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# The Effect of L1 on the Production of L2 Formulaic Expressions

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ABSTRACT

This study explores whether formulaic expressions congruent to the ones in an individual's native language (L1) have an effect on the production those expressions and their respective contexts in that individual's second language (L2). Fifteen EFL students were given a pre- and post-Discourse Completion Test and a Writing Prompt to assess their improvement in producing English idioms and their contexts after a workshop that focused on idioms of varying similarity to the participants' L1: Category I, word-for-word translations of the idiom used in L1; Category II, conceptually similar versions of the idiom used in L1; and Category III, idioms specific to the L2. The results of the study suggest that explicit instruction and comparison of any category of idioms can promote its production, but also that EFL learners are more comfortable working with Category II idioms.



Formulaic language can be defined as sets of precise forms or phrases that are commonly used as a unit, without variation, to convey a message (Wray, 2008).Short utterances that are generated naturally are mostly formulaic language, and such language eases processing, making communication more fluent (e.g., Boers et al., 2006; Myles et al., 1999; Wood, 2006), and the user seem more native like (Author, 2013; Yorio, 1989).

Native speakers are continuously exposed to such formulaic language throughout the process of acquiring their first language (L1) and it is largely this repetition of exposure that internalizes these expressions. They recognize and reuse these sequences of words without analyzing the individual parts, but instead inferring the function of the formulas in communication (Bannard & Lieven, 2012).However, correctly understanding and using formulaic language in its appropriate context is a very difficult process

for non-native speakers who are not provided with years of continuous exposure; and even with extensive exposure, idioms that are not as frequent as other formulaic expressions (Author, 2013) still remain problematic.

Since more and more scholars are attributing fluency and native-like speech to formulaic language, many educators are attempting to incorporate it into their second language (L2) classrooms (Wood, 2009). Regarding research on implications for formulaic language pedagogy, Boers and Lindstromberg (2012) explored studies on formulaic sequences in L2, and how successfully pedagogical interventions like drawing learners' attention to FL when encountered, stimulating dictionary look ups for autonomy, and helping students memorize have been implemented in the classroom. Similarly, Wood (2006) and Wray and Fitzpatrick (2008) attested to the effectiveness of identification and memorization of formulaic expressions on their use. Meunier (2012) reviewed the role of formulaic language in L2 teaching and the tangible effects that theoretical developments regarding formulaic language have had on pedagogy and classroom materials.

There are two opposing views when it comes to L1 and L2 comparison in terms of formulaic expressions. Many studies have shown the benefits of comparing L1 and L2 equivalent formulaic expressions in order to ease the acquisition process for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners(e.g., Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012; Yamashita & Jiang, 2010). On the other hand, some studies have suggested that the focus should be on the differences between L1 and L2 expressions which may be more problematic for learners because these expressions are conceptually new or unfamiliar (e.g., Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Nesselhauf, 2003). Considering the contradiction between such studies, there is a need to investigate how the availability of L1 formulaic congruencies can encourage the production of the L2 counterparts and their contexts by L2 learners, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of such a method.

According to Kecskes's (2007) formulaic language continuum, within the overarching term of formulaic language are different categories including grammatical units, fixed semantic units, and pragmatic expressions. The current study focuses on idioms, which fall in Kecskes's (2007) pragmatic expressions category. Wray (2008) defines idioms as "sets of not all that frequent but particularly evocative multiword strings that express an idea metaphorically" (p. 10). "Kick the bucket", "spill the beans", and "raining cats and dogs" are examples. These expressions are differentiated from other collocations like "blow your nose," "running water," "give up," or "take a test' in that these examples are often shorter and function in a referential or ideational manner as do content words (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012). Whereas previous research would claim that idioms are processed holistically, and that the individual words' meanings do not contribute to the overall meaning (e.g., Bobrow & Bell, 1973; Swinney & Cutler, 1979), more recent research shows that idiomatic processing involves a mixture of grammatical and structural analysis of individual words as well as holistic meaning (e.g., Cacciari & Tabossi, 1988; Cutting & Bock, 1997; Sprenger, Levelt, & Kempen, 2006).

