaning but not all idioms can be interpreted from its individual constituents. Moreover, if you change the idiom to "nobody will give you anything for free", it also expresses the same meaning. Also, in certain situations, the idiom could be used to express the meaning of "not to trust offers that appear too good to be true because there is often an ulterior motive behind it'. Finally, the idiom can be easily comprehended by people, because it possesses identifiable grammatical and lexical aspects.

2.3 Types and categories of Idioms

Idioms can be divided into two types, namely: opaque and transparent (Gibbs, 1991). Opaque idioms refer to the literal meaning of idioms and the figurative sense is not closely linked to each other. For instance, in the expression "spill the bean", there is hardly any link between the literal meaning and the figurative meaning. On the other hand, the figurative meaning in transparent idioms is merely an extension of the literal meaning. Thus, for a learner of English, the expression *'keeping a straight fa*ce' tends to be easier to comprehend.

Idioms can be divided into three categories based on analytical characteristics (Gibbs & Nayak, 1989): non-decomposable idioms, normally-decomposable idioms and abnormally-decomposable idioms.

1)   Non-decomposable idioms

The relation between literal meaning and the figurative meaning may not be a straight forward one. Most people cannot obtain the figurative meaning either from the literary meaning of an individual constituent or the whole phrase. For example, in the expression *break a leg*, one cannot get the meaning from the denotation of *a break* and *leg*, or from the whole phrase. , '*break a leg*'. In order to know *break a leg* actually means good luck, one needs to know more about the language's conceptual system, cognitive method as well as the cultural connotation.

2)   Normally-decomposable idioms

A normally-decomposable idiom has a more or less direct relation with the meaning of the idiom. It may be a one-to-one relation; where each word contributes independently to the figurative interpretation. For example *pop the question* means to ask someone to marry you. In this idiom, there is a direct relationship between pop and ask, question and marriage proposal. In other words, people could get the literal meaning of the components of the idiom and the meaning of the idiom is definitely less ambiguous (Vega Moreno, 2003).

3)   Abnormally-decomposable idioms

It may be an all-to-one relation between the literal meaning of the idiom and the figurative explanation of idioms. For instance, the figurative meaning of *bury the hatchet* is making peace, but it is not easy to get the meaning from the literal meaning of *bury* or *hatchet* independently. Yet people tend to obtain the correct figurative meaning

of the whole phrase by guessing the meaning, having learned it formally or having heard it previously.

From the language acquisition point of view, Laufer (2000) proposed four categories of English idioms, especially for EFL learners.

1)   Total formal similar idiom.

In this category the semantic and linguistic forms are similar between L1 and L2. For example for a student whose first language is English and the second language is Chinese, therefore L1 is English language, L2 is Chinese language.

Paper tiger means a person or organisation that appears powerful but in fact powerless and ineffectual (You Dao Dictionary, 2007). In Chinese, 纸老虎（zhǐ lǎo hǔ）totally expresses the same meaning.

Chinese	English
纸 zhǐ	paper
老虎 lǎo hǔ	tiger
纸 zhǐ＋老虎 lǎo hǔ	paper tiger

From the above, it is easy to see that the first category expresses the semantic and linguistic forms which are similar between L1 and L2.

2)   The partial formal similar idiom.

In this category the semantics or linguistic forms are only partially similar. For instance, for a person whose L1 is English language and L2 is Chinese language. In English,

'*beggars cannot be choosers*' means when you cannot have exactly what you want, you must accept whatever you can get. (Cambridge Idioms Dictionary, 2008) In Chinese, the meaning is expressed as 饥不择食 （jī bù zé shí）

Chinese	English
饥 jī = hungry	beggars = the people who are hungry
不 bù = no/ not	cannot be = they do not have right to do something
择 zé = choose	choosers = the people who make a choice
食 shí = food	

饥 jī in Chinese means "hungry", beggars in English means people who are hungry. 不 bù in Chinese means no/not, cannot be means they do not have right to do something, 择 zé means choose, choosers means the people who make a choice. Thus, they are only partly similar in terms of both semantic meaning and linguistic forms in L1 and L2. Thus, second category expresses the semantic and linguistic forms which are partial formal similar between L1 and L2.

3)   Varying semantics and forms with same conceptual metaphor idiom

In this category, the idioms have varying semantics and forms, but they may have the same conceptual metaphor idiom in L1. For example, for a person whose L1 is Chinese language and L2 is English language. '*Crocodile tears*' is a famous and well known English idiom which means showing sadness which is not sincere (Cambridge Idioms Dictionary, 2008). Chinese idiom 猫哭老鼠假慈悲 (maō kū lǎo shǔ jiǎ cí beī) has a totally different form from English idiom *crocodile tears*, but 猫哭老鼠假慈悲 (maō kū lǎo shǔ jiǎ cí beī) and *crocodile tears* express the same meaning.

Chinese	English
猫(maō) = cat	Crocodile

哭 (kū) = cry	tears
老鼠 (lǎo shǔ) = mouse	
假 (jiǎ) = fake/ false	
慈悲 (cí beī) = mercy	

猫 maō in Chinese means "cat", Crocodile is a large reptile with a long body and strong jaws (Cambridge Idioms Dictionary, 2008). 哭 kū in Chinese means cry, tears in English are the drops of salty liquid that come out of your eyes when you are crying (Cambridge Idioms Dictionary, 2008). 老鼠 lǎo shǔ means mouse, 假 jiǎ means fake and 慈悲 cí beī in Chiense means mercy.

Crocodile tears (or superficial sympathy) are a false, insincere display of emotion such as a hypocrite crying fake tears of grief (source: Wikipedia).

The phrase derives from an ancient belief which that crocodiles shed tears while consuming their prey. While crocodiles do have tear ducts, they weep to lubricate their eyes. Typically when they have been out of water for a long time and their eyes begin to dry out. However, evidence suggests this can also be triggered by feeding.

Bogorad's syndrome is a condition which causes sufferers to shed tears while consuming food, so has been labelled "crocodile tears syndrome" with reference to the anecdote behind it.

4)   L1 non-idiom while the L2 idioms are totally different in terms of the semantic or form of idioms.

For example, in the case of L1 is Chinese language and L2 is English language. In English "peaches and cream" means everything is perfect, but in Chinese peaches and

cream are considered as two types of edible food. In this case, a similar Chinese idiom is not comparable.

2.4 Factors Influencing the Success Rate of Idiom Processing and Comprehension

Based on a few researchers' work, Liontas (2003) indicated that the nature of idiom comprehension, transparency, familiarity compositionality, decomposability, predictability, literality and contextual support have an impact on the success rate of idiom processing and comprehension. Most importantly however, students need to know which learning strategies can help them to understand and interpret the meanings of these English idioms.

2.4.1 Familiarity and Transparency

Familiarity refers to degree of familiarity of an idiom. There are two definitions. Generally speaking, it refers to the degree of familiarity of the literal and figurative meaning of idioms. Narrowly defined, it indicates the familiarity of figurative meaning only (Xie, 2007). Transparency refers to the closeness between the literal meaning or the literal meaning and figurative meanings of an idiom. Once a closer tie between the figurative and literal meaning is attained, we could say that the transparency of this idiom is relatively high.

Nippold and Rudzinski (1993) in their research found that familiarity and transparency influenced their subjects' ability to comprehend idioms. There were a hundred and fifty (150) children and adolescents aged eleven (11), fourteen (14) and seventeen (17), in their study. The participants were asked to comprehend 24 different idioms from a brief

background story context. The results showed that seventeen (17) year old adolescents were better at comprehending idioms than younger children. High-familiarity idioms were found to be easier to understand compared to moderate and low familiarity ones. Moreover, easier idioms tended to have more transparency. After two years, Nippold and Taylor (1995) chose another group of a hundred and fifty (150)-school-age children and adolescents from Grades five (5), eight (8) and eleven (11) as their participants in order to examine the familiarity and transparency of idioms. Results showed that participants found it easier to understand high-familiarity and more transparent idioms compared to low-familiarity and more opaque idioms.

In a later study, Nippold and Taylor (2002) did a comparative study of children and adolescents towards familiarity and transparency of idioms. This study examined whether familiarity and transparency affected fifty (50), eleven (11) year old children and fifty (50), sixteen (16) year old adolescents' ability when evaluating a set of twenty (20) idioms' familiarity and transparency. The results indicated that less-familiar idioms were more difficult for children compared to adolescents. However, there was no clear difference between children and adolescents when it came to judging the transparency of idioms. For the children, easier idioms had high-familiarity and transparency compared to difficult idioms. For the adolescents, easier idioms had a high degree of transparency.

Similar results were also found by Harris (1999), although her participants' backgrounds were different. In Harris' study, twenty four (24) fifth-graders, African American as well as European American students were chosen as participants. All the participants were required to comprehend idioms of high, moderate and low familiarity.

Results showed that there was an enormous effect when participants comprehended low familiarity idioms but no such differentiation was evident when they comprehended high and moderate familiarity idioms. Nippold and Rudzinski (1993) and Harris' (1999) studies have contributed greatly to EFL and ESL learners and teachers, emphasising on the significance of familiarity of idioms in the acquisition of a language. Nippold and Rudzinski in conducting a longitudinal comparison on different ages have revealed that varying abilities are essential to understand English idioms.

Xie (2007) discussed how familiarity, transparency and context can affect participants' understanding of idioms. Xie (2007) chose two classes with a total of seventy students from senior two in Shang Hai. The participants' average ages ranged from nineteen (19) to twenty (20). In order to make sure the research was carried out qualitatively and quantitatively, the participants were required to complete the Idiom Familiarity Judgment Task (henceforth IFJT), Transparency of idiom Judgment Task (henceforth ITJT), Idiom Comprehension Test with Context (henceforth ICTC) and Idiom Comprehension Test without Context (henceforth ICTWC). After collecting the data, results showed that:

1.   There was a positive correlation between familiarity and idiom comprehension results, while transparency did not so clearly affect the EFL learners in comprehending English idioms.

2.   It was much easier for participants when they comprehended the English idioms with high degree of familiarity and high-transparency.

3.   Context played an important role in helping learners comprehend English idioms

4.   There was a significant relationship between context and familiarity.

2.4.2 English Proficiency Level

Bu's (2006) research mainly focused on the relationship between a language learners' language skills and their idiom comprehension ability. Bu (2006) aimed toward seeking answers to: (1) whether a significant difference would exist among learners of English with different levels of proficiency in comprehending idioms. (2) To determine whether specific factors led to these difference, if any difference existed.

Sixty (60) non-English majors from the Chinese People's Liberation Army University participated in an Idiom Comprehension Test. The Test of English idioms comprised twenty four (24) test materials, including eight (8) overt idioms, eight (8) semi-overt idioms and eight (8) covert idioms. In order to help participants understand these idioms, specific contexts of one or two sentences were provided for each idiom. In the second phase, Bu (2006) randomly chose three (3) high-level learners as well as three (3) low level participants to perform a interview to explore the underlying factors for the significant differences between the high and low level learners in their attempt to comprehend the idioms. Once quantitative and qualitative data analysis were done, Bu (2006) concluded that high proficiency level learners obtained better results than low level learners. There was a significant difference between high-level and low level learners while they comprehended the overt idioms and semi-overt idioms. However, in terms of understanding the overt idioms, there was no apparent difference, as the literal meaning is straight forward. This suggests that learners with low proficiency have the ability to analyse the literal sense, but the inference strategies used were inadequate in deducing the semi-overt and covert idioms. Finally, there was a big difference between high level participants and low level participants in terms of the number of strategies

used for comprehension. High proficiency level students used a variety of strategies compared to low level students.

The above findings suggest that there is a close link between the understanding of English idioms and the English proficiency level.

2.4.3 Contextual Effect

Contextual effect of idioms refers to the effect that occurs when people comprehend the idioms within a context to understand the meaning of the respective idioms. Studies have shown, context has a positive impact on learners' understanding of idioms. Wang (2005) claimed that all variables that affect language acquisition interact with each other. The variables include previously stored knowledge, heard and seen knowledge as well as the cognitive psychology knowledge.

Atai and Akbarian (2003) carried out a study to gain understanding of the strategies utilised when people comprehend idioms. They found that there was a big difference when participants' comprehend idioms within a context compared to without any context. Context obviously, aids learners to guess the meaning of the idioms.

Zeng and Li's (2011) study was based on conceptual metaphor and context effects. The participants of this study were a hundred and twenty (120) university level students from a non-English faculty. Based on the result of College English Placement Test,

sixty (60) people were categorised as the high level group; while the other sixty (60) people as the low level group.

They focused on three (3) main aspects: contextual effect, English idioms' level of difficulty and the proficiency level of second language learners. The study also investigated whether the three factors' interactive relationship would affect foreign language learners in their interpretation of English idioms.

Their findings revealed significant differences between the two groups ($t = 7.253$, $p < 0.05$). They chose sixty idioms; categorising them into sixty idioms with context and sixty idioms without context. Then the sixty idioms were sub-categorised into easy idioms (30) and difficult idioms (30) based on the level of difficulty, as reflected in Table 2.1, where a total of a hundred and twenty (120) participants were divided into eight groups.

Table 2.1 Participants' comprehension of English idioms.

No.	English proficiency Level		Contextual Effect		Level of Difficulty
1	High Level (60 participants)	30 participants	idioms with context (60 idioms)	15 participants	difficult (30 idioms)
				15 participants	easy (30 idioms)
		30 participants	idioms without context (60 idioms)	15 participants	difficult (30 idioms)
				15 participants	easy (30 idioms)
2	Low Level (60 participants)	30 participants	idioms with context (60 idioms)	15 participants	difficult (30 idioms)
				15 participants	easy (30 idioms)
		30 participants	idioms without context (60 idioms)	15 participants	difficult (30 idioms)
				15 participants	easy (30 idioms)

The results of Zeng and Li's study showed that:

1) There was a vast difference between the two groups (high and low-level) tested with context and the group (high and low-level) without context.

2) Interaction between context and proficiency levels of second language had a clear impact on English idioms comprehension for learners.

3) There was no interactive relationship among contextual effect, difficulty levels of and proficiency levels.

2.4.4 Learning Strategy

Learning strategies are used by students to help them understand information and solve problem. A learning strategy is a person's approach to learning and using information. Students who do not know or use good learning strategies often learn passively and ultimately fail in school. Learning strategy instruction focuses on making the students more active learners by teaching them how to learn and how to use what they have learned to solve problems and be successful (Wang, 2014).

Vocabulary-based strategy in terms of the vocabulary-based language learning approach utilizes associated a word with a picture, akin to how most children learn their first language, as it is a relatively easy method (McGraw & Yoshimoto 2009). Metacognitive Strategies institute that it can be stated that metacognitive is a term to express executive function, strategies which require planning for learning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, monitoring of one's production or comprehension, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed. Among the main metacognitive

strategies, it is possible to include advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, functional planning, self-monitoring, delayed production, self-evaluation (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner, Rocco & Kupper, 1985).

2.5 Conceptual Metaphor

2.5.1 The Definition of Conceptual Metaphor

Conceptual metaphor theory is a milestone in metaphor research. Conceptual metaphor emphasises metaphor as a dominating tool in man's cognitive apparatus (Zeng, 2008). Conceptual metaphor can be considered as a theoretical basis for understanding English idioms correctly (Chen, 2012). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) stated that metaphor is a key towards understanding of how our language, thought and discourse are structured and metaphor is pervasive throughout everyday language. It structures how people think, act and talk, and that the ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature. To illustrate metaphorical concept and how it can be employed in one's daily activity, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) give examples of conceptual metaphors in expressing arguments such as "Your claims are indefensible; He attacked every weak point in my argument; His criticisms were right on target; I demolished his argument; I have never won an argument with him; You disagree? Okay, shoot! if you use that strategy, he will wipe you out; He shot down all my arguments".

In an argument, people have two apparent choices; to win or lose. In other words, we consider the person whom we are arguing with as an opponent. We try our best to defend our own and attack the opponent's positions. During the argument, we plan how to attack and use strategies to gain ground or to avoid losing ground. If we find a

position untenable, we need to take on a new one for attack and give up the old one. It is easily realised that many things people do in their contention actually are partly structured by the concept of war. However there are differences between a war and an argument. An argument is a verbal battle and not a real battle. However, an argument involves defence, attack, counterattack, and so forth, which reflect that arguments are based on the concept of war, where we structure our actions based on our arguments (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

2.5.2 The Working Mechanism of Conceptual Metaphor

The underlying mechanism to Lakoff's (1987) conceptual metaphor theory is the mapping theory. Before explaining the mapping theory, the fundamental cognitive processes, namely image-schema, conceptualisation, and conceptual network, to support the working mechanism of a conceptual metaphor, need to be explained. Image schemas are "preconception structures arising from recurrent patterns, shapes and regularities in our daily activities" (Lakoff, 1987). The basic image schemas identified by Lakoff (1987) include container, path, balance, up-down, part-whole. These image schemas are the most fundamental direct sensor motor experiences of the world to help us to recognise the world.

Conceptualisation is a dynamically subjective process where the chaotic things in the world are structured and organised to be regular in order to be understood. First, in the process of conceptualisation, the stimuli in the real world are received with our sensor motors, then processed and classified into different categories based on our previous experiences. Secondly, comparatively staying static, the process will stay open to change as long as it receives new stimuli from the real world.

Thirdly, the conceptualisation of the same thing is slightly different for different people because different people will have different experiences. Though the result of conceptualisation differs from person to person; when the difference is slight, especially for those in the same community, understanding becomes easier. If the difference is huge, we need to receive more information to revise our concepts to understand each other. The process of conceptualisation gives us the implication that the formation of one concept involves ceaseless exposure about things to be learned and the comparison of two concepts requires as much knowledge about the two concepts as possible.

From the cognitive perspective, the conceptual network is a network where the concepts are linked not only by the comprehensible conceptual domains but also the figurative conceptual structures. The figurative conceptual structures are based on the semantic extension of the comprehensible conceptual domains.

The working mechanism of a conceptual metaphor is the mapping theory. In order to explain the mapping theory, the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY given by Lakoff as follows.
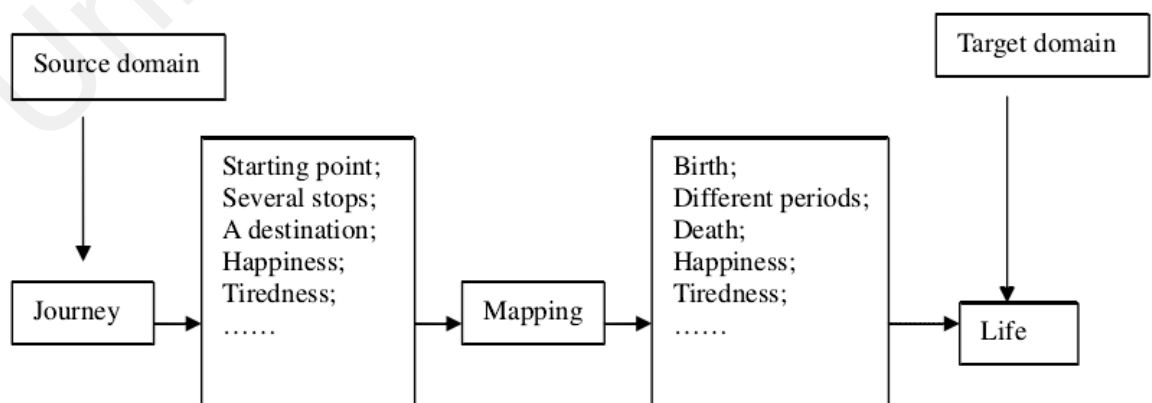
Figure 2.1 The conceptual metaphor mapping of "Life is a journey" (Lakoff, 1987)

From the flow chart above, it is evident that there are two domains, namely the source domain and the target domain in conceptual metaphor. In the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, the target domain is life and the source domain is journey. The meanings of different aspects of the target domain life are mapped to the meanings of different aspects of the source domain journey. In the mapping, the starting point of a journey is mapped to the birth of life; the several stops of a journey are mapped to the different periods of life; the destination of a journey is mapped to the death of life, and so on. This way it is easier for people to understand what life is with the help of the more concrete concepts of journey through mappings of their meanings.

In the conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), every concept can be structured through the mappings in terms of another concept. They pointed out that we cannot recognise many of the metaphorical mappings among concepts because concepts are habitually viewed as separate things and connections between them are usually ignored. As a matter of fact, if the metaphorical mappings between those concepts are recognised, conceptual metaphors arm the reader with the most powerful weapon, which can help the reader widen his/her knowledge of the world with endless motivation and interest.

2.5.3 The classification of Conceptual Metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) separate the conceptual metaphors into three types which are structural metaphors, physical metaphors as well as orientation metaphors.

Structural metaphors are "cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another". For instance, ARGUMENT IS WAR which was explained in section 2.5.1 is a typical structural metaphor.

Physical metaphors could be defined as the projection of entity or substance status upon something that does not have that status inherently. The metaphors offer people a new way to view ideas, events, activities, emotions, as entities for different purposes (in order to refer to them, categorise them, group them, or quantify them).

Orientation metaphor does not organise one concept in terms of another, but instead organises a whole system of concepts with respect to one another.

Orientation metaphors provide a clear concept of a spatial orientation, for instance, 'Happy is UP' could express 'I am feeling up today'. 'Sad is Down' could express 'I am feeling down'. He is really *low* these days. Here, *down* and *low* express the meaning that the emotion is low.

2.5.4 A Conceptual Metaphor Approach to English Idiom Learning and Teaching

Learning English idioms poses a challenge for Chinese students. Xia's (2006) paper on the conceptual metaphor theory considers the feasibility and effectiveness of teaching English idioms in the Chinese education system.

Xia's (2006) study is based on Lakoff's (1980, 1993) proposed conceptual metaphor theory, and mainly applies Gibbs' (1990, 1992) experimental research achievement, which asserts that conceptual metaphor is the theoretical basis of English idioms. The research questions in this study seek to ascertain a significant difference between the conceptual metaphor method and traditional teaching method in teaching English idioms.

Xia (2006) proposes a hypothesis: In English idiom's learning, the conceptual metaphor method is more effective than traditional teaching methods. Seventy-four (74) non-English major sophomores from two classes participated in the experiment. One class was considered as a control group, while the other as an experimental group. Xia (2006) chose a hundred and ten (110) idioms from participants' teaching material 'Practical English Comprehensive Course 3rd edition', 'Metaphors We Live By' by Lakoff and Johnson (1987) and Gibbs's experiment. In order to gauge their level of mastery of English idioms, the participants were required to do a pretest. The results revealed no obvious disparity between the two classes' result.

In the following ten weeks, Xia (2006) used a different teaching method to teach them the English idioms. For the control group, he used the traditional teaching method, which was to directly tell the students the meaning of the idiom and provide some examples of sentences to help the students understand, or the teacher asked the participants to speculate on the meaning of the idioms through examples, while the teacher provided further explanation. On the other hand, for the experimental group the teacher applied the conceptual metaphor method in their learning process. The teacher classified the idioms through figurative meaning of idioms, and led the participants to analyse and interpret the meaning of idioms.

After the initial ten weeks, the two groups were required to do a post-test. The results revealed that the level of two groups' mastery of the English idioms had improved, but the result of the experimental group was significantly higher than the control group. It can be concluded from the results that conceptual metaphor method is more helpful than the traditional method of teaching English idioms, Thus, Xia (2006)'s hypothesis was justified. Clearly, this conclusion also indicates that the conceptual metaphor theory is an effective teaching method.

The conceptual metaphor theory provides a theoretical basis for learners to correctly understand idioms. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) pointed out that metaphors show the way people think, act and express ideas in an experienced system activity. Based on the previous study. Lakoff (1987) proposed that conceptual metaphors act as the medium between two separate and entirely different concepts. The idiom is not only a special language phenomenon; it is also a cognitive linguistic phenomenon which is built on the basis of a concept. Most idioms are conceptual. Its semantics are justified rather than arbitrary. The claims of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) study, which are relevant to this study include:

(1) Metaphor is not just an inherent aspect of language, but also a matter of conceptual thinking.

(2) Conceptual metaphor is a cross-domain mapping of source domain which means one conceptual gestalt-structure onto another conceptual gestalt-structure target domain.

(3) Conceptual metaphor represents a systematic correspondence between two domains.

In concurrence with these three claims, it is easy to comprehend that the idioms have their very own figurative meanings. The figurative meaning conveys a conceptual metaphor. This way, people can see the associations in idioms. If the conceptual metaphor is ignored, the semantic association between idioms makes understanding difficult. Thus, the conceptual metaphor plays a significant role in learning idioms.

2.6 Conceptual Metaphor Studies

Idioms are the essence of a language, reflecting a nation's cultural connotation and thought processes. Learning idioms are an integral aspect of language acquisition that cannot be ignored. Since the time of ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, metaphors have always had a magical charm to them. Lakoff and Johnson come up with the conceptual metaphor theory, which has led to a conceptual metaphorical heat wave. (Chen, 2012)

For Chinese students, English idioms which are an integral aspect of the language pose a big challenge in the process of learning the English language. The traditional view is since the meaning of idioms is non analytical, the meaning of an idiom ought to be treated as a whole. However, cognitive linguists believe not only conceptual metaphor offers a good explanation for the meaning of idioms, but it is a good teaching method of English teaching (Zeng, 2008). Zeng's (2008) study is based on Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory. It offers an empirical thesis of the strategies and effects of teaching conceptual metaphor to university-level Chinese EFL learners' idiom learning.

The experiment consisted of a questionnaire before a pretest, a pretest, classroom instruction, a quiz, a questionnaire on the post-test. Zeng (2008) chose fifty (50) non-English major freshmen as participants. These participants were categorised into experimental class and control class respectively. In this study, subjects in the experimental class were taught the rationale of English conceptual metaphor knowledge to develop the metaphorical sense .The participants in the control class, however, were taught the knowledge of conceptual metaphor. Zeng (2008) applied the typical method, which was to directly inform participants the meaning of idioms and supplemented them with examples or asked them to guess based on the given meaning of idioms. There were obvious benefits for Chinese EFL learners learning the English idioms with the merits of the conceptual metaphor theory.

Zeng's (2008) analysis was based on data obtained from questionnaires, tests, and think- aloud protocols. Through quantitative and qualitative analysis of the empirical data, the following results were obtained:

1) The integration of conceptual metaphor knowledge and training the metaphor awareness contribute to English idiom teaching. From the results of the test; pretest and post-test, it was obvious that the accuracy of idiom comprehension in the experimental group was higher than the control group.

2) The conceptual metaphor theory is an effective strategy to teaching English idioms. Although both groups were exposed to this theory, the experimental class learners

employed more strategies in attempting to comprehend the unfamiliar English idioms and they also obtained higher accuracy.

3) Context helped EFL learners to comprehend the English idioms. It is clear that both classes (experimental and control) obtained higher accuracy when they comprehended the idioms within the context.

4) The conceptual metaphor theory was helpful in understanding English idioms. This is evident from the results of the test. The experimental class had a higher accuracy when they combined the conceptual metaphor with an image schema in the thought process while comprehending the English idioms.

Chen's (2012) study utilised qualitative and quantitative analyses. The aim of study was to figure out how conceptual metaphorical awareness (CMA) correlated with English idiom learning outcomes. It was also aimed at finding out whether there were significant differences in English idiom learning outcomes between CMA low-score learners and high-score learners. Chen's study also aspired to investigate whether the conceptual metaphor-based approach used in English idiom teaching was accepted by Chinese EFL learners (Chen, 2012). Data analysed were based on *t*-test, questionnaires and Pearson correlation. The results showed that there was a positive correlation between the awareness of conceptual metaphor and idioms' results. The correlation coefficient was 0.537. The students with high level of awareness of conceptual metaphors obtained better results than the lower ones. Seventy percent of the students appeared to have a positive attitude to conceptual metaphor idioms pedagogy.

2.7 The Models of L1 Idiom Comprehension

According to Cooper (1999) there are four models of L1 idiom comprehension.

(1)   Idiom-list hypothesis (Bobrow & Bell, 1973)

This hypothesis, also named literally as first hypothesis, explains how native speakers would comprehend the literal meaning first when they come across an idiom. In the case of the literal meaning not fitting the context, then native speakers would try to search their mental lexicon for a suitable one and subsequently select the figurative meaning. This hypothesis was, however, rejected by subsequent studies; Gibbs (1980) stated that if participants had the option of figuring out the literal meaning of the idioms initially, then perhaps the idiom-list hypothesis would not have been rejected.

(2)   Lexical representation hypothesis

Swinney and Cutler (1979) indicated there are two models which expressed the notion that idioms are stored in the mental lexicon with various other words. When native speakers comprehend an idiom, both the literal meaning as well as the figurative meaning would emerge at the same time.

(3)   Direct access hypothesis

This model is an extension of the lexical representation hypothesis. It conveys the notion that native speakers prefer to store more figurative meanings of the idioms than the literal ones of the idiom (Gibbs, 1980, 1984; Schweigert, 1986). Glucksberg (1993) concurs with this perspective as he stated that the figurative meaning of the idiom tends

to appear instantaneously compared to the literal meaning when native speakers comprehend familiar idioms.

(4)   Composition model (Gibbs, 1994)

The composition model illustrates that people in their attempt to make sense of an idiomatic phrase do not shut off their normal processing mode. Initially, people's syntactic parser would instantly analyse the grammatical elements which they come across. Subsequently, the lexical processor would search for the vocabulary items in the mental lexicon and attach their meanings. Finally a semantic analysis works out both the grammatical structure and the underlying meaning of the individual words in the idioms. Thus, idioms can be processed as phrases or sentences and meanings of the individual words which help shed light to the overall figurative meaning.

2.7.1 Heuristic Method

Cooper (1999) however argued that the above four models of L1 idiom comprehension are inadequate in providing an explanation for the variety of strategies employed by the 18 non-native speakers of English who were his participants, in his study. In his study, the third research question aimed to figure out theoretical models of comprehension of idioms in L1 and he applied this to the comprehension of idioms by L2 speakers. Cooper (1999) believed that the heuristic model seemed to be the best model to help L2 learners comprehend idioms. According to him

"The heuristic can denote both a procedure and a learning method. As a Procedure, heuristic means that a problem is solved by discovery and experimentation in a trial-and-error, rule-of-thumb manner rather than according to a planned route specified by an algorithmic approach. In teaching, heuristic implies that learners are encouraged to learn, discover, understand,

or solve problems on their own by experimenting, by evaluating possible answers or solutions through trial and error".

(Cooper,1999)

2.8 The Analytical framework of L2 Idiom Comprehension: Think-Aloud Protocol

Cooper (1999) investigated how eighteen (18) non-native speakers of English comprehended English idioms within the context using the Think-Aloud Protocol and IRT. However, he did not categorise the participants into different levels. He distinguished two main types of idiom comprehension strategies which were preparatory strategies and guessing strategies that L2 students employed when attempting to comprehend the idioms. The table of preparatory strategies and guessing strategies from Cooper (1999) are as follows.

Preparatory Strategies
RP: The idiom is repeated or praphrased without any interpretation
DA: Discussion and analyses of the idiom or its context without guessing the meaning
RI: Requesting information about the idiom or context

Guessing Strategies
GC: Guessing the meaning of the idiom from the context
LM: Using the literal meaning of the idiom as a key to its figurative meaning
BK: Using background knowledge to figure out the meaning of the idiom
L1: Referring to an idiom in the L1 to understand the L2 idiom
OS: Using other strategies

(Cooper, 1999)

In his research, the most frequently used idiom comprehension strategy was guessing the meaning of the idiom from the context (henceforth GC) which stood at twenty eight percent (28%). The second most frequently used idiom comprehension strategy was discussion and analyses of the idiom (henceforth DA) which was 24%, while 19% of the students used the literal meaning (henceforth LM) to help them comprehend the

idioms. From the perspective of accuracy rate, it is interesting to note that GC also occupied the top position (57%), LM took the second (22%) while background knowledge (BK 12%) stood in the third position. Thus, Cooper's findings on the strategies used by participants to comprehend idioms are not related to proficiency level.

Liu (2010) conducted a research to investigate the type of strategies EFL learners employed to comprehend novel English idioms. He also sought answers to whether L2 vocabulary proficiency would have an effect on the participants comprehension of novel English idioms, and whether L2 vocabulary proficiency would influence the type of idioms. (Liu 2010).

In Liu's study, 100 non-English majors in the Jiang Nan University were chosen to do the Idiom Recognition Test (henceforth IRT). 10 students were randomly chosen to do the think-aloud (henceforth TAP) protocols. As Liu randomly chose ten present (10%) (10 participants) to participate in the Think aloud Protocol in his study, the researcher is of the opinion that six (6) out of forty five (45) participants which is about thirteen percent (13%) would be sufficient in this present study for the Think aloud Protocol.

Eleven (11) strategies were found in Liu's (2010) study when EFL learners interpreted the English idioms based on Cooper's (1999) study. The eleven (11) strategies are as follows.

RP: Repeating or paraphrasing the idiom without giving an interpretation
DA: Discussing and analysing the idiom or its context without guessing at the meaning
RI: Requesting information about the idiom or context
CI: Inferring the meaning from the context
LM: Using the literal meaning of the idiom as a key to its figurative meaning
L1: Referring to an idiom in the L1 to understand the L2 idiom
BK: Using background knowledge to figure out the meaning of the idiom
CP: Searching for clues from a particular constituent of a idiom
MI: Using a mental image to figure out the meaning of the idiom
CM: Comprehending the figurative meaning of the idiom through conceptual metaphor
OS: Other strategies
(Liu 2010, p. 46)

Liu (2010) discovered that L2 vocabulary proficiency level had an effect on the understanding of the idioms. The higher vocabulary proficiency learners applied more varieties of strategies compared to learners in the lower group while comprehending idioms.

Moreover, Liu (2010) also found that there were obvious differences when participants comprehended the different types of idioms. Thus, the various type of idioms are an important factor which affects the rate of correction when participants attempt to comprehend the unknown idioms. It appears that Liu's analytical framework is far more comprehensive than Cooper's (1999) work.

Therefore the researcher will adopt both Cooper's and Liu's analytical framework to study how PRC EFL learners understand or interpret English idioms. Initially Cooper used eight (8) strategies to investigate students understanding of idioms, but Liu later adopted eleven (11) strategies to do this. As some of Cooper's strategies overlapped with Liu's strategies, the researcher has adopted Liu's strategies as they are more

comprehensive and as both researchers used the Think aloud Protocol to further investigate the students strategies, the researcher will also use this instrument together with the IRT in this present study

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided the literature review. The literature review was presented in four sections. In the first section, background knowledge of idioms (definition, characteristic, types, and factors influencing the success rate of idiom processing) was provided. In the second section, the idiom comprehension of L1 and L2 (The model of L1 Idiom comprehension, the analytical framework of L2 idiom comprehension) was presented. In the third section, the background knowledge of the theoretical framework which is conceptual metaphor (definition, classification, working mechanism and conceptual metaphor studies) was presented and Cooper's (1999) theoretical framework which is the heuristic method was also discussed. In the fourth section, the knowledge of TAP was provided. The following chapter provides the research methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the different instruments employed in the study as well as the research methodology utilised.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted the mixed methods approach. Analysis of data was carried out both qualitatively and quantitatively. The research was divided into five (5) steps. Firstly, participants would complete the Vocabulary Level Test (henceforth VLT). Secondly, the researcher will categorise the participants into two groups: either high proficiency level group or low proficiency level group based on the VLT results. Thirdly, participants would complete the Idiom Recognition Test (henceforth IRT). The forth step was to randomly choose six (6) participants to do the Think Aloud Protocols (henceforth TAP). Finally, the TAP data were transcribed and analysed based on Cooper (1999) and Liu (2010)'s study.

3.1.1 Analytical Framework

As mentioned in Section 2.8 on analytical framework (p.35), the researcher will adopt both Cooper's (1999) and Liu's (2010) analytical framework to study how PRC EFL learners understand or interpret English idioms.

3.2   Participants

For the purpose of this study, forty five (45) PRC students studying in Malaysia were randomly selected. There are two (2) reasons as to why the researcher chose these students as participants. First, since 2001, Chinese students are required to study English as the Ministry of Education has enforced English as a compulsory course in China. Therefore, Chinese students need to learn English for six (6) years before they can gain admission into a university. If Chinese students want to study abroad, they are required to pass an English proficiency test, either IELTS or TOEFL at a minimum band. Students especially those who wish to pursue their study abroad tend to be more concerned about learning English, which would encompass English idioms, as they are an important aspect of the English language.

Secondly, Chinese students who study in Malaysia tend to have more opportunities to communicate in English. During their conversations they realise the difficulties they face when they attempt to comprehend English idioms. People will try their best to overcome the difficulties they face only when they come across these challenges. Thus, it will be interesting to unearth the strategies they use when they attempt to comprehend unfamiliar English idioms.

The age range of the participants in this study is from nineteen (19) to thirty four (34) years old. The median age is twenty five (25) and mean age is twenty six (26) years old. All participants speak Mandarin Chinese as their first language. On average, the participants have lived in Malaysia for 4.3 years and they have studied English in China for 7.3 years. All forty five (45) participants will sit for the IRT to test their understanding of English idioms. Since the sample of the study is small in number, the

researcher opined that the data drawn from six (6) participants would suffice to fulfil the aims of the study. Thus, six (6) participants; three (3) from low level and three (3) from high level vocabulary proficiency were randomly selected to do the TAP. Those selected were interviewed while answering the IRT.

3.3   Instruments

There are three instruments which are

- VLT (Vocabulary level test) which is used to measure participants' vocabulary level (see Appendix A).

- IRT (Idiom Recognition Test) which is used to measure students' comprehension of English idioms (see Appendix B).

- TAP (Think Aloud Protocol) which is used to identify the strategies used by students to understand idioms (see Appendix C).

3.3.1   Vocabulary Level Test

Vocabulary is regarded as an important component of language, and also regarded as an essential building block of language (Norbert, Diane & Caroline, 2001). VLT is especially designed to determine the level of vocabulary for English as second and foreign language learners. The rationale for the test is based on the research results where there is evidence that the vocabulary size can affect participants' ability to apply English in various ways (Norbert, Diane & Caroline, 2001). Since Nation's (2004) Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) has been accepted by many researchers, it has been validated as an appropriate measure to determine participants' vocabulary size. It is also employed in this study to evaluate the participants' level of vocabulary.

Example:

Table 3.2 One unit of Vocabulary Level Test

1. improve	___4___ fairness; rightfulness
2. relax	
3. shelter	___6___ the winner of a contest
4. justice	
5. scholar	___3___ place that give cover or protection
6. champion	

For this research, the VLT is based on Liu's VLT (2010). There would be a list of sixty (60) multiple choice questions in total. As Table 3.2 shows that there are six (6) words listed on the left side of the paper and three (3) semantic meanings of the words are provided on the right side. Participants will be requested to select the number which reflects their answer to match the semantic expression on the right side of the paper. The standard of grading, used by Liu (2010), was for each correct answer, one (1) mark was awarded while wrong answers were marked zero (0).

Due to only (10 participants) twenty two percent (22%) participants having IELTS or TOEFL results, the researcher had no option but used the VLT to determine the English vocabulary knowledge as means of having some insights into the proficiency level of the participants who were separated into two groups; high vocabulary proficiency level group or low vocabulary proficiency level group. In order to evaluate participants more comprehensively, the vocabulary test items were selected from Chinese English Test-level two (2) to Chinese English Test- level six (6), just as what Liu (2010) had done.

Liu (2010) who provided a key to interpreting the mean score in order to divide participants into high and low group, which the researcher also adopted. The forty five

(45) participants were placed either in the high vocabulary proficiency or low vocabulary proficiency groups based on their mean score of VLT.

3.3.2 Idiom Recognition Test

The IRT adopted from Cooper's (1999) and Liu's (2010) study was used to check the participants' comprehension ability. Twenty (20) English idioms from the Dictionary of American Idioms were chosen for the IRT. The twenty (20) English idioms involved eight (8) Standard English idioms, eight (8) informal /colloquial discourses and four (4) slang idioms (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Idioms on Idiom Recognition Test

Standard English (more formal)	Informal or colloquial (conversational)	Slang (informal)
To burn the candle at both ends	To pull the wool over someone's eyes	To have a big mouth
To see eye to eye	To have a chip on one's shoulder	What's cooking?
To suffer from burnout	To have something in the bag	To get sacked
To tighten one's belt	To have a green thumb	To be chicken feed
To roll up one's sleeves	To rob the cradle	
To see things through rose-colored glasses	To be up the creek without a paddle	
To be a little frog in a big pond	To let the cat out of the bag	
To stir up a hornet's nest	To get off the ground	

(Cooper, 1999)

For the purpose of easier comprehension for the participants, each idiom was exemplified with either two (2) or three (3) sentences in context.

The standard of grading followed by Cooper (1999) which is one (1) mark for a blank answer; 'I don't know' or wrong answer while two (2) marks were awarded for a partly correct answer; three (3) marks were awarded for a correct answer.

3.3.3   Think Aloud Protocols

Think-aloud protocol (henceforth TAP) is a type of research data used in empirical translation process research. The data elicitation method is known as 'thinking aloud' or 'concurrent verbalisation,' where the participants are required to carry out a task and subsequently to verbalise their thoughts during the performance of the task. The written transcripts of the verbalisations are referred to as think-aloud protocols. (Riitta, 1990).

Pei (2013) believes that the TAP developed by Newell and Simon (1972) was actually a method of direct observation, to investigate cognitive problem-solving strategies, such as reading (Pei, 2013).

As mentioned in Section 2.8 (p.34), in Liu's study, one hundred (100) non-English majors in the Jiang Nan University were chosen to do the IRT. Ten (10) students were randomly chosen to do the TAP. As Liu randomly chose ten percent (10%) (10 participants) to participate in the TAP in his study, the researcher is of the opinion that six (6) out of forty five (45) participants which is about thirteen percent (13%) would be sufficient in this present study for the Think aloud Protocol.