Since idioms are collocations that convey a meaning furthest away from the expression's literal meaning (Kecskes 2007), they can cause certain difficulty for EFL learners. Certain studies (e.g., Hama, 2010; Bahns & Eldaw, 1993) argue that non-congruencies between L1 and L2 formulaic languages should be focused on, while others (e.g., Yamashita & Jiang, 2010; Nesselhauf, 2003) state that acknowledging the similarities is important and beneficial. To the knowledge of the researchers, no study has explored the effect of comparing L1 and L2 formulaic language equivalences on the production of the target expressions and their contexts, especially in regard to English and Turkish. Therefore, this explored the effect of comparing L1 and L2 formulaic language (idiomatic) equivalences on the production of the target expressions and their contexts by addressing the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the availability of an equivalent idiom in EFL learners' L1 affect the accurate production of that idiom in L2?

2. To what extent does the availability of an equivalent idiom in EFL learners' L1 affect the accurate production of its context in L2?

3. What are EFL learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of focusing on L1 and L2 equivalent expressions when learning idioms?

By answering these questions, the study aimed to demonstrate the effect of drawing students' attention to the existence of L1 equivalences on the production of L2 formulaic expressions and their contexts.

## 2. Method

The instructional setting for the present study was an English and Composition I course at a private university in Ankara, Turkey. The reasoning behind choosing this class as the study's sample is that the students who attended this course had already taken a proficiency exam after studying one-year intensive English and were proven to have sufficient university-level English proficiency to study in their departments. University-level English proficiency was preferred in this study so as to render negligible the idea that the participants' performance on the DCTs and Writing Prompts were due to a simple lack of English knowledge and not the study's teaching method variable. There were 15 students participated in the study, eight female and seven male with Turkish being their first language.

As this study was a quasi-experimental study, there were three phases for data collection. In the first phase, a pre-test was conducted for both the DCT and Writing Prompt. Next, a workshop focusing on the three categories of idioms was conducted. The first (Category I) included 11 idioms that are word-for-word English equivalences of the counterpart used in the Turkish language; the second (Category II) included 10 English idioms that are conceptually similar to the counterpart used in Turkish, but may not be an exact word-for-word translation; and the third (Category III) included 12 idioms that are distinct and specific to the English language (see Appendix A). Many of the target idioms came from Liu's (2003) article on the most frequently used spoken American English idioms. Other idiom entries came from the researchers' intuition on common and appropriate idioms in the English language, various websites listing frequently used idioms, and television programs. The idioms were screened by the researchers to make sure they were considered idioms in accordance with Kecskes' (2007) formulaic language continuum. The university's class sessions last 50 minutes each, and the researchers were granted four: one for pre-testing, two for treatment, and one for post-testing. Then, a post-test for both the DCT and Writing Prompt were conducted as well as a retrospective Likert-scale questionnaire.

### *2.1. Discourse Completion Test (DCT)*

The DCTs aimed to determine the participants' ability to produce the accurate idiom that corresponds to the given situations. The DCTs included 33fill-in-the-blank items of the three categories of idioms. After reading a brief contextual orientation statement to describe the situation of each item, the participants were asked to fill in the blank with an appropriate idiom that completes a short authentic text adapted from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). An example DCT item:

Situation: Sue had been waiting for Steve for awhile, but was glad he arrived at least.

So you finally decided to show up? Well, _____, I guess. (Target expression: better late than never)

### *2.2. Writing Prompt*

For the Writing Prompt, the participants were provided a list of all the idioms used on the DCT. They were instructed to mimic the items from the DCT test by creating a brief contextual orientation

statement to describe the situation for each of five items they select from the list followed by a short text which uses the idiom appropriately. Which category of idioms (I, II, or III) the participants chose to use in the Writing Prompt was expected to show which category they were most comfortable or confident working with. The accuracy of the idiomatic contexts that the participants produced in the Writing Prompt were evaluated on a grading scale from zero to two:

Table 1.
Writing Prompt scoring key

| Score | Definition |
|---|---|
| 0 | failure to respond, used when a participant wrote less than the total required responses (5) OR the response did not include the chosen idiom in an applicable situation |
| 1 | the response had some elements appropriate to the target idiom, but was not completely correct |
| 2 | the response was contextually accurate and appropriate to the target idiom |

The researchers collected the DCTs prior to the participants completing the Writing Prompt so that they could not receive any help from DCT.

*2.3. Questionnaire*

After the post-tests were conducted, the researchers distributed a questionnaire with the goal of discovering the perceptions of the participants on the teaching methodology they experienced in the workshop. A Likert-scale style questionnaire was developed by the researchers to fit the purposes of the study. It consisted of five statements and the participants were directed to rate their level of agreement with each statement regarding the teaching methodology.

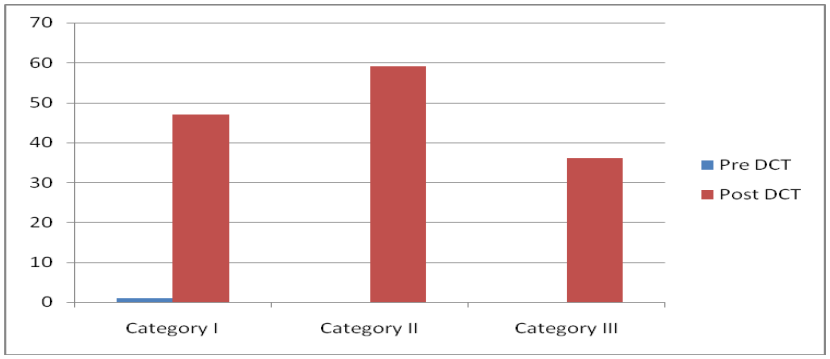
*2.4. Workshop*

During the workshop that took place in between pre- and post-tests, a list of all of the target idioms (with the Turkish equivalents when applicable) was distributed to the participants by the first author of the study. For Category I and II expressions, the researcher divided the participants into groups and first asked the participants to read through the Turkish equivalents and see if they could identify the examples of when the English versions of such sayings can be used based on their knowledge of the Turkish expression. The participants presented their examples to the rest of the class. Then, the researcher went over the English versions again and provided additional examples. For Category III idioms, the researcher announced that the idioms are particular to the English language, and explained various situations that they are used in. Then, the participants, working in groups, were asked to come up with their own examples and situations in English where the usage of the idioms was appropriate. These idioms were also split among the groups and the scenarios created were presented to the rest of the class. For idioms in all three categories, the group work for creating additional scenarios for the idioms was meant to check the understanding of the participants and to encourage retention. Emphasis was given on separating the expressions into their respective categories to make sure the participants made the connections between the L1 and L2 target expressions and contexts. At the beginning and end of the second hour of the treatment, a brief review of what was previously learned was conducted.

## 3. Results

*Research question 1: To what extent does the availability of an equivalent idiom in EFL learners' L1 affect the accurate production of that idiom in L2?*

In order to answer the first research question, the results of the pre- and post-DCTs were analyzed to see if there was a statistically significant difference between them. Figure 1 shows the total number of correctly produced idiomatic expressions in the pre- and post-DCTs.




Note: Category I - word for word translations; Category II - conceptually similar idioms; Category III - idioms specific to English

Figure 1. Correctly produced idioms on the pre- and post-DCT among the three categories

As shown in Figure 1, after the workshop comparing English and Turkish idioms, there was a major increase in all three categories of correctly produced English idioms on the post-DCT when compared to the pre-DCT which had only one correct response across the entire sample. The most common reasons the participants failed to give an acceptable response are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Main reasons for incorrect responses on the DCT

| Reason | Response | Target Expression (Category) |
|---|---|---|
| Using a different target idiom from the study in place of the appropriate one | "Enjoy the lull and down-time. It is just the **in the long run**. It is about to get a lot more hectic." | calm before the storm (Category I) |
| | "Meanwhile, the suspect was **out of the blue**. He'd created a fake identity and made a new passport for himself." | up to something (Category II) |
| Misspelling or errors within the target idiom that changed the meaning | "You're in luck, sir. As it just so happens, James is an expert accountant. He...[phone rings]..., well **call of devil**, he's calling right now!" | speak of the devil (Category II) |
| | "I'm coming back. My laptop is here. Will you please **take an eye** it?" | keep an eye on (Category II) |

Table 3 presents the mean number of improved points between the pre- and post-DCT (gain scores) of the individual participants within each category of idioms and the standard deviation for each.

Table 3.
Descriptives of the gain scores between the pre- and post-DCTs by each category

| | Gain | |
|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Category I | 3.067 | 2.282 |
| Category II | 3.933 | 2.086 |
| Category III | 2.400 | 1.595 |

As shown in Table 3, the sample showed the greatest mean gain score within Category II idioms, followed by Category I, and finally Category III.

A Shapiro-Wilk Test of normality confirmed the normality of the DCT gain scores across the three categories. For Category I, SW = .901, df = 15, $p$ = .098 and skewness (.363) and kurtosis (-1.352) statistics suggested that the data could be considered normal. For Category II, SW = .928, df = 15, $p$ = .253 and skewness (-.062) and kurtosis (-1.138) statistics suggested that the data could be considered normal. For Category III, SW = .886, df = 15, $p$ = .058 and skewness (.210) and kurtosis (.903) statistics suggested that the data could be considered normal. Therefore, it was decided to continue with a parametric test.