The TAP will be done by six (6) participants who will be randomly chosen while doing the IRT and the whole process will be recorded using a recording pen. The researcher feels that six (6) participants suffice for this research as the questions and findings from each participant is quite extensive to investigate the strategies used in understanding idioms. Furthermore similar to Liu (2010), the researcher will have about ten percent (10%) of her participants undergoing TAP. In line with Tang's (2009) study, there will be three (3) steps involved in TAP.

1.   Participants will be informed that the focus of the TAP is to ascertain the strategies employed by participants rather than whether the idiom is interpreted correctly.

2.   Warm up phase where participants will be provided with one (1) or two (2) idioms to express how they interpret the meaning of the idioms.

3.   Participants will be recorded while doing the TAP. Participants will be allowed to use their own language to minimise misunderstanding. Subsequently, transcription will be done before analysing the data.

Table 3.2 The Participants interpretation of English idioms (two groups)

The English vocabulary Proficiency Level	The number of participants	Think Aloud Protocols
High	24	3
Low	21	3

The model was replicated from Zeng and Li's study (2011)

3.4   Procedure

The procedure would be carried out in two (2) stages: data collection and data analysis. Once data are collected from participants, then the TAP data will be transcribed and the total data will be analysed (see Figure 3.1)

3.4.1   Data Collection Method

The researcher sought for the participants (PRC EFL learners) from University Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM),

SUNWAY University, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) and SEGi University.

Firstly, the researcher will explain the purpose of the study prior to conducting the VLT paper and IRT paper. Secondly, participants will be required to complete VLT in fifteen (15) minutes which was in line with Liu's (1999) execution when he did the pilot study with six students. Using the VLT, the participants will be separated into two (2) groups; high vocabulary proficiency level group or low vocabulary proficiency level group. Thirdly, researcher will ask the participants to do IRT in twenty five (25) minutes which was also in tandem with Liu's (1999). Those who will be randomly selected to do TAP will be given extra twenty (20) mins so that they can complete both the IRT and the TAP as well. Participants would be given the choice of responding to the IRT using Chinese or English. While participants do the IRT, six (6) participants (high 3; low 3) would be randomly chosen to do TAP.

To answer the first research question "What are the strategies used when Chinese EFL learners comprehend English idioms?" a total of six (6) students were chosen to do the TAP tasks and their answers were recorded using a recording pen.

To answer the second research question "How does the English vocabulary knowledge level of PRC EFL learners correlate with their understanding of English idioms?" the participants' results of VLT will be used as an indication of their English vocabulary proficiency level. The results of IRT were used to investigate the various strategies that participants use to interpret the English idioms in terms of their knowledge and understanding of idioms.

Data Collection Phase   **Data Analysis Phase**

```
                  ┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌───────────┐
        ┌────┐    │   Think Aloud Protocol  │        │   Data    │
        │ Q1 ├────┤         (TAP)           │──────▶ │ Analysis  │
        └────┘    └─────────────────────────┘        └───────────┘

                  ┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌───────────┐
                  │   Vocabulary Level Test │        │   Data    │
                  │         (VLT)           │──────▶ │ Analysis  │
        ┌────┐    └─────────────────────────┘        └───────────┘
        │ Q2 │
        └────┘    ┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌───────────┐
                  │  Idiom Recognition Test │        │   Data    │
                  │         (IRT)           │──────▶ │ Analysis  │
                  └─────────────────────────┘        └───────────┘
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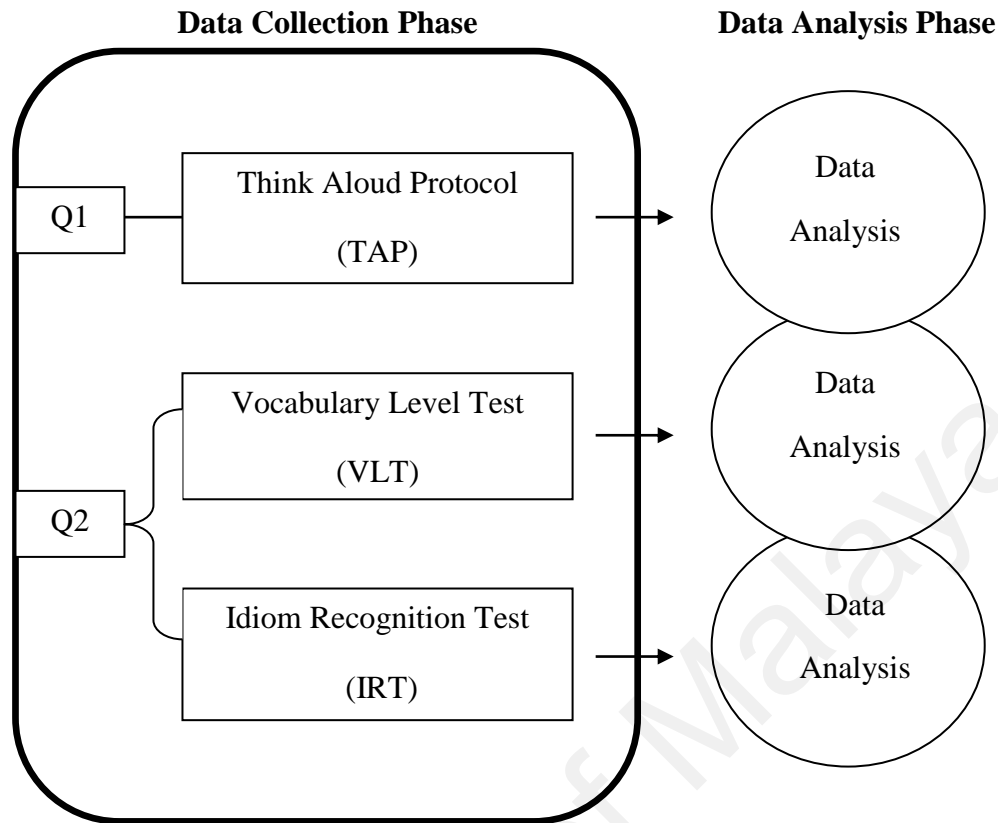
Figure 3.1 Research Procedures

3.4.2 Data Analysis

The transcription of TAP tasks will be analysed based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor. Analysis and discussion will be based on Cooper's (1999) and Liu's (2010) research. A Pearson correlation test will be used to analyse the relationship between the English vocabulary proficiency level of PRC EFL students and their understanding of English idioms.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter explained the research methodology, by introducing research design participants, instruments and procedure. The following chapter will present the findings of the research as well as discuss the rationale of results of both research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methodology employed in the data collection and analysis for the purpose of this study. This chapter continues by documenting the analysis of participants' understanding of English idioms, the strategies used when participants interpret English idioms and the relationship between the English vocabulary proficiency level of participants and their understanding of English idioms.

4.1 Results of the Vocabulary Level Test and Idiom Recognition Test

This section presents the results and analysis of the Vocabulary Level Test and Idiom Recognition Test. The purpose of the VLT paper was to gauge the English vocabulary level of participants while the IRT papers measured the participants' comprehension of English idioms.

4.1.1 Results of Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) and Analysis

Each vocabulary level test comprised sixty (60) questions which were from Chinese English Test- level two (2) to Chinese English Test – level six (6). Each level comprised twelve (12) questions. A total of forty five (45) VLT papers were collected and analysed. Each correct answer was awarded one (1) mark while wrong answers were given a score

of zero (0). The range of marks for the Vocabulary Level Test paper is from zero (0) to sixty (60). Table 4.1 presents a summary of the results.

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Scores of Vocabulary Level Test

N	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Std. Deviation
45	14	59	44	42.8	11.63

From Table 4.1, it can be seen that the minimum score of the VLT is fourteen (14), while, the maximum score of VLT is fifty nine (59). The mean is 42.8 and the median is forty four (44). The underlying function of VLT was to categorise participants into different levels. Liu (2010) provided a key to interpreting the mean score to divide participants into high and low group. The researcher also placed the participants either in the high vocabulary proficiency or low vocabulary proficiency group based on their VLT mean score (42.8). Those participants who scored in the range of fourteen (14) to thirty nine (39) were categorised into the low vocabulary group, and those who scored in the range of forty six (46) to fifty nine (59) were categorised into the high vocabulary level group. The mean score of VLT in low vocabulary proficiency group was 32.1, while the mean score of VLT in high vocabulary proficiency group was 52.1. Twenty one (21) participants were categorised in the low vocabulary proficiency group, while the rest (24) were categorised in the high proficiency group.

4.1.2 Results of Idiom Recognition Test (IRT) and Analysis

The IRT papers contained twenty (20) idioms with a few sentences in context. The standard of grading was adopted from Cooper (1999) who provided a key to interpreting the result whereby one (1) mark was awarded for a blank answer; 'I don't know' or wrong answer; while two (2) marks were awarded for a partly correct answer. Three (3) marks were awarded for a correct answer. Thus, the total marks that participants can achieve ranged from twenty (20) to sixty (60) marks.

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Scores on Idiom Recognition Test

N	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Std. Deviation
45	25	54	39	38.4	6.9

A total of forty five (45) Idiom Recognition Test papers were returned. As can be seen from Table 4.2, the minimum score for the IRT was twenty five (25), while, the maximum score of IRT was fifty four (54). The mean was 38.4 and the median was thirty nine (39).

From Table 4.2, it is evident that the IRT results were not that high which indicate that the participants did not perform very well. There are a few possible reasons for the IRT results. The first reason being the number of students in their first and second year which comprised twenty eight point nine percent (28.9%) and thirteen point three percent (13.3%) respectively, have been in Malaysia for only a few months. Thus, they may have yet to adapt themselves to the English speaking environment in Malaysia, and

therefore are not exposed to English idioms frequently. Due to their lack of English vocabulary, participants generally did not attain good marks in their IRT papers.

4.1.3 The Comparison of IRT results with Low Proficiency Group and High Proficiency Group

The results of VLT and IRT were collected and analysed. In this section, the comparison of IRT results between two groups was carried out. The data is reflected in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 The Comparison of IRT Results in Low and High Proficiency Group

Scores of IRT	Low Proficiency Group	High Proficiency Group
51-60 marks	0%	2 (8.3%)
41-50 marks	4 (19%)	10 (41.7%)
31-40 marks	9 (42.9%)	12 (50%)
21-30 marks	8 (38.1%)	0%

It is evident from Table 4.3, the scores of the low proficiency level participants ranged from twenty one (21) to fifty (50) marks, while the scores of the high proficiency level group ranged from thirty one (31) to sixty (60) marks. A large proportion of the participants (81 percent) achieved scores ranging from twenty one (21) to forty (40) marks in the low proficiency level group, while the majority (91.7 percent) of the participants obtained scores ranging from thirty one (31) to fifty (50) marks in the high proficiency level group.

Table 4.3 shows the number of participants who obtained higher results in the IRT paper; the high vocabulary proficiency group outnumbered those in the low vocabulary proficiency group. In other words, PRC EFL learners who obtained higher results for the VLT had more opportunities to gain higher scores for IRT. That means PRC EFL learners who were armed with an extensive English lexicon appeared to understand English idioms better.

4.2 Strategies Identified from Think-Aloud Protocol

In the TA tasks, eleven (11) types of strategies were used by the six (6) selected participants (See Table 4.4, p.52). Idiom comprehension strategies can be divided into two (2) groups which are preparatory strategies and guessing strategies.

The preparatory strategies allow the participants to consolidate and clarify the knowledge regarding expressions. Preparatory strategies can be further sub-divided into three strategies.

- RP Strategy is repeating or paraphrasing the individual words, the idiom or sentences in a particular context without giving an interpretation. RP Strategy is used to gain more time before guessing the meaning of the idiom.

- DA Strategy is discussing and analysing the idiom. The function of DA strategy is to review the information and subsequently to select new and useful information.

- RI Strategy is requesting information about the idiom. It is used to request more information about the idiom, and collect additional information to make a more informed guess.

Thus, the three preparatory strategies allow participants to gain time to collect more useful information, discuss and analyse the idiom. However, the preparatory strategies do not directly lead the participant to gain the answer or meaning of the idiom.

The guessing strategy is just as the name implies where participants can guess the meaning of the idiom, based on the context (CI Strategy), the literal meaning of the idiom (LM Strategy), by referring to the L1 idiom (L1 Strategy), the background knowledge (BK Strategy), searching for clues from the idiom (CP Strategy), the mental image (MI Strategy), conceptual metaphor (CM Strategy) and other strategies (OS Strategy).

Table 4.4 Strategies Identified from Think-Aloud Protocol

	Strategy	Example
The preparatory strategies (PS)	RP: repeating or paraphrasing the idiom without giving an interpretation	"Many small business can be successful once they got off the ground" P1L13.7
	DA: discussing and analysing the idiom or its context without guessing the meaning	"because we decided that Molly was a bad worker, was a bad worker, wait, wait, because the word 'was', let me think again, cannot find the job, I choose I change my answer cannot find the job" P3L3.6
	RI: requesting information about the idiom or context	"so he must what?" P6L2.8
The guessing strategies (GS)	CI: inferring the meaning from the context.	"because from the message, Molly work badly so she, I guess she need to work harder" P5L15.4
	LM: using the literal meaning of the idiom as a key to its figurative meaning	"from the from the from the literature meaning of pool the wool over someone's eyes" P2L2.8
	L1: referring to an idiom in the L1 to understand the L2 idiom	"so it is the same, it is the similar meaning in Chinses idiom 有色眼镜" P2L17.9
	BK: using background knowledge to figure out the meaning of the idiom	"based on my experience, I think if I want to buy a house, I think my husband will company me too" P3L4.13
	CP: searching for clues from a particular constituent part of the idiom	"sure, here, rose-coloured glasses means something very positive" P5L17.5
	MI: using a mental image to figure out the meaning of the idiom	"This one you can imagine if you creek a boat without paddle" P2L11.2
	CM: comprehending the figurative meaning of the idiom through conceptual metaphor	"from burnout, burnout I can relate it to candle" P5L6.3
	OS: other strategies, such as using personalised discussion or comment	"I know the vocabulary, I cannot collect it together" P2L9.7

Note: Participant 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 27 were randomly chosen to do TAP and were coded as follow:

Participant10= P1; Participant 11=P2;

Participant 12=P3; Participant 13=P4;

Participant 15=P5; Participant 27=P6.

4.2.1 Results of Think Aloud Protocol and Analysis of the Strategies

Six participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 and P6) were randomly selected to do the TA tasks and all verbal data were collected to identify the strategies which were employed when PRC EFL learners interpret English idioms. The analysis of the strategies is in concurrence with the methodology used by Cooper (1999) and Liu (2010). An example of the analysis can be seen in Table 4.5 which is an excerpt of the analysis of the Think Aloud transcription for P6.

Table 4.5 Strategies used by P6's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom 3. Billy often gets into fights with other kids at school. His mother says he has a chip on his shoulder. What does it mean to *have a chip on one's shoulder*?

	P6's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
3.1	P: Number three	Reading
3.2	P: Billy often gets into fight with other kids at school/	Reading
3.3	P: His mother says he has a chip on her on his shoulder/	Reading
3.4	P: What does it mean to has a chip on someone's shoulder?/	Reading
3.5	P:So he always get fights with other with other kids at school/	RP
3.6	P: from his sentence, I ca know Billy had a very bad temper/	CI
3.7	P:so he always get fight with other with other kids at school/	
3.8	P:and maybe everyone in school will afraid Billy very much/	DA
3.9	P:That's all/	
3.10	R: Okay, so what does it mean to have a chip on one's shoulder?	
3.11	P:it means eh, this person have had a very bad temper/	CI
3.12	R: okay, thank you	
3.13	R: please write your answer	

The table above shows the transcription excerpt of P6 comprehending Idiom 3. As reflected in the transcription excerpt, the function of Line 3.1(henceforth L3.1) to Line 3.4 (henceforth L3.4), was coded as reading the idiom only. Line 3.5 repeats the context, thus L3.5 is considered as an RP strategy. L3.6 and L3.11 indicate that P6 guessed the meaning of the idiom based on the sentence in context, which is categorised as CI strategy. Moreover, P6 discusses the context and idiom which could be categorised as a DA strategy. In total, there are three (3) strategies used which include RP strategy, CI strategy (twice) and DA strategy in P6's Think-Aloud Protocol.

4.2.2 Strategies by Frequency of Use

Participants usually employ several strategies in the process of comprehending an idiom (see Table 4.6 and Figure 4.1). A rank ordering of the various strategies used are reported in percentages in the bottom row of Figure 4.1. Guessing from the context was the most frequently used strategy (42% of the time), followed by discussing and analysing the idiom (15%), requesting information (13%), paraphrasing or repeating the idiom (13%), using other strategies (5%), using the literal meaning (3%), referring to an L1 idiom (3%), research the clues from part of an idiom (3%), mental image (1%), using background knowledge (1%) and conceptual metaphor (1%).
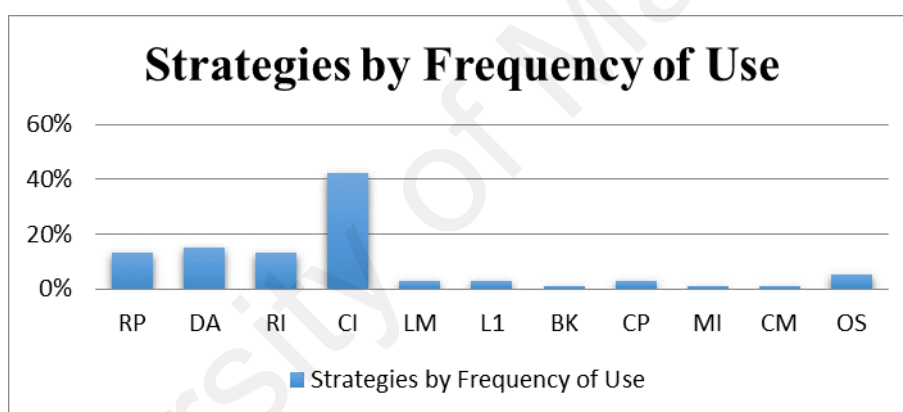
Figure 4.1 Strategies by Frequency of Use

Figure 4.1 indicate CI, DA, RP and RI strategies were used more frequently compared to the other strategies (83% of total). Of the total number of strategies used by participants; forty one percent (41%) were preparatory strategies (RP, DA and RI) while forty two percent (42%) of all the strategies used were CI strategy and seventeen (17%) were the rest of the guessing strategies. It can be clearly seen that preparatory strategies provide the necessary preparation for the participants to discuss, analyse, request and repeat while participants comprehend idioms which assisted them in guessing the meaning of English idioms. The next section discusses the successful strategies.

Successful strategies refer to the guessing strategies which have been used successfully by high and low proficiency participants to interpret and understand the idioms. Henceforth the researcher called them successful strategies.

Table 4.6 Frequency of Strategies Used in Idioms

Idioms	Preparatory Strategies			Guessing Strategies							
	RP	DA	RI	CI	LM	L1	BK	CP	MI	CM	OS
1 To burn the candle at both ends	1	4	0	8	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
2 To pull the wool over someone's eyes	3	4	1	9	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
3 To have a chip on one's shoulders	7	3	1	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
4 To see eye to eye	1	3	0	9	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
5 To have a big mouth	3	2	0	7	0	2	1	1	0	0	1
6 To be suffering from burnout	3	3	3	9	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
7 To have something in the bag	2	3	1	14	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
8 What's cooking?	5	3	4	7	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
9 To have a green thumb	2	2	2	7	1	1	0	1	0	0	1
10 To rob the cradle	1	3	6	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11 To be up the creek without a paddle	0	3	10	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
12 To let the cat out of the bag	5	3	3	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
13 To get off the ground	2	3	1	13	2	1	0	0	0	0	2
14 To tighten one's belt	3	3	3	7	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
15 To get sacked	3	2	2	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
16 To roll up one's sleeves	3	3	4	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
17 To see something through rose-colored glasses	0	1	1	8	1	1	0	3	0	0	0
18 To be a little frog in a big pond	2	2	0	10	0	6	0	0	0	1	3
19 something is chicken feed	4	4	0	7	0	0	0	3	1	0	0
20 To stir up a hornet's nest	0	2	8	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	50	56	50	156	10	13	4	12	2	2	18
Percentage of strategies used by participants	13%	15%	13%	42%	3%	3%	1%	3%	1%	1%	5%

Total strategies used on all items = 373.
The model was replicated from Cooper's (1999) study

4.2.3 The Successful Strategies (Guessing Strategies)

Strategies that help participants to obtain correct answers can be accounted as successful strategies. Usually a few different strategies were used in the process of comprehending the idiom and to get the correct answers. Although participants usually employed a few

strategies to obtain the correct answer, those who employed only one strategy to directly obtain the correct meaning of the idiom was included in this count. Six participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 and P6) were randomly selected to do TA tasks, where each participant was required to comprehend twenty (20) idioms. Out of a hundred and twenty (120) idiom items which were required to be comprehended, only forty eight (48) idiom items were comprehended correctly. As mentioned before in Chapter Three, when an answer is deemed correct, a score of three (3) is awarded. The RP Strategy, DA Strategy and RI Strategy are not presented in Table 4.7, because all these three strategies were categorised under preparatory strategies which allow the participants to gain time, gather information, discuss and analyse the information in order to think about the meaning of idiom before providing an answer to the meaning of idiom. Cooper (1999) indicates that RP, DA and RI strategies are ways of marking time so that participants can sift through the new linguistic material contained in an expression while piecing together components that might lead to an interpretation (p.252).

Figure 4.2 Rank of Successful Strategies

As reflected in Figure 4.2, there are seven 7 successful strategies which were used by the participants (CI, LM, L1, BK, CP, MI and CM) and the total number of successful strategies is forty eight (48). It is apparent from Figure 4.2, that CI strategy had the biggest proportion, thus can be considered the most successful strategy with fifty six point three percent (56.3%). The next largest proportion was CP strategy at fourteen point six percent (14.6%) which were followed closely by L1 and LM at eight point three percent (8.3%), and subsequently BK at six point three percent (6.3%). The least used strategies were CM and MI which were at four point two percent (4.2%) and two percent (2%) respectively. Unfortunately, OS strategy did not contribute as participants did not get the correct answer when employing this particular strategy.

Table 4.7 Successful Strategies used by PRC EFL Learners in TA Tasks

Idioms	Participants					
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
1 To burn the candle at both ends						
2 To pull the wool over someone's eyes	CI			LM	CI	CI
3 To have a chip on one's shoulders				LM		CI
4 To see eye to eye	CI	BK			CI	LM
5 To have a big mouth			BK			
6 To be suffering from burnout		CI	CI	CI	CM	CI
7 To have something in the bag	CI	CI	CP	CI	CI	CI
8 What's cooking?				CI		
9 To have a green thumb						CI
10 To rob the cradle						
11 To be up the creek without a paddle				CI	CI	
12 To let the cat out of the bag			CI			
13 To get off the ground		LM			L1	
14 To tighten one's belt		CI				L1
15 To get sacked		CI				CI
16 To roll up one's sleeves		BK			CI	CI
17 To see something through rose-colored glasses			CI	CP	CP	CP
18 To be a little frog in a big pond	L1	L1	CM			
19 something is chicken feed		CP	MI	CI	CP	CP
20 To stir up a hornet's nest						

The model was replicated from Cooper (1999)

Based on frequency of use and success rate, it is evident that, the theoretical framework of this study which is grounded on conceptual metaphor (CM) did not play an important role in comprehending the English idioms for PRC EFL learners. On the other hand, CI strategy played a significant role for PRC EFL learners. The next section discusses preparatory strategies and guessing strategies which are sub-divided into eleven (11) strategies used in Think-Aloud Protocol by the participants.

4.2.4 The Strategies Used in Think-Aloud Protocol

In order to investigate research question one, the researcher attempts to unearth the strategies used by the PRC EFL learners to comprehend English idioms. Preparatory strategies (RP, DA, RI) and guessing strategies (CI, LM, L1, BK, CP, MI, CM, OS) were used during Think-Aloud Protocol. This section introduces the definitions of the strategies and the functions which are illustrated with examples from the TAP.

4.2.4.1 The Preparatory Strategies

There are three preparatory strategies which were used from TAP; RP strategy, DA strategy and RI strategy.

4.2.4.1.1. Repeating or paraphrasing the idiom without giving an interpretation (RP 13%)

Many of the participants repeated or paraphrased the idiom in context when they first come across English idiom. This was typically done by the participants after reading the idiom or reading the context which was given in IRT. Repeating or paraphrasing helped participants to mobilise all related information hidden in their long term memories.

Moreover, by repeating or paraphrasing the information, the participants gained more time to think about the meaning of the idioms.

Table 4.8 Excerpt showing RP strategy used by P6's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom 3. Billy often gets into fights with other kids at school. His mother says he has a chip on his shoulder. What does it mean to *have a chip on one's shoulder*?

	P6's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
3.1	P: Number three	Reading
3.2	P: Billy often gets into fight with other kids at school/	Reading
3.3	P: His mother says he has a chip on her on his shoulder/	Reading
3.4	P: What does it mean to has a chip on someone's shoulder?/	Reading
3.5	P:So he always get fights with other with other kids at school/	RP
3.6	P: from his sentence, I can know Billy had a very bad temper/	CI

P6 repeated the sentence "he always get fights with other with other kids at school" (L3.5), which allowed the participant to infer that Billy has a bad temper. This inference provided a useful cue to the correct meaning of *has a chip on one's shoulder* that is "to always have a bad attitude". In brief, RP strategy is a useful strategy which helped P6 to comprehend the meaning of this idiom.

Table 4.9 Excerpt showing RP strategy used by P1's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom 8. After dinner, John would go over to the mall to see what's cooking. What does *What's cooking?* mean?

	P1's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
8.1	P: Number eight	Reading
8.2	P: after dinner, John would go over the mall to see what's cooking/	Reading
8.3	P: what does what's cooking means/	Reading
8.4	P: I guess what's cooking means sell something for somebody/	Reading
8.5	P:Because after dinner means dinner finish/	RP
8.6	P: John would go over to the mall to see what's cooking/	CI
8.7	P: Maybe he want to buy something, like this/	

P1 repeated two key points from the excerpt after reading the context. The first time is after dinner, and the place is a mall (Line 8.6). Usually the time after dinner is dedicated for recreation and entertainment. Due to the place mentioned being a mall, it led the participant to guess that perhaps John wanted to make a purchase in the mall after dinner. Thus, repeating the context may have provided the participant with the main idea or main clue for interpreting the idiom.

RP Strategy is one of preparatory strategies which cannot be categorised as a successful strategy. However, as can be seen from Table 4.8, RP Strategy helped the participant to comprehend the idiom successfully. Table 4.6 (p.55) shows that from a total of three hundred and seventy three (373) strategies, RP was used fifty (50) times in the Think-Aloud Protocol. It can be seen clearly that there are twenty three (23) RP strategies （46%）used to assist participants in comprehending the idioms successfully. There are five (5) RP strategies (10%) which directly assisted the participant to comprehend the idiom successfully. Eighteen (18) RP strategies (36%) were employed to indirectly assist the participant with comprehending of the idiom.

4.2.4.1.2. Discussing and analysing the idiom (DA 15%)

Participants usually use DA Strategy to discuss the context and idiom. Discussing and analysing allow participants to make full use of logical thinking to find out the meaning of the idiom, while, at the same time helping to fine tune the relationship between idioms and their context. Moreover, the process of discussing and analysing the data provides participants with more time to select any useful information before obtaining the correct answer as can be seen from the excerpt in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Excerpt showing DA strategy used by P3's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom 15. We decided that Molly was a bad worker and that she would have to get sacked. What does *to get sacked* mean?

	P3's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
15.1	P: Fifteen had to get fired that means/	
15.2	R：why?/	
15.3	P: because we decided that Molly was a bad worker/	
15.4	P: was a bad worker/	
15.5	P: wait wait/	
15.6	P: because the word 'was'/	
15.7	P: let me think again/	
15.8	P: cannot find the job/	DA

Table 4.10 shows the process of P3 using the DA strategy to explain the meaning of *to get sacked.* It can be observed that the participant interpreted the meaning of *get sacked* as to get fired directly (L15.1). The participant focused on the lexical item 'was'. Molly was a bad worker expresses the meaning that she was not a good worker in the past, but perhaps she has transformed to being a good worker currently. Finally, the participant rethinks and decides on the meaning of *get sacked* as cannot find a job. Although the discussion did not lead the participant to arrive at the correct answer, it shows that DA strategy could guide participants to find an alternative to explain the idiom.