As shown in Table 4, *t*-tests for each category comparing the individual participants' pre- and post-DCT scores confirmed the statistical significance of the increase in score between the pre- and post-DCT among the three categories ($p$< .001).

Table 4.
The difference between the pre- and post-test DCTs in all categories

| Category | Pre-DCT | | Post-DCT | | t | df | p (2-tailed) | Cohen's d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $\bar{x}$ | SD | $\bar{x}$ | SD | | | | |
| I | .07 | .258 | 3.13 | 2.295 | 5.204 | 14 | < .001 | 2.781 |
| II | .00 | .000 | 3.93 | 2.086 | 7.302 | 14 | < .001 | 3.903 |
| III | .00 | .000 | 2.40 | 1.595 | 5.829 | 14 | < .001 | 3.115 |

To see whether the differences between the mean gain scores by category were statistically significant, a one-way ANOVA was run on the gain scores between the pre- and post-DCTs among the different categories of idioms.

Table 5.
The difference among the three categories across pre- and post-DCT

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | p | Observed Power |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model (Between Categories) | 17.733 | 2 | 8.867 | 2.197 | .124 | .424 |
| Intercept | 441.800 | 1 | 441.800 | 109.494 | .000 | 1.000 |
| Category | 17.733 | 2 | 8.867 | 2.197 | .124 | .424 |
| Error (Within Categories) | 169.467 | 42 | 4.035 | | | |
| Total | 629.000 | 45 | | | | |
| Corrected Total | 187.200 | 44 | | | | |

Note: R Squared = .095 (Adjusted R Squared = .052)

As shown in Table 5, there was no statistically significant difference between the three categories: $F$(2,42) = 2.19, $p$> .005 ($p$ = .12), that is, the type of category did not make a difference in terms of L2

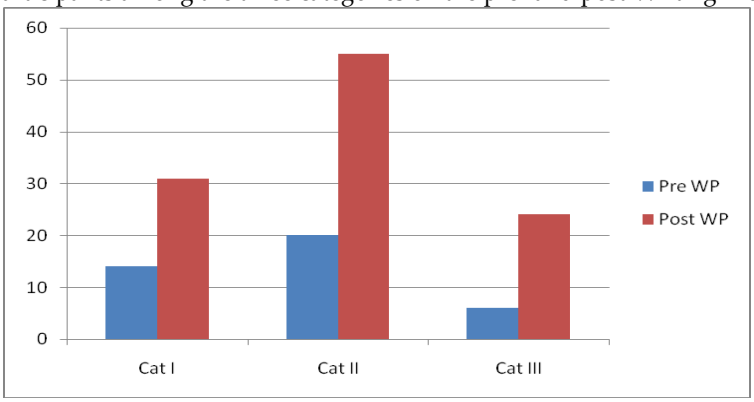
learners' scores on the post-DCT. The observed power of .42 indicates the need for a larger sample size in order to show a statistically significant difference among the category of idioms.

When the overall results are taken into account, it can be concluded that the explicit instruction of idioms aspect of the treatment of the study had a positive impact on the participants' ability to correctly produce target idiomatic expressions. This is supported by the fact that the number of correctly produced idioms increased greatly between the pre- and post-DCTs. It can also be said that Category II idioms were more correctly produced. However, based on the results of the inferential statistics analysis, it cannot be concluded that one category of idioms was easier to produce on the DCT than another.

*Research question 2: To what extent does the availability of an equivalent idiom in EFL learners' L1 affect the accurate production of its context in L2?*

In order to answer the second research question, the results of the pre- and post-Writing Prompt were analyzed to see if there was a statistically significant difference after the workshop. Figure 2 shows the total number of correctly produced contexts of idiomatic expressions in the pre- and post-Writing Prompts.

Figure 2.
The total scores of the participants among the three categories on the pre- and post-Writing Prompt




As shown in Figure 2, there was an increase in all three categories of correctly produced contexts of English idioms on the post-Writing Prompt when compared to the pre-Writing Prompt. The most common reasons the participants failed to give an acceptable response are shown in Table 6.

Table 6.
Reasons for incorrect responses on the Writing Prompt

| Reason | Response | Score (Category) |
|---|---|---|
| Simply giving insufficient context to show they fully understood the idiom | "Person wait a long time and do something right time and the right place. He **hit the nail on the head**" | 1 point (Category III) |
| Using the idiom literally | "I am very hungry, oops. hey, is there **a piece of cake** on the refrigerator?" | 0 points (Category II) |
| | "I broke my **arm and leg** because of car accident" | 0 points (Category III) |

Table 7 presents the mean gain scores of the individual participants within each category of idioms between the pre- and post-Writing Prompt and the standard deviation for each.