DA Strategy is a preparatory strategy which cannot be categorised as a successful strategy in this case. However, DA Strategy does contribute much to the participants in comprehending the idioms successfully as it allows participants to discuss the context and idioms.

Table 4.6 (p.55) shows a total of fifty six (56) DA strategies were used in the TAP. Though DA strategy could not directly provide the answer for participants, it contributed in a positive manner by helping participants find the meaning of idioms.

4.2.4.1.3. Requesting information about the idiom or context (RI 13%)

During TAP, the participants had requested for information when they did not understand the vocabulary, phrase or a sentence, even the whole context. For instance, when the participant asked himself a question, which can be illustrated from P6's attempt to comprehend the second idiom from the Think-Aloud Protocol. It is clear from Table 4.11, P6 repeated the lexical items "the salesman" and "broken dishwasher" (L2.6) before requesting for the information. The participant could have regarded himself as the salesman, trying to sell a broken dishwasher to Mrs. Smith. He must have assumed the role of the salesman and asked himself what should he do in the process of marketing the broken dishwasher to Mrs. Smith, as reflected in "so he must what?" (L2.7). Once the participant asked the question, he obtained a clue to the meaning of the idiom which is "So he must cheat cheat Mrs. Smith" (L2.8).

Table 4.11 Excerpt showing RI strategy used by P6's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom 2. The salesman sold Mrs. Smith a broken dishwasher. He pulled the wool over her eyes. What does it mean to *pull the wool over someone's eyes*?

	P6's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
2.6	P: Because the salesman salesman a broken dishwasher/	
2.7	P: so he must what? /	RI
2.8	P: so he must cheat cheat Mrs. Smith. /	

Another example to illustrate RI strategy is when the participant requested for information from the researcher or tried to make some sense from the context. Obviously several of the participants had problems recognising or understanding certain vocabulary items in the idioms, for example, *cradle* in idiom *robbing the cradle* (See Table 4.12), *abortion* and *hornet* in the idiom *to stir up a hornet's nest* (See Table 4.13), especially so for the participants who were categorised in the low proficiency level group (P1,P3,P6). English vocabulary is definitely the stumbling block for them in

seeking the meaning of the idiom. They kept maintaining: "Sorry, I don't know, I can't guess anymore".

Table 4.12 Excerpt showing RI strategy used by P6's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom10. Robert knew that he was robbing the cradle by dating a sixteen-year-old girl. What does *robbing the cradle* mean?

	P6's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
10.5	P: Oh I am sorry, I don't know the meaning of the candle (cradle)/ . . .	RI
10.10	P: yes, I don't know the meaning./	RI

Table 4.13 Excerpt showing RI strategy used by P3's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom20. Mentioning the abortion issue just stirred up a hornet's nest. What does *to stir up a hornet's nest* mean?

	P3's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
20.4	P: the last one actually I do not know the meaning/	RI
20.5	P: It is because the word mentioning the abortion/	
20.6	R: abortion issue	
20.7	P: I do not know the word/	RI
20.8	P: and then the other word is hornet, I do not know the word/	RI
20.11	P: and also the phrase I do not know, so I cannot guess	RI

Based on Table 4.6 (p.55), a total of fifty (50) RI strategies were used in the Think-Aloud by participants. As mentioned before, RI Strategy is one of the preparatory strategies which cannot be categorised as a successful strategy, although it does contribute to some extent to the participants in comprehending the idioms.

4.2.4.2 The Guessing Strategies

There are eight (8) guessing strategies used in Think-Aloud protocol which were CI, LM, L1, BK, CP, MI, CM and OS strategy.

4.2.4.2.1. Infer the meaning from the context (CI 42%)

CI Strategy was the most frequently used strategy (42% of total strategies), which gives prominence to the context. Many experts and linguists point out that in the guessing strategy, the context is useful and helpful for students of English language learners to interpret the meaning of an idiom (Atai & Akbarian 2003; Zeng & Li, 2011). The analysis of the Think Aloud Protocol of the PRC EFL participants supports this point.

There are two (2) types of contextual inferences. First is taking the whole context as a background and figuring out the meaning from that situation. Participants often can guess the meaning of the idiom based on the whole context.

Table 4.14 Excerpt showing CI strategy used by P2's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom15. We decided that Molly was a bad worker and that she would have to get sacked. What does *to get sacked* mean?

	P2's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
15.3	P:We decided that Molly was a bad worker and that she would have to get sacked/	Reading
15.4	P: get sacked means/	
15.5	R: according to the sentence, get sacked means, maybe means he needs to be punished or fired /	CI

Table 4.15 Excerpt showing CI strategy used by P4's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom19. To some people, a thousand dollars is chicken feed. What does *chicken feed* mean?

	P4's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
19.1	R: Number nineteen	
19.2	P: Number nineteen	
19.3	P: To some people, a thousand dollars is chicken feed/	Reading
19.4	P: What does *chicken feed* mean?	Reading
19.5	P: I guess the meaning is a little amount of money	CI

P2 and P4 arrived at the correct answers once they finished reading the context. This indicates that they obtained the answer based on the context. The CI strategy assisted them in interpreting the idioms correctly.

Table 4.16 Excerpt showing CI strategy used by P2's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom20. Mentioning the abortion issue just stirred up a hornet's nest. What does *to stir up a hornet's nest* mean?

	P2's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
20.1	P: mentioning the abortion issue just stirred up a hornet's nest	Reading
20.2	P: from the meaning, I can guess like destroy the nest	CI
20.3	R: okay, how do you know that?	
20.4	P: just I guess	

P2 (Table 4.16) did not get the correct answer when using CI strategy in the process of comprehending idiom 20, and also did not employ any other strategies while trying to obtain the answer. It is not difficult to deduce that P2 was arbitrarily guessing the meaning of the idiom without any other evidence to verify his answer. In other words, the participant failed to obtain the correct answer, as he did not analyse the context or idiom carefully as well as did not employ any other strategies to relate to the comprehending of the idiom.

The second type is to make use of particular words or phrases in context as clues to arrive at the meaning of the idiom. For instance, P4 as shown in Table 4.17 made use of the particular word *suffering* and the phrase "she needs a vacation" to infer the meaning of *suffering from burnout* is tired or exhausted.

Table 4.17 Excerpt showing CI strategy used by P4's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom6. Pam needed a vacation because she was suffering from burnout. What does *suffering from burnout* mean?

	P4's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
6.3	P: Pam needed a vacation because she was suffering from burnout	Reading
6.4	P: What does suffering from burnout mean?	Reading
6.5	P: That means, she is very tired and she is exhausted	CI
6.6	R: how do you know?	
6.7	P: because she needs a vacation	CI
6.8	P: and you know from the word suffering	CI

The phrase "needed a vacation" allowed P4 to infer that Pam was tired or was over worked and thus gives a negative connotation. The word *suffering* describes feelings of mental or physical pain. The notion of suffering is often related to something negative. Both "needed a vacation" and *suffering* implies that Pam was not happy. Thus, consideration of the expression "need a vacation" and *suffering* in the context enabled P4 to figure out the meaning of the idiom successfully.

This example shows that the learners can figure out the meaning of the idiom successfully even if they do not know the meaning of the individual words. As long as participants can accurately master key words and analyse the key words in the right manner, they are likely to guess the correct meaning of the idioms.

P5 in Table 4.18 could not figure out the correct meaning of the idiom. It is apparent that P5 did not comprehend the key words *get sacked* and therefore did not figure out the meaning of the idiom. From the context, "we decided that Molly was a bad worker and that she would have to get sacked"; it can be inferred that Molly's employer spoke to other people who knew Molly.

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Table 4.18 Excerpt showing CI strategy used by P5's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom15. We decided that Molly was a bad worker and that she would have to get sacked. What does *to get sacked* mean?

	P5's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
15.1	R: Number fifteen	
15.2	P: we decided that Molly was a bad worker and that she would have to get sacked/	Reading
15.3	P: what does to get sacked mean? /	Reading
15.4	P: Because from the message, Molly work badly so she, I guess she need to work harder/	CI

Thus, the participant was required to find a clue to think about the idiom *get sacked* from the employer's point of view. When the employer recognised Molly as a bad worker, hence it was presumed that Molly would be punished or get fired. Thus, if P5 had followed this train of thought and read the context carefully, P5 may have interpreted the idiom in the correct manner and possibly obtained the meaning of the idiom.

According to Table 4.6 (p.55), a total of one hundred fifty six (156) CI strategies were used in the Think-Aloud by participants. There are forty eight percent (48%) CI strategies which were used to help participants to comprehend the idioms successfully. CI strategy occupies the highest correct rate in terms of successful strategies as well as the highest frequency of use. Due to the high frequency of use of CI strategy and high success rate, it could be said that context plays an important role in comprehending English idioms for PRC EFL learners. In other words, once EFL/ESL teachers realise the importance of CI strategy and utilise the CI strategy reasonably well, it may increase the success rate of their comprehension of English idioms.

4.2.4.2.2. Using the literal meaning of the idiom as a key to its figurative meaning (LM 3%)

Each English idiom has a literal and figurative meaning. Using the literal meaning as a key to figure out the figurative meaning requires participants to have the ability to decompose the phrase, and do a comprehensive analysis of the component of the sentence or the literal meaning of the idiom. Thus, the frequency of using LM Strategy is not that popular.

Table 4.19 Excerpt showing LM strategy used by P4's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom2. The salesman sold Mrs. Smith a broken dishwasher. He pulled the wool over her eyes. What does it mean to *pull the wool over someone's eyes*?

	P4's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
2.9	P: and then from the from the from the literal meaning of pool the wool over someone's eyes	
2.10	P: That means to put something in front of her eyes	LM
2.11	P: so I got the answer	

P4 in Table 4.19 used the literal meaning which is "put something in front of her eyes" as a key to interpret the figurative meaning of the idiom *pull the wool over someone's eyes* which is to "hide or cheat" . P4 analysed the idiom using the LM strategy and successfully obtained the correct meaning of the idiom. It could be inferred that P4 possessed the ability to master both the literal meaning and figurative meaning of the idiom.

Table 4.20 Excerpt showing LM strategy used by P5's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom9. People say that Jennifer can keep any plant alive with her green thumb. What does *green thumb* mean?

	P5's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
9.1	P: Number nine	
9.2	P: People say that Jennifer can keep any plant alive with her green thumb/	Reading

9.3	P: What does green thumb mean/	Reading
9.4	P: Green thumb means she can do something very good	
9.5	P: Because thumb, the first finger/	LM
9.6	P: When you should do you big finger to someone you are agree with someone, or someone did a good job/	
9.7	P: so green thumb means he can do something very, he can do something very great or do something magically/	

P5 did not get the correct answer by using LM strategy. Table 4.20 demonstrates that P5 understood that thumb is the first finger, and also correctly explained the meaning of thumbs up, which means, "green thumb means he can do something very good" but unfortunately, he did not combine the meaning with the context. Thus, if he had delved into the context a little more deeply, he might have obtained the correct answer which is "he is really good at planting or he has a good way with plants".

As shown in Table 4.6 (p.55), a total of ten (10) LM strategies were used in the Think-Aloud by participants. It can be seen that there are four (4; 40%) LM strategies used in comprehending the idioms successfully. LM strategy is normally used to figure the literal meaning as a main issue to figure out the meaning of idiom. The LM strategy is based on the premise that participants are able to understand and recognise each vocabulary item in an idiom as well as the literal meaning of the idiom. As mentioned earlier, the vocabulary items are stumbling blocks for participants, even worse among the participants in the low proficiency group. Thus, only a few participants used LM strategy.

4.2.4.2.3. Referring to an idiom in the L1 to understand the L2 idiom (L1 3%)

For some of the English idioms, it was not a difficult task to find the corresponding Chinese idioms. For example, *as timid as a rabbit* (胆小如鼠 dǎn xiǎo rú shǔ), *fish in the air* (水中捞月 shuǐ zhōng laō yuè) and *cast pearls before swine* (对牛弹琴 duì niú tán qín). Sometimes participants when looking at the English idioms will directly map them to the Chinese idioms which can help participants to interpret the meaning of the English idioms. For example the following Chinese idioms served as a key to help PRC EFL participants comprehend the meaning of the English idioms.

- Big mouth (Idiom 5) is similar to 大嘴巴 dà zuǐ ba (big mouth)

- Tighten his belt (Idiom 14) equals 勒紧裤袋 leī jǐn k ù dài (tighten his belt)

- Roll up his sleeves (Idiom 16) equals 撸起袖子 lū qǐ xiù zi (roll up his sleeves)

- A little frog in a big pond (Idiom 18) is similar to 沧海一粟 cāng hǎi yī sù (a grain of corn in the wide sea)

- Stir up a hornet's nest (Idiom 20) equals 捅马蜂窝 tǒng mǎ fēng wō (stir up a hornet's nest)

It is interesting that P1 and P2 linked the idiom *a little frog in a big pond* with two different corresponding Chinese idioms which are 沧海一粟 (cāng hǎi yī sù) and 井底之蛙 (jǐng dǐ zhī wā) (See Table 4.21).

Table 4.21 Excerpt showing L1 strategy used by P1 and P2's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom18. Looking up at the sky can make you feel like a little frog in a big pond. What does *a little frog in a big pond* mean?

P1's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
18.4 P: In Chinese, 井底之蛙/	L1

	P2's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
18.7	P: that is a similar Chinese idiom 沧海一粟/	L1

A little frog in a big pond means an unimportant or unqualified individual in a large organisation or in some other setting (Cooper 1999, You Dao Dictionary 2014).井底之蛙 (jǐng dǐ zhī wā), the literal meaning is a frog living at the bottom of a well, while the figurative meaning is to describe a person with a limited outlook or a person with a narrow world view. 沧海一粟(cāng haǐ yī sù) means a drop in the ocean which means insignificant and small individual in a large organisation or world (You Dao Dictionary 2014). Thus, *a little frog in a big pond* expresses the same meaning as 沧海一粟 (cāng haǐ yī sù). P1 failed to get the correct answer as he did not read the context and idiom carefully. Hence, deducing the idioms can be considered a challenge in testing the participants' analytical ability and comprehension skills. However, P2 successfully obtained the correct answer by using L1 strategy. Meanwhile, "frog" is 蛙 (wā) in Chinese; this idiom was easy for the participants to relate to the well-known Chinese idiom 井底之蛙 (jǐng dǐ zhī wā).

From Table 4.6 (p.55), it can be concluded that there were thirteen (13) instances when L1 strategy was used by participants in the TAP. Forty six percent (46%) found the L1 strategy a helpful device. L1 strategy is to use an idiom from the first language as a key to help participant figure out the meaning of the second language idiom. In other words, using the L1 strategy is based on the premise that participants have mastered the first language idiom and hence are able to relate the first language idiom to the second language idiom. Thus, only a few participants employed L1 strategy which is actually not surprising.

4.2.4.2.4. Using background knowledge to figure out the meaning of the idiom (BK 1%)

BK Strategy interprets the meaning of the idiom by using prior knowledge or background knowledge to identify the idiom, to summon the related knowledge to figure out the meaning of the idiom. Prior knowledge involves the participants' experience or them having heard certain information from other people, or they have seen/heard other people using the idiom on TV or in a convention. For example, P2 interprets the idiom *to roll up his sleeves* based on his prior experience. P2 is a researcher, thus he understands the rigours of working as a researcher, for instance striving to complete a proposal. (See Table 4.22)

Table 4.22 Excerpt showing BK strategy used by P2's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom16. The researcher had to roll up his sleeves to get the proposal in on time. What does *to roll up his sleeves* mean?

	P2's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
16.5	P: I think is begin to strive for his for finish his proposal/	
16.6	P: how do you know that? /	
16.7	P: because the researcher I am also some kind of researchers in engineering/	BK

P2 being an engineering researcher, probably relates easily to the meaning of *to roll up his sleeves* which means to prepare to work hard. When the researcher needs to finish a particular proposal on time, then it is time for the researcher to *roll up his sleeves* and concentrate. It proves that a person's experience/ background can help him/her to interpret English idioms.

Table 4.23 Excerpt showing BK strategy used by P3's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom4. Mother wants to buy a new house in the country. Father sees eye to eye with her. What does it mean *to see eye to eye*?

	P3's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
4.1	R: Number four	

4.2	P: Number four
4.3	P:Number four that means the father, from my personal opinion, I think it means, father helping mother to choose the house
4.4	R: okay, why, how do you know the answer?
4.5	P: why? To be honest, at first sight, I actually I did not know the exactly answer
4.6	P:but when I finish reading when I come back to here
4.7	P:I realized mother want to buy a new house in the country
4.8	P: and father father father is like
4.9	P: the role of father is company mother to do something
4.10	R: okay
4.11	P: most of the time
4.12	R: okay
4.13	P: base on my experience, I think if I want to buy a BK house, I think my husband will company me too

P3 did not know the meaning initially when she read the context. P3 obtained the answer to the phrase "husband help wife to choose the house" once she realised the context revolved around a mother wanting to buy a house. It is obvious that P3 has had the experience of purchasing a new house and her husband helped her choose the house. Thus, she deduced the answer to *see eye to eye* is a father helping out a mother to choose a house. However, she did not carefully read the context, and she also did not combine her experience with the context, which led her not to successfully interpret the idiom.

From Table 4.6 (p.55), it can be concluded that there were four (4) instances when BK strategy was used by participants in the Think-Aloud protocol. Seventy five percent (75%) of BK strategy was helpful. BK strategy is to use background knowledge which serves as a key to help participants figure out the meaning of idioms. In other words, BK strategy is based on the premise that participants utilise certain background information about the idiom or having previously used the idiom gives them an

advantage. PRC EFL students' lack of a conducive English environment, and not being exposed to English idioms in their daily lives, could be reasons why PRC EFL learners seldom used BK strategy in the Think-Aloud.

4.2.4.2.5. Searching for clues from a particular constituent part of the idiom (CP 3%)

CP Strategy only focuses on the idiom seeking for clues from part of the idiom. Due to the frequency of CP strategy not being that high; it can be concluded that context is very important to PRC EFL participants while interpreting English idioms. (See Table 4.24)

Table 4.24 Excerpt showing CP strategy used by P6's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom17. Depressed people should look at the world through rose-coloured glasses. What does to through rose-coloured glasses mean?

	P6's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
17.1	R: Number seventeen	
17.2	P: Depressed people should look at the world through rose-colored glasses/	Reading
17.3	P: what does to through rose-colored glasses means? /	Reading
17.4	P: Rose color, rose colored glasses is not the common glasses /	CP
17.5	P: it means it is different from the common glasses /	
17.6	P: It means depressed people look at the world in another way/	
17.7	P: so to through to through rose- colored glasses means to see something through the positive view/	

P6 focuses on the *rose colour glasses*, she said that the *rose colour glasses* are not common, and this was an important aspect for her to arrive at the correct answer of the idiom *rose-coloured glasses*, which indicates something different from the norm. The participant then deduced the correct answer when she realised the clue which formed the idiom. Thus, it demonstrates that participants can interpret the meaning of the idiom from the clues in the idiom.

Table 4.25 Excerpt showing CP strategy used by P2's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom8. After dinner, John would go over to the mall to see what's cooking. What does *What's cooking?* mean?

	P2's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
8.1	P: after dinner, John would go over to the mall to see what's cooking?/	Reading
8.2	P: because now a the cooking meaning/	
8.3	P: the cooking means, I think the cooking means that what does the mall sell? /	
8.4	R: oh, I see	
8.5	P: because cooking usually the words use in the kitchen/	CP
8.6	P: Here the location is mall/	
8.7	P: so, I think selling maybe/	

P2 failed to obtain the correct meaning of the idiom as the participant was merely focusing on a certain aspect of the idiom "cooking". People usually relate cooking with kitchen. Similarly P2 associated the common activity at the "mall" with shopping. P2 gives the meaning of *what's cooking* as what's selling in the mall, which obviously is a wrong answer. In other words, participants do make use of the context when they have no confidence of gaining insights of obtaining the answer.

From Table 4.6 (p.55), it can be concluded that there were twelve (12) instances of CP strategy used by participants in the TAP. Fifty eight percent (58%) found the CP strategy helpful. CP strategy is basically to search for clues from the idiom, thus, CP strategy is based on the premise that participants are able to analyse the idiom from the perspective of structure, vocabulary and literal meaning of the idiom. In other words, to apply the CP strategy, participants are required to have the ability to relate the idiom to the background knowledge in order to gain clues which can help participants interpret English idioms.

4.2.4.2.6. Using a mental image to figure out the meaning of the idiom (MI 1%)

MI Strategy allows participants to use a mental image to figure out the figurative meaning of an idiom. For example, P2 and P3 construct the mental image of the idioms to help them understand the idiom.

Table 4.26 Excerpt showing MI strategy used by P2's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom11. If you procrastinate, you will find yourself up the creek without a paddle. What does *up the creek without a paddle* mean?	
P2's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
11.3 P: This one you can imagine if you creek a boat without a paddle/	MI
11.4 P: This means you cannot move/	

P2 imagines he is the person in the context and asks himself "if you creek a boat without a paddle, "what am I going to do? Or what is the situation I am faced with?" P2 constructs the mental image; and from there, he figures out the answer which is he is unable to move.

Based on L11.3, it is evident that P2 understood the meaning of *creek a boat without a paddle*, where P2 explains it with the answer "cannot move". Yet, "cannot move" is not the correct answer to the idiom. He only explained the situation if people creek a boat without a paddle, which is cannot move, but he missed the key word "procrastinate". The context basically is that if you procrastinate, you will end up with a problem. Thus, P2 would have obtained the correct answer if he had extended to think about "cannot move". The main reason P2 did not successfully attain the answer is due to his lack of imagination and he does not progress to use the context to his benefits.

Table 4.27 Excerpt showing MI strategy used by P3's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom19. To some people, a thousand dollars is chicken feed. What does *chicken feed* mean?

	P3's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
19.3	R: why? /	
19.4	P: only a few money for them /	
19.5	P: because when I saw the word chicken feed/	
19.6	P: The first image in my mind is chicken's mouth/	MI
19.7	P: Chicken's mouth actually is very small/	

P3 successfully understood the meaning of the idiom based on MI strategy. P3 uses "the image of a *chicken's mouth* very small" as a clue to figure out the figurative meaning of chicken feed. It is rather clear how P3 used "the image of a *chicken's mouth* is very small" as a breakthrough to deduce the correct answer. Thus, participants made use of MI strategy as a point of penetration in the process of interpreting English idioms.

From Table 4.6 (p.55), it can be concluded that there were two (2) instances when MI strategy was used by participants in the Think-Aloud protocol. MI strategy is used by creating a mental image to understand the underlying meaning of the idiom. MI strategy is based on the premise that participants are able to understand the definition and come up with a mental image. In other words, the MI strategy requires participants to have background knowledge of a mental image and then to apply the MI strategy to figure out the meaning of the idiom. However, the result shows that only two (2) MI strategies were used, which may states that PRC EFL students' lack of ability to create a mental image.

4.2.4.2.7. Comprehending the figurative meaning of the idiom through conceptual metaphor (CM 1%)

A conceptual metaphor can be considered as a theoretical basis for understanding English idioms correctly (Chen，2012, p.12) A conceptual metaphor emphasises the metaphor as a dominating tool in our cognitive apparatus (Zeng, 2008, p. 2). Participant 15 deduced that the target domain is a candle and resource domain is people (See Figure 4.3 & Table 4.28).
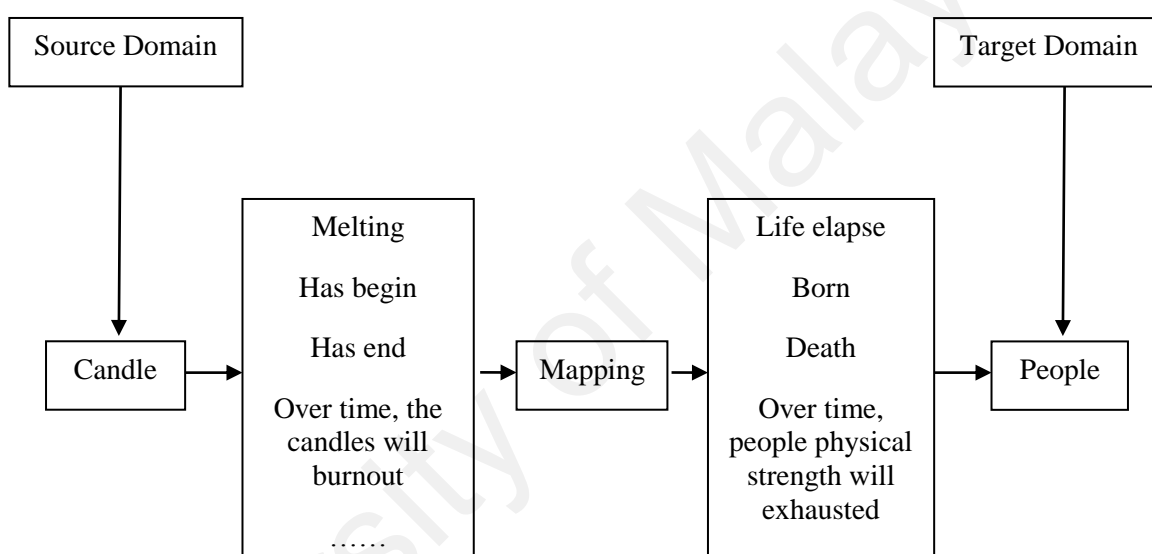

Figure 4.3 The conceptual metaphor mapping of "Candle is a people" (following Lakoff, 1987)

Table 4.28 Excerpt showing CM strategy used by P5's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom6. Pam needed a vacation because she was suffering from burnout. What does *suffering from burnout* mean?

	P5's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
6.3	P: from burnout, burnout I can relate it to candle/	CM
6.4	P: Then you can burning the candle/	
6.5	P: So the burnout means you use out or exhausted/	

Chinese people do use the word "candle" as a metaphor to describe people who are sacrificial in nature, akin to a "candle" burning itself to light other people. Due to the same nature of people and candle, thus, Chinese people always use the Chinese

character 烛 (zhú = candle) to describe people's lives. The examples are as mentioned below:

- 风烛之年 (fēng zhú zhī nián) refer to old people who are close to death.
- 风烛残年(fēng zhú cán nián) means people who are old, where life could end at any time.
- 风中之烛 (fēng zhōng zhī zhú, candle in the wind) is similar with 风烛残年(fēng zhú cán nián).
- 烛尽光穷(zhú jìn guāng qióng) expresses once dead, the consciousness also fades away.

Thus, Chinese people usually are familiar with the connection between people and candle. In this research; only one percent (1%) of the participants used the notion of a conceptual metaphor to figure out the meaning of the idiom, which indicates that PRC EFL participants lack the awareness of employing conceptual metaphors in deducing answers in relation to idioms.

Table 4.6 (p.55) illustrates that a total of two (2) CM strategies were used in Think-Aloud by participants. Based on the frequency of use and success rate, it can be seen that, conceptual metaphor was not an important strategy employed in comprehending the English idioms for PRC EFL learners. On the other hand, CI strategy which is based on context played an important role for PRC EFL learners.

There are a few reasons why participants used fewer CM strategies to comprehend English idioms. First, CM strategy is used as a conceptual metaphor to investigate the meaning of idioms on the premise that participants are able to understand the definition,

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function and rationale of conceptual metaphor. In other words, CM strategy requires participants to have the background knowledge of conceptual metaphor and then use CM strategy to figure out the meaning of idiom. CM strategy is usually employed by native speakers. Unfortunately PRC EFL students do not have that level of English proficiency to start off and therefore that is the primary reason why PRC EFL seldom use CM strategy to comprehend idioms. Participants prefer to use the CI strategy, since the CI strategy uses context which is already provided to comprehend the English idioms.

Thus, it can be concluded that PRC EFL learners unfortunately lack native speaker proficiency level, and to compound it, they lack the knowledge of conceptual metaphor. Context plays a significant role in comprehending the English idioms.

4.2.4.2.8. Other strategies, such as using personalised discussion or comment (OS 5%)

OS Strategy means that participants interpret the English idiom using personalised discussion or a personal comment, which is similar to whispering to themselves. There are two (2) types of OS strategy that were found in the data collected.

Table 4.29 Excerpt showing OS strategy used by P5's Think-Aloud Protocol

Idiom16. The researcher had to roll up his sleeves to get the proposal in on time. What does *to roll up his sleeves* mean?

	P5's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
16.5	P: So, from the , from the message of the context /	OS
16.6	P: Roll up his sleeves means he need to he need to /	OS

The first type is when the participant encounters the idiom for the first time. There are two (2) situations which can occur arising from this. The first one is a participant cannot recall any information in his/her brain to interpret the meaning of the idiom. In this case, the participant needs to say anything, even ideas which are not relevant, in order to gain more time to retrieve the information in the brain. Another situation is when the participant's brain is extremely active but he/she is not able to select any useful information about the idiom at that particular time. This explains why P5 spoke in incomplete sentences in the think-aloud Protocol.

Table 4.30 Excerpt showing OS strategy used by P1 and P2's Think-Aloud Protocol

	P1 and P2's Think-Aloud Protocol	Coding
P1 L13.4	P: I know the sentence vocabulary	OS
P1 L15.10	P: I guess, decided, decided I know	OS
P1 L16.17	P: But I know the research, proposal, in on time	OS
P1 L16.21	P: sorry	OS
P2 L9.7	P: I know the vocabulary, I cannot collect it together	OS

Note: P=Participant
    P1L13.4=Participant 1, Idiom No.13, Line4
    P2L9.7 = Participant 2, Idiom No.9, Line7

The second type was when the participant explained the reason why he cannot interpret the answer to the idiom. This OS strategy differed from the RI strategy in that RI strategy requests information about the idiom or context, while in the OS Strategy, personal discussion or comments are given. The purpose of using RI strategy is to figure out the meaning of the idiom. However, the purpose of using OS strategy in this case was to explain why the participant could not arrive at the answer. The symbolic answer of RI strategy includes "I don't know" while, the typical answer of OS strategy was "I know…"and "Sorry".

As seen from Table 4.6 (p.55), a total of eighteen (18) OS strategies is used in the Think-Aloud by participants. It can be concluded that twenty eight percent (28%) OS strategy used by the participants was helpful. OS strategy is used by participants to interpret the English idiom using personalised discussion or a personal comment. The OS strategy does not contribute much in figuring out the correct meaning of the idiom. In the Think-Aloud protocol pursuit, participants speak out their thinking process when they interpret the English idiom that is using personalised discussion or a personal comment any which seem inevitable. It also proves that the data of Think-Aloud is raw data. Even though OS strategy obtained the lowest correct rate (0%) among the successful strategies, OS strategy is highly necessary and unavoidable in many situations.

4.2.5 Comparison in the use of preparatory and guessing strategies by high and low proficiency group

Two main strategies were used in this study, which are preparatory and guessing strategies. The preparatory strategies comprises three (3) strategies which are repeating and paraphrasing (RP strategy), discussing and analysing (DA strategy) and requesting information about the idiom or context (RI strategy).

On the other hand, the guessing strategies comprise eight (8) strategies which are participants guess the meaning of idiom based on the context (CI Strategy), the literal meaning of the idiom (LM Strategy), by referring to the L1 idiom (L1 Strategy), the background knowledge (BK Strategy), searching for clues from the idiom (CP Strategy), the mental image (MI Strategy), conceptual metaphor (CM Strategy) and other strategies (OS Strategy).

Based on Table 4.6, the frequency of these two strategies (preparatory and guessing strategies) occurred 373 times in the Think-Aloud protocol. The strategies used by participants in the high and low vocabulary proficiency groups would be compared and discussed in this section.
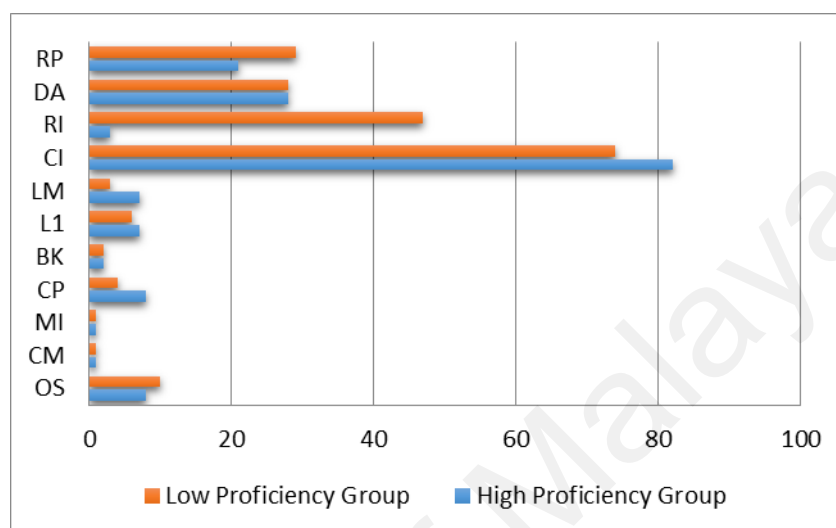

Figure 4.4 Comparison of Strategies used by High and Low Proficiency Group

Figure 4.4 indicates the frequency of strategies used by high and low proficiency groups. It can be seen that frequency of strategies used in the low proficiency group was higher (205 times) than in the high proficiency group (168 times). For the preparatory strategy, the frequency of strategies used by the low proficiency group was higher than the high proficiency group. The frequency of guessing strategies by participants in the low proficiency group was lower than participants in the high proficiency group except for OS strategy.

Both groups used CI, DA and RP more than the rest of the strategies. This was followed by OS, L1, CP and LM strategies. BK, CM and MI were least used in the Think-Aloud by participants in the two groups.
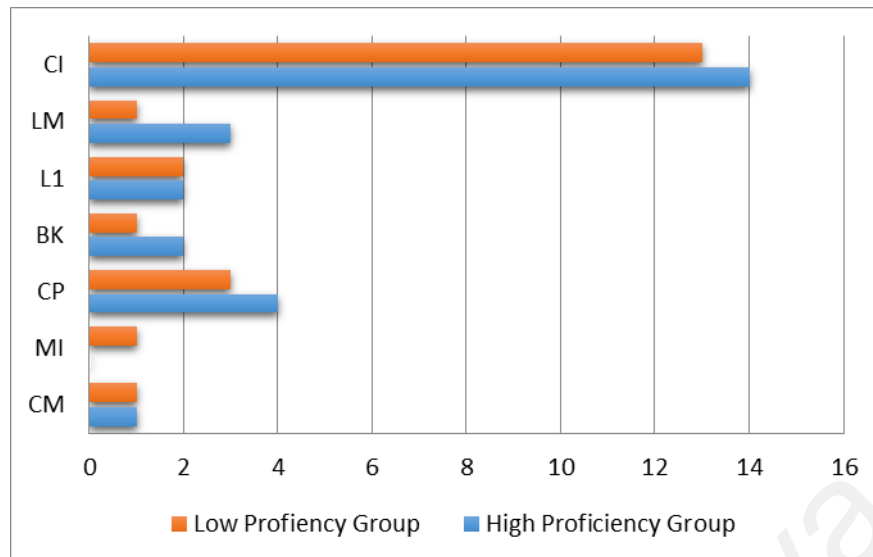
Figure 4.5 Successful Strategies used between High Proficiency Group and Low

Proficiency Group

Figure 4.5 indicates the successful strategies used by high and low proficiency groups. Out of 373 occurrence used in the Think-Aloud protocol, there were 48 number of occurrences used successfully. The frequency of successful strategies used by participants in the low proficiency group (22 times) is lower than the high proficiency group (26 times). However, there is an obvious difference in terms of frequency of successful strategies used in two groups

Based on Figure 4.5, it is evident that the success rate of the low proficiency group (10.7%) is lower than the high proficiency group (15.4%).

There are a few reasons to justify the results. First, the success rates of two groups were not that high, even among the high proficiency group. This could be because of their limited vocabulary that affects their comprehension of English idiom as well as various

other possible factors. They may be afraid to guessing the meaning or they may not have seen the idiom before, or they may not learning comprehension it with idiom in their L1.

The participants in the low proficiency group used more RI strategy and OS strategy than those in the high proficiency group. Vocabulary is a big challenge for participants in the low proficiency group. They requested for more information from the context and more personalised discussion to gain insights of the meaning of vocabulary items before comprehending the meaning of these idioms. Participants in the low proficiency group took a longer time than participants in the high proficiency group in comprehending each idiom during the Think-Aloud protocol.

Moreover, CI strategy was the most frequent and most successful strategy for both groups. It was apparent that context play an important role for both low or high proficiency groups. Participants could use context to help comprehend the unknown English idioms.

MI and CM strategies were the least used in the two groups as both these strategies require participants to master the knowledge of a mental image and conceptual metaphor. It is apparent that PRC EFL learners lacked the ability to create a mental image and to employ conceptual metaphor in comprehending idioms. This is also because MI and CM strategies are usually employed by native speakers while PRC EFL learners in this study have yet to attain that level of English proficiency.

Finally, according to the data of successful strategies used in the Think-Aloud protocol, there are two models of successful strategies used in Think-Aloud, summarised as follow:

Table 4.31 The First Model of successful strategies used in Think-Aloud

MODEL 1	Guessing strategy + Guessing strategy
Formula 1	CI+BK
Formula 2	CI+CP
Formula 3	CI+CI
Formula 4	CI+L1

From the total of forty eight (48) successful occurrences used in Think-Aloud protocol, twenty two point nine percent (22.9%) includes the "guessing strategy + guessing strategy" model to comprehend the idiom successfully. Thus, PRC EFL learners used context combined with the background knowledge or used context combined with the clues from idiom or L1 idiom to help them deduce the correct meaning of unknown English idioms.

Table 4.32 The Second Model of successful strategies used in Think-Aloud

MODEL 2	Preparatory strategy + Guessing strategy
Formula 1	DA+CI
Formula 2	DA+RP+CI
Formula 3	RP+CI
Formula 4	RP+LM+CI
Formula 5	RP+L1+CI
Formula 6	DA+CP+CI

Table 4.32 also shows that seventy seven point one percent (77.1%) occurrence were successfully used when participants used the model of "preparatory strategy + guessing strategy" to comprehend the idioms successfully. Thus, PRC EFL learners would use repetition (RP strategy), discussion (DA strategy) combined with the context (CI strategy), background knowledge (BK strategy), and the clue from idiom (CP strategy), L1 idiom (L1) as well as the literal meaning of idiom (LM strategy) to help participants get the correct meaning of unknown English idioms.

4.3 The Relationship between VLT and IRT

There are three sub sections involved in this section. First, the overall relationship between the results obtained from VLT and IRT is discussed, followed by the relationship between the result obtained from VLT and IRT in the low vocabulary proficiency level group. Finally, the relationship gained from the result obtained from VLT and IRT in the high vocabulary proficiency level group will be discussed.

4.3.1 The Overall Relationship of VLT and IRT

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was configured to assess the relationship between the VLT and the IRT result. There was a positive correlation between VLT and IRT (r =0 .642, n =45, p = 0.000). A scatter plot summarises the result (Figure 4.6). Increase in vocabulary level of PRC EFL learners was correlated with increase in the level of interpreted English idiom. The effective size is large. This means that almost all of the participants' vocabulary level affects their comprehension of idioms.
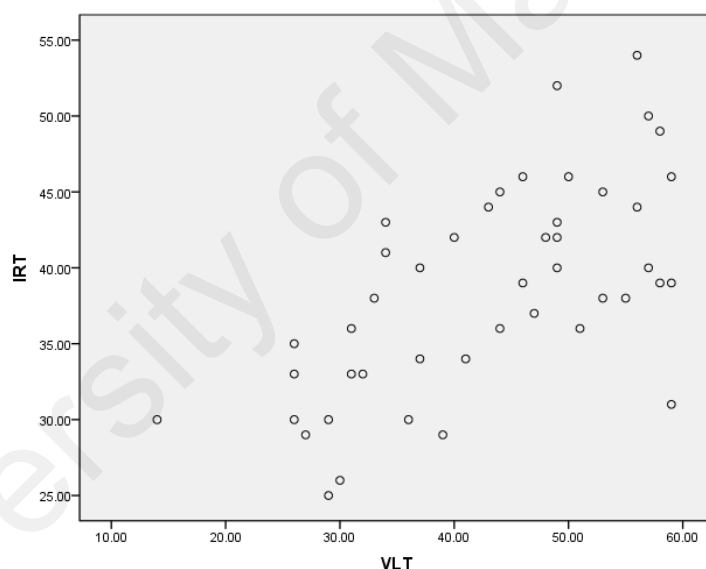
Figure 4.6 Scatter Plot graph of overall relationship of VLT and IRT.

4.3.2 The Relationship of VLT and IRT in Low Proficiency Group

There was a moderate positive correlation between VLT and IRT in low vocabulary proficiency group (r =0 .498, n =21, p = 0.011). Figure 4.7 shows that increase in English vocabulary level of PRC EFL students which was moderate correlated with

increase in their comprehension level of interpreting English idioms. The effective size is large as well.
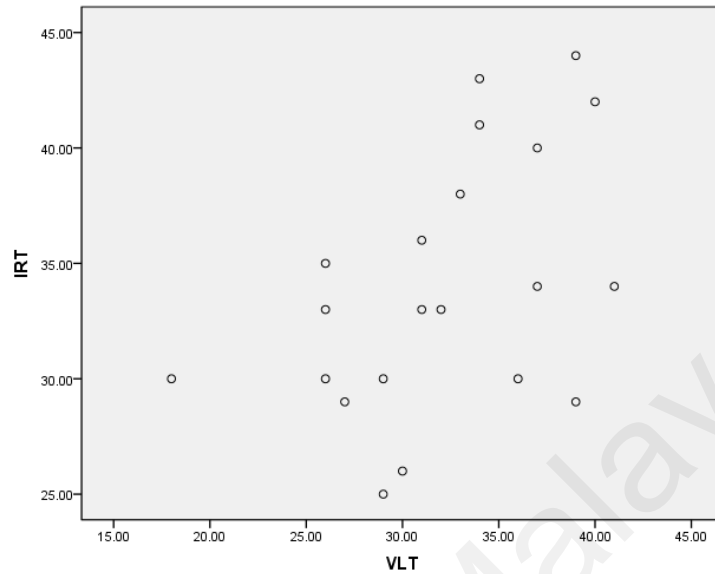
Figure 4.7. Scatter plot graph of relationship of VLT and IRT in low vocabulary

proficiency group

4.3.3 The Relationship of VLT and IRT in High Proficiency Group

Figure 4.8 summarises the result of the relationship between VLT and IRT in high vocabulary proficiency group. There was a rather weak correlation between VLT and IRT in high vocabulary proficiency group (r =0.061, n =24, p = 0.389) which could be due to vocabulary not being challenging enough for participants in the high vocabulary proficiency group.
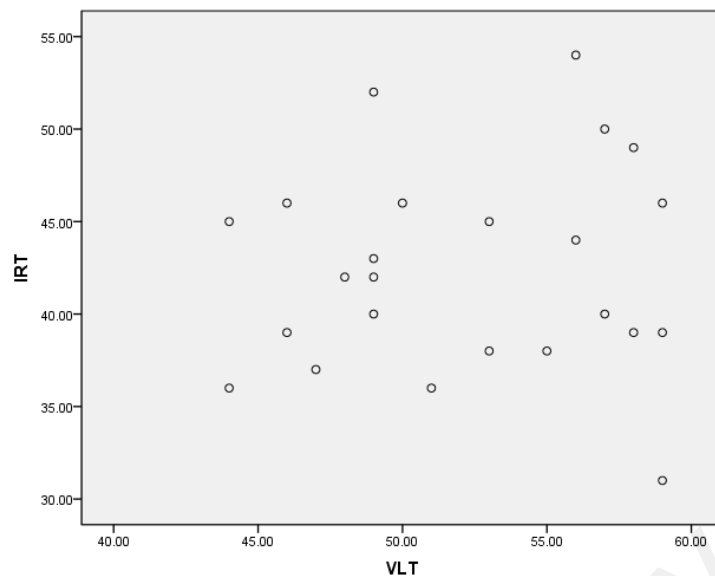
Figure 4.8. Scatter plot graph of relationship of VLT and IRT in high vocabulary

proficiency group

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the findings of a mixed method research. The results are presented in three sections. In the first section, the descriptive statistics revealed the results of VLT and IRT. In the second section, idiom comprehension strategies were described and statistical analyses were performed. There were eleven (11) strategies used in Think-Aloud protocol. Preparatory strategies played an important role to assist guessing strategies to obtain the correct meaning of idioms. In the third section, the Pearson correlation test showed that there was a significant correlation between VLT and IRT. Increase in vocabulary level of PRC EFL students was correlated with increase in the level of interpreted English idioms. The following chapter summarises the main findings of the study and discusses the implications of these findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the findings of the study were analysed and discussed. This chapter summarises the main finding and provides an overview and discussion of the main findings of the study for each research question as well as identifies the implications of the study. Suggestions for further study are also put forth.

5.1 Major Findings

There are two (2) research questions involved in this study. The data collected in this research were analysed to answer two research questions which were posed in Chapter one.

Six (6) participants were randomly chosen to complete the Think Aloud Protocol tasks so as to answer the following first research question:

- What are the strategies used when Chinese EFL learners comprehend English idioms?

There were in total eleven (11) types of strategies identified from the Think-Aloud transcription. The order of the frequency of strategies used by the participants are ranked CI strategy (28%) , DA strategy (23%), RP strategy (18%),CP strategy (8%),

OS strategy (6%), BK strategy (5%), L1 strategy (4.7%), LM strategy(3.9%), RI strategy (2%), CM strategy (1%), MI strategy (1%). Three (3) strategies, which are CI, DA and RP strategies, were the most frequently employed by the participants, which occupy sixty nine percent (69%) of all the strategy trials. Strategies that helped participants get correct answers can be categorised as successful strategies. Usually a few strategies were used in the process of comprehension of correct answers. Although in many cases the participants used more than one strategy to succeed, only the ones that led directly to the correct response was included in this count. In this situation, RP strategy, DA strategy, RI strategy as well as OS strategy cannot be categorised as successful strategies.

There are 7 strategies that were used successfully: CI strategy, CP strategy, BK strategy, LM strategy, L1 strategy, MI strategy and CM strategy. CI strategy was used most successfully (47.9 percent). The second most successful strategies were CP strategy and BK strategy at 14 percent respectively. They are followed closely by LM strategy (10 percent) and L1 strategy (8 percent) while the last two strategies, MI strategy and CM strategy make up two (2) percent respectively of the successfully used strategies.

Eleven (11) types of strategies were found in the Think-Aloud protocol which are in tandem with Liu's (2010) study, which were used to develop Cooper's (1999) 8 strategies. Cooper (1999) believed L2 learners used the heuristic approach in comprehending English idioms. In this study, a few strategies were used to comprehend English idioms which support Cooper's (1999) heuristic approach.

In this study, the high proficiency learners employed fewer strategies than the low proficiency learners. That is opposite to Liu's (2010) results. In Liu's research, participants in high proficiency group applied more strategies than those in lower proficiency group.

This study was based on Cooper's (1999) and Liu's (2010) study. Eleven (11) types of strategies were found, and further definition, usage, function of each strategy with examples were provided in this research. Although Conceptual metaphor as a theoretical framework does not contribute a lot towards helping participants comprehend the English idioms, it is a starting point in terms of the knowledge of conceptual metaphor for PRC EFL learners.

- How does the English vocabulary knowledge level of PRC EFL learners correlate with their understanding of English idioms?

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was done to figure out the relationship between the English vocabulary knowledge level of PRC EFL students and their understanding of English idioms. There was a positive correlation between VLT and IRT ($r = 0.642$, $n = 45$, $p = 0.000$). There was a moderate positive correlation between VLT and IRT in low proficiency group ($r = 0.498$, $n = 21$, $p = 0.011$). There was a very weak correlation between VLT and IRT in high proficiency group ($r = 0.061$, $n = 24$, $p = 0.389$). In high proficiency groups, the participants' English vocabulary knowledge level did not lead to any changes in their scores of IRT.

5.2   Suggestions for future research

Based on the results of the relationship between the English vocabulary knowledge level of PRC EFL students and their understanding of English idioms and Think-Aloud protocol tasks, the following are suggested for future research:

Participants were divided into high and low proficiency group based on the results of VLT in this study. The findings show that there was a positive correlation between participants' English vocabulary proficiency level and their comprehension of English idioms. Thus developing ways to improve PRC EFL learners' English vocabulary level would help them improve their comprehension of English idioms. There is an intense need to improve EFL or ESL vocabulary size or how to use English vocabulary in order to improve participants' comprehension proficiency level of English idioms which ought to be looked into for the purpose of future research undertakings.

As this study only focused on two main factors which are English vocabulary proficiency level and participants' comprehension of English idioms, exploration of the idiom comprehension strategies of foreign language learner at different ages and at different levels of proficiency can be carried out in the future.

As mentioned earlier, the study only focuses on two main factors; participants' age, faculty, and other idiom types were all ignored in this study. Further research could focus on the comprehension of English idioms using different variables, for instance participants' age, gender, cultural and idiom types as well as idioms employed in jokes.

The participants of this study are PRC EFL learners. Comparing the English idiom comprehensions utilised by L2 learners and L1 learners will be a good alternative to find out ways to help EFL or ESL learners employ other useful strategies in comprehending English idioms.

5.3   Conclusions

This cross-language, mixed methods research has two aims. The first aim of this study was to ascertain useful strategies employed by EFL Chinese students in interpreting English idioms. The second aim was to check whether the English vocabulary knowledge level would help the subjects to understand English idioms. The significance of this study can be identified from three aspects. Firstly, the researcher aspires for the findings of this study to be a guide for EFL teachers and students on how to learn and teach English idioms. Secondly, the researcher plans to examine if participants' vocabulary level would affect their understanding of English idioms or not. The most important contribution of this study is to fill the gap in the literature.

This major finding of the study showed that when participants had a higher level of English vocabulary knowledge, there was a corresponding high level of comprehension of idioms as well. Thus, English vocabulary is an essential condition to comprehend English idioms. Another meaningful finding of this study is discovering the eleven (11) types of strategies used by PRC EFL learners. The knowledge of these strategies would help EFL teachers to teach students to comprehend English idioms easily. Hopefully, this study would benefit ESL teachers, learners and researchers as well as EFL teachers, learners and researchers.

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Vocabulary Level Test

Example:

1. uncle	__6____ part of a house
2. school	___4___ animal with four legs
3. rise	___2___ place for study
4. monkey	
5. gloss	
6. wall	

1. improve
2. relax
3. shelter
4. justice
5. scholar
6. champion

___4____ fairness; rightfulness
____6___ the winner of a contest
__3_____ place that give cover or protection

1. atmosphere
2. concert
3. focus
4. gain
5. construction
6. romance

__5_____ the process of building
___1____ an environment; a mood
___4____ to get; to earn

1. background
2. respond
3. legal
   lawyers
4. patience
5. upset
6. support

___6____ to provide for
__2_____ answer; reply
____3___ having to do with the law or with

1. remind
2. inquiry
3. exhibit
4. community
5. plentiful
6. explore

___5____more than enough; abundant
___2____question
___6____study or examine

1. nervous
2. accompany
3. benefit
4. bruise
5. career
6. brilliant

___5____ occupation; work
____1___ uneasy; uncomfortable
___2____ to go along with

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1. appealing   ____2__ not kind; brutal
2. cruel   __1_____ likeable; pleasing
3. attention   ___4____ to go down
4. descend
5. disappointing
6. concept

1. detailed   ____5___ finally; in the end
2. females   ___4____ to gain possession of; get
3. imaginary   ___2____ girls; women
4. obtain
5. eventually
6. ironic

1. mumble   ____6___ staying alive; existing
2. precious   ___2____ having great value
3. comedian   __4_____ beautifully and smoothly
4. gracefully
5. poverty
6. survival

1. attractive   ____6___ to live or dwell in
2. fatigued   ____1___ pleasing; pleasurable
3. instinct   ____3___ a natural ability or talent
4. dedicated
5. modestly
6. inhabit

1. complicated   _____1__ difficult; tangled
2. disgusting   ___5____ deserted; left behind
3. majority   ____3__ the greater number or part; more than
4. fabulous   half
5. abandoned
6. extremely

1. allowance   __5____ clear; can be seen through
2. curious   ___3___ surprising
3. startling   ___2___ eager to know
4. version
5. transparent
6. privileged

1. victim   ___5___ often
2. original   ___1___ person or animal killed, injured, or
3. requiremade to suffer
4. resistance   ____4__ opposition to something or
   someone
5. frequently
6. humorous

1. obligation   ____5__ sudden
2. investigate   ____1__ having doubts; not willing to
   believe
3. prejudice   ____2__ to study; to look into carefully
4. skeptical
5. abrupt
6. circumstance

1. humid   ___4___ full of energy; vigorous
2. permanent   ____1__ complicated; intricate
3. dynamic   __2____ lasting; continuing
4. frantic
5. elaborate
6. souvenir

1. ignorance   ____6__ to disappear
2. mission   ____4__ the cruel use of power
3. orchestra   _____5_ eye catching; very unusual
4. tyranny
5. spectacular
6. vanish

1. resemble
2. segregation
3. banish
4. enthusiastic
5. authority
6. erupt

____4___ eagerly interested
_____1__ look like; be similar in appearance
____6___ to explode; to burst forth

1. impressive
2. potential
3. sculpture
4. conflict
5. aggressive
6. diligent

____5___ showing energy, ambition, and
                confidence
___2____ possible
___3____ carved or molded artwork

1. haunting
2. phenomenon
3. magnificent
easily
4. controversy
5. adequate
6. exquisite

____5___ just enough
____4___ cause of disagreement or argument
____1___ remaining in one's memory; not
                forgotten

1. mourn
2. recovery
3. ample
4. fantasy
5. neglect
6. superb

___6____ excellent
____2___ a return to normal
____3___ full or enough; plenty of something

1. verdict
2. tuition
3. vaccine
4. torment
5. immune
6. encounter

___6____ to meet face to face
_____5__ protected from something, usually a
                disease
____2___ money paid to go to a school

Idiom Recognition Test

1. Mr. Carson works as a teacher all day and works in a factory at night. His wife says he is burning the candle at both ends. What does it mean to be *burning the candle at both ends*?

    It means work long hours without rest.

2. The salesman sold Mrs. Smith a broken dishwasher. He pulled the wool over her eyes. What does it mean to *pull the wool over someone's eyes*?

    It means to deceive someone in order to prevent them from discovering something.

3. Billy often gets into fights with other kids at school. His mother says he has a chip on his shoulder. What does it mean to *have a chip on one's shoulder*?

    It means to be unhappy all the time because he/she thinks themself have been treated unfairly.

4. Mother wants to buy a new house in the country. Father sees eye to eye with her. What does it mean *to see eye to eye*?

    It means they agree with each other.

5. Because Betsy cannot keep a secret, other people call her a big mouth. What does *big mouth* mean?

    It means he/she could not keep secrets well.

6. Pam needed a vacation because she was suffering from burnout. What does *suffering from burnout* mean?

    It means his/her energy almost runs out.

7. After coming back from her interview, Stacey knew she had the job in the bag. What does *in the bag* mean?

It means that people are certain to get it.

8. After dinner, John would go over to the mall to see what's cooking. What does *What's cooking?* Mean?

   It means to check out what is happening.

9. People say that Jennifer can keep any plant alive with her green thumb. What does *green thumb* mean?

   The ability to make plants grow.

10. Robert knew that he was robbing the cradle by dating a sixteen-year-old girl. What does *robbing the cradle* mean?

    It refers to a situation in which an older individual seduces a much younger one

11. If you procrastinate, you will find yourself up the creek without a paddle. What does *up the creek without a paddle* mean?

    It means in a difficult position.

12. By mistake, Kay let the cat out of the bag when she revealed the surprise. What does *to let the cat out of the bag* mean?

    To allow a secret to be known.

13. Many small businesses can be successful once they get off the ground. What does *get off the ground* mean?

    The thing starts or succeeds.

14. After getting laid off from the pen factory, George had to tighten his belt. What does *tighten his belt* mean?

    To spend less money than before.

15. We decided that Molly was a bad worker and that she would have to get sacked. What does *to get sacked* mean?

 To remove someone from a job.

16. The researcher had to roll up his sleeves to get the proposal in on time. What does *to roll up his sleeves* mean?

To prepare to work hard.

17. Depressed people should look at the world through rose-coloured glasses. What does to through rose-coloured glasses mean?

To take positive attitude to face bad things.

18. Looking up at the sky can make you feel like a little frog in a big pond. What does *a little frog in a big pond* mean?

An unimportant individual in a large organization

19. To some people, a thousand dollars is chicken feed. What does *chicken feed* mean?

A small amount of money.

20. Mentioning the abortion issue just stirred up a hornet's nest. What does *to stir up a hornet's nest* mean?

To make a big trouble.

Transcription of Think Aloud Protocol

P1 Transcription

R: Idiom recognition test number one

P: Mr. Carson works as a teacher all day and works in a factory at night. /

His wife says he is burning the candle at both ends. What does it mean to be buring the candle at both ends? /

I think his wife says he is buring the candle at both ends means he always work

Because he works as a teacher all day and works in a factory at night/

He has two works as in his life

So he was very busy

I think I think burns the candle as both ends means she works very hard in his life /

Yes

Okay, thank you , please write your answer

R: Number two

P: The salesman sold Mrs. Smith a broken dishwasher. /

He pulled the wool over her eyes. /

What does it mean to pool the wool over someone's eyes? /

I think the salesman sold Mrs. Smith a broken dishwasher/

It is a bad things

The salesman is not good

So he pool the wool over over her eyes means he cheat Mr. Smith /

So pool the wool over someone eyes means cheat

R: okay , thank you please write your answer

P: 可以吗？ （is it okay?）

R:Number three

P: Billy often gets into fights with other kids at school.

He mother says he has a chip on his shoulder.

What does it mean to have a chip on one's shoulder ?

I think Billy often gets into fights with other kids at school

I know this sentence means

But his mother says he has a chip on his shoulder

I don't know chip, eh, and shoulder

So I don't know this sentence means

Sorry

R:, okay, thank you

R: Number four

P: Mother wants to buy a new house in a country.

Father sees eye to eye with her.

I guess father agree with mother

Because mother want to buy a new house in the country,

It is a big things for her family

So father sees eye to eye with her

I think father agree with with with mother

So I guess agree

R: okay,

R: Number five

P: Because Betsy cannot keep a secret, other people call her a big mouth.

OH, in Chinese 大嘴巴 da zui ba

Means can't keep secret ,and always talk about other people

R: okay Thank you

R: Number six

P: Pam needed a vacation

Sorry, I don't know this vocabulary

because she was suffering for burnout

What does Suffering from burnout mean?

Sorry many vocabulary I don't know

So I don't know what 's means

I can't guess any more

R: oh, okay thank you

Number seven

P: After coming back from his her interview, Stacey knew she had a job in the bag.

What does in the bag means

I think after coming from her interview

Interview means company

After after coming back from her interview

Stacey knew she had had the job

means the job in his hand

in the bag means he already have had this job

R: okay

Thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number eight

P: After dinner, John would go over the mall to see what's cooking?

What does what's cooking means /RP

I guess what's cooking means sell something for somebody

Because after dinner means dinner finish

John would go over to the mall to see what's cooking

Maybe he want to buy something

Like this

Sorry, I don't know what means

R: oh, okay, thank you

En, Please write your answer

R: Number nine

P: People say that Jennifer can keep any plant alive with her green th green thumb.

What does Green thumb mean

Sorry, I don't know the vocabulary green thumb means so

I don't know what's meaning

R okay

Thank you

Number ten

P: Robert knew that he was robbing the cradle by dating a sixteen-years-old girl

What does robbing the cradle mean?

Sorry, I don't know robbing or candle

R cradle

P cradle vocabulary

I don't know means

So I can't guess the means

R: okay, okay thank you

Number eleven

P：If you procrastinate, you will find yourself up the creek without the paddle

What does up the creek without paddle means?

Sorry, I don't know thre three vocabularies word vocabulary in this sentence

So I don't know means

R: okay, okay, what which one you don't know ?

P： procrastinate

R: OH, procrastinate

P: YES

And creek

R: oh creek,

P and paddle

R: paddle I see I see

P: sorry

R so you can not guess the meaning, right?

P: yes

R: I see okay thank you

R: Number twelve

P: by mistake, Kay let the cat out of the bag when she revealed the surprise

What does to let the cat out of the bag means ?

Eh, Sorry veiled revealed I don't know means

R: oh you don't know the meaning of revealed

P: yeah, revealed, I don't know means

R: I see

P: by the mistake Kay let the cat out of the bag when she

Sorry, I don't know the sentence means

R: Okay, thank you,

R: next one Number thirteen

P: Many smell businesses businesses can be successful once they get off the ground

What does get off the ground means?

I know the sentence vocabulary,

R: You know the vocabulary of this idiom

P: yeah, yeah,

Many small business can be successful once they got off the ground

I think got off the ground means many many

Sorry I don't know

I don't know how to say

R: you can speak Chinese

P:many eh 有很多机会 （got many opportunities）

R: oh, you mean many small business can be successful because they have many chances

P: yeah, yeah, yeah

R: many opportunities

P: yeah, yeah, like this

R: oh, okay, I see

How do you know ?

P: because many small business can be successful I know this sentence means

R: eh,

P: so I think

R: oh, you guess the meaning?

P: yeah, I guess this is

R: because you guess

P： because I know many small business can be successful

I know this sentence means

But after that, I just guess

R: oh, I see, I see

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number fourteen

P: After getting laid off for the pen factory, George had to tighten his belt

What does tighten his belt mean?

Sorry, many vocabulary I don't know meaning

For example George

R: George

P tighten

R tighten

P belt

R belt

P: I don't know this means

R: oh, okay,

P: Sorry

R: thank you

R: Okay, Number fifteen

P: We decided that Molly was a bad worker and they and that she would have to get shocked/RP

Oh, sorry, I also don't know shocked

R: sacked

P: sacked means

So, I don't know this sentence means

R: oh, okay,

You guess

Can you guess ?

P: I guess

Decided , decided I know

But maybe , maybe Molly don't want to this job

Don't want to

Molly was a bad worker

I know means, but she would have to get shocked

R: oh, you don't know

P: yeah, yeah, shock I don't know

So this sentence I don't know

R: okay , Thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number sixteen

P: The re

R: researcher

P: researcher had to roll up his sleeves

R: sleeves

P: to get the proposal

R: proposal

P: in on time

What does to roll up his sleeves mean?

First vocabulary, I don't know means

R: oh, researcher, you don't know

P: yes, researcher means student?

R: yeah, student , they doing some research

P:oh, yeah, yeah, yeah I know

But have to roll roll roll up , roll up I don't know

So to roll up his sleeves I don't know means

But I know the research, proposal, in on time

Maybe he need to finish his homework like this

Must be on time

R: eh

P: sorry

R: okay,

R: Number seventeen

P: Depressed Depressed people should look at the world through rose-colored glasses.

 what does to through rose-colored glasses mean?

I guess this means rose colored ,through rose-colored means a beautiful vase (view)/

R: sorry?

Ｐ sorry, I don't know about the sentence

R: oh, okay, okay, thank you

R: Number eighteen

P: Looking up at the sky can make you feel like a little frog

R: pond, oh , oh sorry, frog

P a little frog in a big pond.

R: yeah

P:What does a little frog in a big pond oh, mean?

P: in Chinese , jing di zhi wa 井底之蛙

R：OH

P：like you are very small in in in pond

R: oh, okay

P: you you are very small in a sea

R: oh

P: in Chinese 感觉自己很渺小

R：oh

P: feel like you are very small

R: I see I see

P: yeah,

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

Number nineteen

P: To some people, a thousand dollars is chicken feed.

What does chicken feed mean?

To some people a thousand dollar

A thousand dollar is chicken feed

Oh chicken feed feed

Oh, I guess I just guess chicken feed means a little

To some people think think a thousand dollar is is a a little not more or many

So some people don't care this

So I think chicken feed means a little, people don't care

R: okay, I see I see, thank you

please write your answer

R: Number twenty

P: Mentioning Mentioning？

R：oh Mentioning

P: Mentioning the

R: abortion

P abortion

R issue

P: issue sorry, Mentioning the abortion issue just stirred up a hornet's nest.

What does to stirred up a hornet's nest mean?

Sorry, many vocabulary word many vocabulary I don't know

So I can't guess

R: oh, okay

P: sorry

R: okay, thank you so much

Thank you for your corporation

P: you are welcome

P2 Transcription

Q1

P: The first question is Mr. Carson works as a teacher all day and works in a factory at night.

His wife says he is burning the candle at both end ends

The meaning of be burn burning the candle at both ends

In my opinion, I thought the meaning is he is over working during the day and night

R: Okay, please write your answer.

Answer: 蜡炬成灰泪始干

Q2

P: The salesman sold Mrs. Smith a broken dishwasher

He pulled the wool over her eyes.

The meaning of pull the wool over someone's eyes?

Ah, the meaning is ,Seems like ah Mrs. Smith judge a dishwater wronging

She didn't didn't judge it properly

R: How do you know that?

P: Because the dishwasher is broken one

R: Okay, please write your answer

Answer: Made wrong judgment

Q3

P: Billy often gets into fights with other kids at school.

His mother says he has a chip on his shoulder.

The idiom has a chip on his shoulder/RP

I suppose the meaning is this kid is willing to fight

Because he always fight with other kids at school

And he is emotional

So he is willing to fight

This is the meaning I supposed

R: Okay, thank you

Answer : He willing to fight

Q4

Mother wants to buy a new house in the country

Father sees eye to eye with her.

I think the meaning is agree

Father agree with the mother

R: How do you know that?

P: Because when the people communicate with eyes

Sometimes they say Sometimes meaning is agree

R: Okay, thank you

Answer Agree

Q5

P: Because Betsy can cannot keep a secret, other people call her a big mouth.

The big mouth meaning

I suppose the big mouth means this guy willing to talk

So, I think the meaning should be he is very willing to spread the secret to others.

R: Okay, how do you know that?

P: Because he did not can not keep a secret

R: Okay, thank you

P and somehow is related to Chinese idiom

We say 大嘴巴 （da zui ba）

R: Okay, thank you

Answer : 大嘴巴

Q6

P: Pam needed a vacation because she was suffering with burnout

Suffering with burnout

I think meaning is more than overwork

Because Pam needed a vacation

She must she must overwork

R: Okay, thank you

Answer：More than overwork

R: Now we move to Number seven

Q7

After coming back from her interview, Stacey knew she had the job in the bag.

In the bag

The meaning I suppose should be she know the result

She has already success to get this job

R: How do you know that?

P：because usually something we talk about something in the bag

which means you already has the bag and you already hold it

so I think this is (the meaning)/

R: Okay, thank you

Answer: She get the job

Q8

P: After dinner, John would go over to the mall to see what's cooking?

120

Because now a the cooking meaning ,the cooking means,I think the cooking means what does the mall sell ?

R: oh, I see

P: because cooking usually the words use in the kitchen

Here the location is mall

So , I think selling maybe

R: Okay, thank you

Answer What's selling?

Q9

People say that Jennifer can keep any plant alive with her green thumb.

Green thumb means

R: please speak loudly

P: This one I can not I I I can not understand

R: so, why?

You do not know the phrase or you do not know some vocabulary?

P: I know the vocabulary

I can not collect it together

R: okay

P ：can I move to number eight?

Number ten?

R: yeah, sure sure

Answer She has some special ability

Q10

P: Robert , Robert knew that he was robbing the cradle by dating a sixteen-year-old girl

The robbing a cradle means means

I I in my mind, I suppose the meaning is he was risky

take risky risky action

By dating a very young girl

I am not sure

R: Okay sorry?

P: I am not sure about it

R: Okay, thank you

Answer: take some risky action

Q11

P: If you procrastinate, you will find yourself up the creek without a paddle

This one we can imaging if you creek a boat without a paddle

This means you can not move

So procrastinate means

No no no

The creek out without a paddle actually the same meaning with the procrastinate

R: Okay thank you

Answer can't move

Q12

by mistake, Kay let the cat out of the bag when she revealed the surprise

let the cat out of the bag

I think this means because he when he, According to the sentence when he when she revealed the surprise

She let the cat out of the bag

Something like she did not keep the secret

R: How do you know that?

I just guess from the , According to the sentence

R: Okay,okay, thank you

P this is logic way

Answer make mistakes

Q13

Many small businesses can be successful once they get off the ground

The meaning of the get get off the ground

Means if you If the business If the small business start

If they can start from the beginning

Then get out Get off the ground

Something like leave the leaving the ground

So this means it is going to start

It is start already

It it is start

R: okay

P: This means positive/ So it can be successful

R: Okay thank you

Answer started

Q14

P: After getting laid off from the pen factory, George had to tighten his belt

Tighten his belt

Here because George lost job from the pen factory

So he has to tighten his belt

Its means he need to take some action for his for his laid off

He needs to save money

And he can not spend so much money on his cost

So some like he need to save he need to save

R: Okay, thank you

R: Number fifteen

P: Number fifteen

We decided that Molly was a bad worker and that she would have to get sacked

Get sacked means According to the sentence Get sacked means maybe means he needs to be punished or fired

R: okay, thank you

R: Number sixteen

P: number sixteen

The researcher had to roll up his sleeves to get the proposal in on time

The roll up his sleeves means

I think is begin to strive for his for finish his proposal

R: how do you know that?

P: because the researcher I am also some kind of researchers in engineering

R: I see

P: for research and proposal we need to

How to say

We need to strive for that

R: Okay, thank you

R: Number seventeen

P: Number seventeen

Depressed people should look at the world through rose-colored glasses

The colored glasses

The rose-colored glasses is something like you are not you you

You are not look at some objective

Transparent

It is like before you judge something you already have some kind of idea in your mind

So it is the same

It is the similar meaning in Chinese idiom 有色眼镜

R： Okay, thank you

R: Number eighteen

P: Number eighteen

Looking up at the sky can make you feel like a little frog in a big pond.

A little frog in a big pond

That's a similar Chinese idiom 沧海一粟

which is means some rice a rice the yellow rice

one piece of yellow rice in the ocean

seems like a some very small item in a very big location

R: I see , thank you

R: Number nineteen

P: Number nineteen

To some people, a thousand dollars is chicken feed.

The chicken feed I think the chicken feed means

Because the chicken feed is very small mount

Even one thousand dollars for some

According to the sentence, to some people is not to most people

To some people one thousand dollars is like a chicken feed

So chicken feed is something like very small small mount

R: Okay, thank you

R: Number twenty

P: Number twenty

Mentioning the abortion issue just stirred up a hornet's nest.

From the meaning ,I can guess like destroy the nest

So I think the meaning should similar with destroy something

R: Okay, how do you know that?

P: Just I guess

R： Okay, thank you so much

Thank you for your corporation and thank you for your time

R: Idiom recognition test number one

P: For the first question,

 I think burning the candle at both ends, it it means Mr. Carson work hard

Why?

Why I think the meaning is, It is because the first one is candle

candle

Burning a candle that means exhausted something

R: Okay,Thank you, please write your answer.

P: write?

R: yeah

P: Write in here?

R: Okay

P: Okay

P: get very tired

R: Number two

P: Number two

P: pulled the wool over someone's eyes.

That means

Acutally the sales man They do not want the Mr Smith know that the dishwasher actully is broken

R: yeah

P: so should I write the answer?

R: so what does pulled the wool over someone's eyes mean ?

P: That means someone do not want others know

R: Okay, I see

Please write your answer

P: someone do not want others know clearly

R: okay

P:I do not know maybe

R: okay

R: and Number three

P: number

The third question is

Billy's mother always get in trouble

Because Billy always fight with other kids at school

R: okay so ?

P: for me, I think have a chip on one's shoulder that means have responsibility to do something

R: okay please write your answer

P: okay

R: Number four

P: Number four that means the father

From my personal opinion, I think it means father helping mother to choose the house

R: okay, why

How do you know the answer?

P:why?

to be honest, at first sight, I actully I did not know the exactly answer

But when I finish reading when I come back to here

I realised mother want to buy a new house in the country

And Father father father is like

The role of father is company mother to do something

R: okay

P: most of the time

R: okay

P: base on my experience, I think if I want to buy a house

I think my husband will company me too

R: okay, I see thank you

Please write your answer

P: okay, done

R: Number five

P: Number five

Can not keep a secret

Oh, big mouth means You know, is a can not keep the secret

R: oh, yeah, how do you know?

P: because

R: why you just response so fast?

P: because I already know the answer

R: oh ,oh oh

Because I use this words before

R: oh, I see, thankyou

Please write your answer

P: someone can not keep secret

Okay

R: okay

R: so, now Number six

P: number six

This idiom means someone is already very tired

R: how do you know?

P: I know it because

I do not know whether is wrong or not

R: okay, never mind, never mind

P: whether is correct or not

But from the beginning of the sentence He need a vacation

because need a vacation

vacation tell me maybe it is because the make the worker getting tired

R: I see I see

P: so he need a vacation

She need vacation

R: okay, please write your answer

P: okay done

R:Now let us move to number seven?

P: yeah, number seven

P: number seven that means

had the job that means absolutely

how to say this word Stacey

R: yeah, the person

P: the person already get the job/

R: oh

P: absolutly, he

She knows that she already get the job

R: how do you know that?

P: in the bag

That means we keep something in the bag

Keep something in the bag Mostly time is very importance stuffs

R: oh, yeah, yeah ,yeah

P: so I think she

The person have a confidence

R: oh

P: so she says this words

R: okay, please write your answer

R:now Number eight

P: number eight

What's cooking?

Number eight

For for question number eight

Actully I do not know the meaning

But I do not know the meaning

R: okay

P: okay

It is because the first one is

Because the sentence after dinner John, go to the mall and see what's cooking?

If without after dinner, weI

I maybe can say what's cooking means to find some materials for food cooking

but here the sentence is after dinner

 so it is like already tell they already finish the food

they already finish the dinner

so I do not know the purpose that Jogn go to the mall and see what's cooking

R: oh, I see

R: never mind

thank you

R: okay, number nine

P: Number nine

For me that means take care carefully

Take care

R: what do you mean take care?

P: take care plant

R: oh

P: keep plant alive

R: okay

P: I know this because the other words like plant alive

R: I see

R: so you know the green thumb already

P: yes

In China, we have this word

R: how to

How to express in Chinese ?

P: wenshi 温室

R： oh， I see I see

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

P: maybe

R: okay

And also please write the chinese one

P: okay

Done

R:okay

Number ten

P: number ten

For me this idiom means out of his mind

R: oh creazy

P: oh creazy

P: because the Robert want to dating a girl very young age girl

In Nowadays, in morden life

We actully we do not start

Actually yes can

Out of his mind

If we want to married we always find some person suitable person

But here the girl is very young

P: I think

R: so your answer is ?

P: out of his mind

R: Okay, thank you

Please write your answer

P: done

R: okay

R: number eleven

P：Eleven

For Number eleven I do not know the exactly meaning

Because first one because I do not know the word procrastinate

R: I see

P: then I really do not know

Base on the situation lah

Because few words cannot give you more information

R: so that means in this idiom, there are few words you do not understand

P: Yes, yes

R: I see I see

P: some words I can not understand

R: I see I see

R: so now we move to number twelve

P: en Number twelve

For me, that means , Kay already know already knows knows the surprise before she actually open the door /

R: open the door?

P: open the door maybe

Or open the present

R: how do you know that ?

P: By mistake

And then Kay let the cat out of when she revealed the surprise

By mistake is like something is positive

Oh no positive, negative

R: I see, I see

R: so you guess the meaning ?

Right?

P : yes

R: okay

P: Guess

R: okay , now please write your answer

R: okay, thank you , please

Now we move to number thirteen

P: number thirteen

That means already pay over their bills

R: why ?

P: the first one

The first reason is because small business

Small business is like sometime they cannot get successful all the time

So once they do something, and they can achieve their success

That means they I think the problem for small business always because the money

So I think the result is like this

R: okay thank you

R: okay, now number fourteen

P: fourteen okay

For me that means find a new job

R: Why?

P: getting off from pen factory

Getting laid

I just guess the meaning

R: Okay

P: if really need to find the reason

I think it because the word getting laid off

R: okay

P: the phrase

R: so you guess the meaning is the person George need to find the new job, right?

P: yes

R: okay, thank you

P: you can say that

Let us move to the number fifteen

R: number fifteen, yes

P: Fifteen

Had to get fired

That means

R: why?

P: because we decided that Molly was a bad worker

Was a bad worker

Wait wait

Because the word was

Let me think again

Can not find the job

I choose I change my answer

Can not find the job

R: oh

P: can not find the job

R: because the

Why?

P: Because the first time I want to say get fired

I am thinking because we decided Molly was a bad worker in their factory

But however when I reread this sentence

I found was Was that means the something happened in the past

R: I see

P: so I rethink again

R: okay

Okay

Thank you

Please write your answer

P: okay

Done

R: Number sixteen

P: have to do their work as soon as possible

R: why?

P: because the word on time

Because the word on time

R: so you mean the researcher need to do the word as soon as possible

P:en

R: okay, thank you

17 Now we move to number seventeen

P: look at the world through positive way

R: how do you know?

P: because the word depressed people

Depressed people is like they should do something

They should to do something

Is like suggestion for the depressed people

R: I see I see

Okay thank you

So, please write your answer

Okay, now number eighteen

P: Number eighteen

For me is like that actually we are so small

We can not

The sky actually is very big

R：yeah

P: sometimes we can say huge

It is huge for us

We as a person

When we look at something huge , we suddenly realize we are actually very small

R: yeah

P: on the some super power

And also because in Chinese we have this old saying

R: how to express it in Chinese?

P: 井底之蛙

R： okay, please write the Chinese idiom and also write your answer

P: my answer is

R: okay ,so number nineteen

P: nineteen that means it's a it's a small money

R: why?

P: only a few money for them

Because when I saw the word chicken feed

The first image in my mind is chicken's mouth

Chicken's mouth actually is very small

When we want to feed them we need to give them some mostly time we give them some rice

R: yeah

P: and rice is actually a small thing

R: yeah, okay,

So based on the chicken feed, you know the answer , right?

P: en, yes

Yes you can say that

R: okay , thank you

Please write your answer

P: okay, Done

R: okay, number twenty

P: the last one

R: yeah

P: the last one actually I do not know the meaning

It is because the word mentioning the abortion

Abortion issue

I do not know the word

And then the other word is hornet

I do not know the word

R: okay

So you do not know the word , so that's why you do not know the meaning

P:And also the phrase I do not know

So I can not guess

R： I see I see

Okay, thank you so much

P: thank you also

R: thank you for your cooperation

P4 Transcription

R: okay,

Idiom recognition test number one

P: Number one

 Mr. Carson works as a teacher all day and works in a factory at night.

His his wife says he is burning the candle at both ends. What does it mean to buring the candle at both ends?

I think to be buring the candle at both ends means to suffer a big working load

Oh, you know, from the context, here

Mr Carson he both as a teacher and worker at the same time

So his wife says he is a you know, suffering

He is suffering from the big working load

That's why I got the answer

R: Okay, thank you

Number two

P: Number two

P: The salesman sold Mrs. Smith a broken dishwasher.

He pulled the wool over her eyes.

What does it mean to pool the wool over someone's eyes?

Here , I think the meaning is to hide or to cheat

Because first the salesman sold a broken dishwasher

Broken one to Miss Smith

And then from the from the from the literature meaning of pool the wool over someone's eyes

That means to put something in front of her eyes

So I got the answer

R: okay, thank you

Number three

P: Number three

 Billy often gets into fights with other kids at school.

His mother says he has a chip on his shoulder.

What does it mean to has a chip on someone's shoulder ?/

Here, to have a chip on one's shoulder means someone with a bad temper

Bacause from the sentence, We know Billy ,often you know fights with other kids at school

And also from the literature , literal to have a chip on one's shoulder means very eaily get angry , you kown, how to say , to , to be get angry

R: okay, okay, thank you

R: Number four

P: Number four

Mother wants to buy a new house in the country

Father sees eye to eye with her.

What does it mean to see eye to eye

I guess the meaning here, is to go to visit house together

Also from the context , because she wants to buy a new house in the country , not you know not in the location where they live

That why the father wants to go with her to see the house together personaly

So I think the answer should be like this

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R: oh ,yes, thank you so much

R: Number five

P: number five

P: Because Betsy cannot keep a secret, other people call her a big mouth.

What does big mouth mean?

Big mouth means the person always publishize the secret whenever someone else tell him a secret

This is my answer

R: how do you know?

P: because big mouth , you know from the word itself ,you can get the some information

R: oh I see

you know big mouth can not can not zip very easily

R: oh, I see I see

P: so the information from the mouth can easily take it out

R: ok ok ,I see isee

Thank you

R: Number six

P: number six

 Pam needed a vacation because she was suffering from burnout

What does Suffering from burnout mean?

That means , she is very tired

And she is exhausted

R: how do you know?

P: because she needs a vacation

And you know from the word suffering

R: oh , I see I see

Thank you

Number seven

P: Number seven

After coming back from her interview, Stacey knew she had a job she had the job in the bag.

What does in the bag mean?

That means the job is already in her bag

That means she already made it

She succeed in getting the job

R: Okay, thank you

R: Number eight

P: number eight

After dinner, John would go over to the mall to see what's cooking?

What does what's cooking mean ?

Here of couse we can not get some enough information from the word cooking

But you know it's some sort of confusion of dinner and cooking

So I guess this should be something like what's cooking? What's happening?

Over there , in the mall

R: Okay, thank you

R: Number nine

P: Number nine

People say that Jennifer can keep any plant alive with her green thumb.

What does Green thumb mean

Green thumb means be being good at planting

I guess green here this word ,You know, something related to plant planting

and she can keep any plant alive means she is good at planting

R: I see

Thank you

Number ten

P: number ten

Robert knew that he was robbing the cradle by dating a sixteen-year-old girl

What does robbing the cradle mean?

You know, dating, from this word we knew that dating something between adults

But he dating with a sixteen-year-old girl

That means to go beyond the regulation or to be against you know, common sense among people

R: I see

Thank you

Number eleven

P：Number eleven

If you procrastinate, you will find yourself up the creek without a paddle

What does up the creek without paddle mean?

I do not understand this sentence

But I guess it means in a very hashful situation

Because , you know If you response something or delay something but you have to do

You are in the situation which put you, you know , to push you to finish the thing as soon as possible

R: okay , thank you

Number twelve

P: Number twelve

by mistake, Kay let the cat out of the bag when she revealed the surprise

what does let the cat out of the bag mean?

Here, we know this by mistake

Only by mistake , this person, really get the truth or the reality

When she revealed the surprise

Only through mistake

She is getting near to the truth eventually

R: okay, thank you

Number thirteen

P: number thirteen

Many small businesses can be successful once they get off the ground

What does get off the ground mean?

It means to gradually get fulfill the ends that lead to the final goal

R: so how do you know the answer?

P: because you know the small business from the beingging

You can not have a big ,,you can not have a big company,

you must go setp by step

To get off the ground means to to

Get off is to leave up

So I guess the meaning is to gradually fulfill the aims that lead to the final goal

R: okay, thank you

R: Number fourteen

P: fourteen

After getting laid off from the pen factory, George had to tighten his belt

What does Tighten his belt mean?

That means tighten one's belt means to lead a economic or relatively poor life

Because we have such a similar expression in Chinese as well

R: So what's the expression in Chinese?

P: 节衣缩食

R： I see I see okay, okay

R: Number fifteen

P: Number fifteen

We decided that Molly was a bad worker and that she would have to get sacked

What does get sacked mean?

Here to get sacked means to be fired or to get bad comment on her performance in work

Because she is a bad worker

And , yeah

R: I see

Thank you

R: Number sixteen

P: number sixteen

The researcher had to roll up his sleeves to get the proposal in on time

What does to roll up his sleeves mean?

Because when someone tries to do something

What he does? It is to roll up his sleeves before doing this , before doing the thing

So you know from the from the ,how to say, behavior

We know the meaning is to intending it is to intend to do something

Or to be about to do something

R: Okay, thank you

R: Number seventeen

P: Number seventeen

Depressed people should look at the world through rose-colored glasses

 What does to , what does to through rose-colored glasses mean?

Sure, here, rose-colored glasses means something very positive

And very pink ,and you know, without much negative aspects

So I think rose-colored

Through rose-colored glasses , means through a positive view to value the world

R： I see

Okay, thank you

R: Number eighteen

P: eighteen

Looking up at the sky can make you feel like a little frog in a big pond.

What does a little frog in a big pond mean?

A little frog can see only the sky from within his visual

So here we have a similar expression in ChineseTraditional

So here means can not see the whole sky but the scope from within his visual

R: I see , thank you so much

R: Number nineteen

P: Number nineteen

To some people, a thousand dollars is chicken feed.

What does chicken feed mean?

I guess the meaning is a little amount of money

R: okay, number twenty

R: Number twenty

P: Number twenty

Mentioning the abortion issue just stirred up a hornet's nest.

What does to stirred up a hornet's nest mean?

To stir up I think is to the meaning is to incite

to incite what to incite a emotion towards a abortion issue

so this is my answer

R: thank you so much

Please write your answer

Thank you

P5 Transcription

R: Idiom recognition test number one

P: Mr. Carson works as a teacher all day and works in a factory at night.

His wife says he is burning the candle at both ends. What does it mean to buring the candle at both ends? /RP

For this question I think because the candle has two sides

So the man works at day and also works in the night

Means he works very hard and he is exhausted himself

R: Okay, please write the answer

R: Number two

P: The salesman sold Mrs. Smith a broken dishwasher.

He pulled the wool over her eyes.

What does it mean to pool the wool over someone's eyes?

Because the salesman sold her a broken dishwasher

So that means the salesman cheated

Okay, tell the forth to the lady

So put the wool over her eyes means been cheated

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R:Number three

P: Billy often gets into fights with other kids at school.

His mother says he has a chip on his shoulder.

What does it mean to have a chip on someone's shoulder ?

Chip means something very little and very sharp

So has a chip one someone's shoulder means very

He is very emotional to get into something

And like a triger to do something very easily

So that means the boy are more likely to get into trouble

And to get into comflit with others

R:, okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number four

P: Mother wants to buy a new house in a country.

Father sees eye to eye with her.

What does it mean to see eye to eye

They are contraodictionring guess

Eye to eye means a father agree with your mum

Then you see the person eye to eye means, yes, I agree with you

And another means, on the other hand , maybe it is just means I am not agree with you , do not think of that

R: okay, haha thank you

So what is your answer

Please write your answer

R: Number five

P: Because Betsy cannot keep a secret, other people call her a big mouth.

What does big mouth mean?

Big mouth means some person who are very easily to give deep answer or infromation to others

Because big mouth , you can imaging

They will say something aloud

Or they will say something easily

So big mouth means this kind of person

R: okay Thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number six

P: Pam needed a vacation because she was suffering from burnout

What does Suffering from burnout mean?

Suffering suffering means you are exhaunted by something

From burnout, burnnout I can realated it to candle

Then you can buring the candle

So the burnout menas you use out or exhaunted

R: okay, thank you so much,

Please write your answer

Number seven

P: After coming back from his her interview, Stacey knew he had a job in the bag.

 had the job in the bag , in this question means he can posibility to get the job is very big

R: I see

Thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number eight

P: After dinner, John would go over to the mall to see what's cooking?

what's cooking in this question

I guess it means what is new ?

Or what's on sales ?

Because John would like to go to the

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number nine

P: People say that Jennifer can keep any plant alive with her green thumb.

What does Green thumb mean

Green thumb means she can do something very good

Because thumb , the first finger , when you should do you big finger to someone

You are agree with someone ,

Or someone did a good job

So green thumb means he can do something very ,

he can do somethig very great or do something magically

R okay

Thank you

Please write your answer

Number ten

P: Robert knew that he was robbing the cradle by dating a sixteen-year-old girl

What does robbing the cradle mean?

Because from the context, Rober is dating a sixteen-year-old girl

So this thing is very unbeliavle

And very incrudble

So robbing the cradle means something is unbleiable or soemthing is not usual

R: okay, thank you ,

Please write your answer

Number eleven

P： If you procrastinate, you will find yourself up the creek without a paddle

What does up the creek without paddle mean?

Form this sentence, procrastinate, means you put something , put on something, or always do something very slow

You put something on the next day

So you will find yourself up the creek without a paddle

It means you will put yourself in a very dangerous situation

R: okay , thank you

Please write your answer

Number twelve

P: by mistake, Kay let the cat out of the bag when she revealed the surprise

Kay revealed the surprise so she let the cat out of the bag

Eh, means she already realize that is a surprise

She already found that

R: Okay, thank you, please write your answer

Number thirteen

P: Many small businesses can be successful once they get off the ground

What does get off the ground mean?

Eh , get off the ground means when you do something the first step or you just started to do it.

Like Chinese version, the first step is the most difficulty work

So get off the ground means, you started to do that

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number fourteen

P: After getting laid off from the pen factory, George had to tighten his belt

What does tighten his belt mean?

Because George getting laid off that means George lose his job in a pen factory

So he need to

He need to save money

So tighten his belt means save money

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number fifteen

P: We decided that Molly was a bad worker and that she would have to get sacked

What does to get sacked mean?

Because from the passage , Molly work badlly

So she, I guess

She need to work harder

Had to so she had to work harder

R: okay , Thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number sixteen

P: The researcher had to roll up his sleeves to get the proposal in on time

What does to roll up his sleeves mean?

Because the researcher need to hand in his proposal on time

So, from the, from the message of the context

Roll up his sleeves means he need to he need to

Roll up his sleeves

Ah, that means is also he need to work harder on this

And spend more time

And put more effort on his work

R: okay, thank you ,

Please write your answer

R: Number seventeen

P: Depressed people should look at the world through rose-colored glasses.

 what does to through rose-colored glasses mean?

This is a This is means that when people they are getting depressed,

they need to look at the world from a more beautiful perspective

Because rose-colored, rose-colored related to something good and beautiful

R: Okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number eighteen

P: Looking up at the sky can make you feel like a little frog in a big pond.

What does a little frog in a big pond mean?

That means a little and a big , they are compare to each other

So, from this sentence, I guess the meaning is you can feel yourself is very small but the big a very world

So, nothing gonna over take you or, you can through everything

Because the world is very big

And you can do anything

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

Number nineteen

P: To some people, a thousand dollars is chicken feed.

What does chicken feed mean?

Because chicken eat very small

So chicken feed means just a little piece of money

R: okay, please write your answer

R: Number twenty

P: Mentioning the abortion issue just stirred up a hornet's nest.

What does to stirred up a hornet's nest mean?

I guess this is hornet is a name of bird

So that means this issue is very serious

Because when they related to abortion

So , for this sentence, maybe means that is not good or very serious problem

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

P6 Transcription

Idiom recognition test number one

P: Mr. Carson works as a teacher all day and works in a factory at night.

His wife says he is burning the candle at both ends. What does what does it mean to buring the candle at both ends?

Because Mr. Carson works as a teacher at day, and works in a factory at night

He has no time to to left

So maybe it means he will be very tired

Because he works all day and all night

R: Okay, thank you

Please write your answer

Number two

P: Number two

P: The salesman sold Mrs. Smith a broken dishwasher.

He pulled the wool over her eyes.

What does it mean to pool the wool over someone's eyes?

Because the saleman salesman a broken dishwasher

So he must What?

So he must cheat cheat Mrs. Smith

And to pulled the wool over someone's eyes means cheat someone

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

Number three

P：Billy often gets into fights with other kids at school.

His mother says he has a chip on her on his shoulder.

What does it mean to has a chip on someone's shoulder ?

Billy often gets into fights with other kids at school

From this sentence, I can know billy had a very bad temper

So he always get fight with other with other kids at school

And maybe everyone in school will afraid billy very much

That's all

R: okay, so what does it mean to have a chip on one's shoulder?

P: it means eh, this person have had a very bad temper

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number four

P: Number four

Mother wants to buy a new house in the country

Father sees eye to eye with her.

To sees eye to eye

Father sees eye to eye

It means eh, father sees mother in his eyes

So, eh, if he can see see mother in his eyes

Maybe it means father agree with mother to buy a new house

R: okay, thank you

P: so

R: so what？

P：so to see eye to eye means, the father agree with mother

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number five

P: number five

P: Because Betsy cannot keep a secret, other people call her a big mouth. a big mouth

Because he because she can't keep a secret

So it must means the big mouth must means someone can not keep the secret

R: ok please write your answer

R: Number six

P: Pam needed a vacation because she was suffering from burnout

What does Suffering from burnout mean?

She need a vacation

suffering from means

she is suffer from means pam maybe she is in trouble

or she is very tired from her work

so she needed a vacation so much

 so oh suffer from the burnout means she is very tired

R: oh, okay thank you

Thank you so much

Please write your answer

Number seven

P: After coming back from her interview, Stacey knew she had a job in the bag.

she had a job in the bag

It must means from her interview ,

she is very confident that she can get the job

so, she must have a good a good confirm in her interview

and in the bag means she is sure she can get the job

R: Okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number eight

P: number eight

After dinner, John would go over to the mall to see what's cooking?

What does what's cooking mean ?

go over to the mall

Mall means a place to sell many many goods

Maybe he, after he eat dinner , he want to go out to buy something

So what is cooking it means what's selling in the mall

R: Okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number nine

P: People say that Jennifer can keep any plant alive with with her green thumb

What does Green thumb mean

Because at the first sentence, people say Jennifer can keep any plant alive

So her green thumb

Maybe it means Jennifer is very good at make any plant alive

R: oh Thank you

Please write your answer

Number ten

P: Robert knew that he was robbing the cradle by dating a sixteen-year-old girl

What does robbing the candle mean?

Cradle

Oh I am sorry, I don't know the meaning of the cradle

R:oh, you mean, you mean cradle

I see I see

P: oh, cradle

R: okay

P: yes, I don't know the meaning

R: so you don't know the idiom, right?

P: yes

R: okay

Thank you

Next one Number eleven

P:If you procrastinate, you will find yourself up the creek without a paddle

What does up the creek without paddle mean?

Eh, sorry, I also don't know what is means

R： okay so , you can not guess the meaning? Right?

P: yes

R: okay

Number twelve

P: by mistake, Kay Kay let the cat out of the bag when she revealed the surprise

To let the cat out of bag

Maybe maybe someone is very surprise about something

R: how do you know the answer ?

P: because , eh, this sentence she revealed the surprise

And the first is that by mistake

So it means not by design

So maybe it is a surprise

R: okay, thank you

Number thirteen

P: number thirteen

Many small businesses can be successful once they get off the ground

What does get off the ground mean?

Eh, some it's like

Oh no no no

small businesses can be successful

oh this means they must have somethings special

eh, and they get off the ground means if they have the confidence to try and they can be successful maybe

R:okay , what's your what's your answer ?

P：it means they have the confident to have a try

R: okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number fourteen

P: Number fourteen

After getting laid off from the pen factory, George had to tighten his belt

What does Tighten his belt mean?

Because George getting laid off the pen factory

So he had no job

He had no money

So he have to save money and eat less and less

So tighten his belt means similar with Chinese idiom 节衣缩食

R： okay thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number fifteen

P: We decided that Molly was a bad worker and that she would have to get sacked

Because she was a bad worker

so the company must eh, the company don't need her

so get sacked means get fired

R okay, Thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number sixteen

P: The researcher had to roll up his sleeves to get the proposal in on time

What does to roll up his sleeves in on time?

The researcher must finish the proposal in on time

So she must start the proposal right now

And so to roll up his sleeves means he is begin to do the proposal

And, or he is about to make the effort to get the proposal

R: Okay, thank you

R: Number seventeen Number seventeen

P: Depressed people should look at the world through rose-colored glasses.

 what does to through rose-colored glasses mean?

Rose color, rose colored glasses is not the common glasses

It means it is different from the common glasses

It means depressed people look at the world in another way

So to through to through rose-colored glasses means to see something through the positive view

R： Okay, thank you

Please write your answer

R: Number eighteen

P: Looking up at the sky can make you feel can make you feel like a little frog in a big pond

It is similar with our Chinese idiom 井底之蛙

It means you just like a little little person when you when you stand on the ground

Or to see the sky

So a little frog in a big pond means they only focus on the benefits near to them

And not focus on the future benefits

R: okay, thank you

R: Number nineteen

P: To some people, a thousand dollars is chicken feed.

Chicken feed is very small

When it is contrast with people people's food

So to some people, a thousand dollar is just a piece of cake

And it's very very small money

So the chicken feed means a small value or small money

R: okay, thank you

R: Number twenty

P: Mentioning the abortion issue just stir stirred up a hornet's nest.

What does to stirred up a hornet's nest mean?

In this sentence,

I have

I can't understand many vocabularies

R: Okay, so do you know what does to stirred up a hornet's nest mean?

P: I don't know

I can't understand the whole sentence

R: okay, thank you

P: sorry

R:okay thank you