Table 7.
Descriptives of the gain scores between the pre- and post-Writing Prompt by category

| | Gain | |
|---|---|---|
| | $\bar{x}$ | SD |
| Category I | 1.21 | 1.528 |
| Category II | 1.57 | 1.505 |
| Category III | 1.29 | 1.899 |

As shown in Table 7, the sample showed the greatest mean gain score with the contexts of Category II idioms, followed by Category III, and finally Category I.

A Shapiro-Wilk Test of normality confirmed the normality of the Writing Prompt gain scores in Categories I and II. For Category I, SW = .890, df = 14, $p$ = .082 and skewness (.637) and kurtosis (-.320) statistics suggested that the data could be considered normal. For Category II, SW = .873, df = 14, $p$ = .047 and skewness (-.294) and kurtosis (-1.338) statistics suggested that the data could be considered normal. For Category III, where SW = .742, df = 14, $p$ = .001 and skewness (1.489) and kurtosis (1.615) statistics suggested that the data could not be considered normal. Yet, because the other two categories could be considered normal, it was decided to continue with a parametric test.

As shown in Table 8, *t*-tests for each category comparing the individual participants' pre- and post-Writing Prompt scores confirmed the statistical significance of the increase in their scores between the pre- and post-Writing Prompt among the three categories (Category I and III $p$< .05, Category II $p$< .001).

Table 8.
The difference between the pre- and post-test Writing Prompt in all categories

| Category | Pre-WP | | Post-WP | | t | df | p (2-tailed) | Cohen's d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $\bar{x}$ | SD | $\bar{x}$ | SD | | | | |
| I | 1.00 | 1.301 | 2.21 | 1.578 | 2.973 | 13 | .011 | 1.649 |
| II | 1.43 | 1.222 | 3.93 | 1.685 | 6.679 | 13 | < .001 | 3.704 |
| III | .43 | .756 | 1.71 | 1.939 | 2.534 | 13 | .025 | 1.405 |

To see whether the differences between the mean gain scores by category were statistically significant, a one-way ANOVA was run on the gain scores between the pre- and post-Writing Prompt among the different categories of idioms.

Table 9.
The difference among the three categories across pre- and post-Writing Prompt

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | p | Observed Power |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model (Between Categories) | 14.619 | 2 | 7.310 | 2.775 | .075 | .515 |
| Intercept | 116.667 | 1 | 116.667 | 44.298 | < .005 | 1.000 |
| Category | 14.619 | 2 | 7.310 | 2.775 | .075 | .515 |
| Error (Within Categories) | 102.714 | 39 | 2.634 | | | |
| Total | 234.000 | 42 | | | | |
| Corrected Total | 117.333 | 41 | | | | |

Note: R Squared = .125 (Adjusted R Squared = .080)

As shown in Table 9, there was no statistically significant difference between the gain scores of the three groups: $F(2,39) = 2.77$, $p > .005$ ($p = .075$), indicating that one category was not easier to produce than the others. The observed power of .51 indicates the need for a larger sample size in order to show a statistically significant difference between the groups.

When the overall results are taken into account, it can be concluded that the explicit instruction of idioms aspect of the treatment of the study had a positive impact on the participants' ability to correctly produce the context of target idiomatic expressions. This is supported by the fact that the number of correctly produced contexts increased greatly between the pre- and post-Writing Prompts. It can also be said that Category II idioms' contexts were more commonly correctly produced. However, based on the results of the inferential statistics analysis, it cannot be concluded that the context of one category of idioms was easier to produce on the Writing Prompt than another.

*Research question 3: What are EFL learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of focusing on L1 and L2 equivalent expressions when learning idioms?*

In order to answer the third research question, the questionnaire responses were entered into SPSS and analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics. Table 10 shows the mode responses where 1 conveys that the participant strongly disagreed with the statement, 2 disagreed, 3 was neutral, 4 agreed, and 5 strongly agreed. The subsequent figures are the graphical representations of the response frequencies for each item of the questionnaire: (Q1) Associating the English idioms with their Turkish counterparts while learning them helped me produce them on the test; (Q2) Associating the English idioms with their Turkish counterparts helped me produce their context in the Writing Prompt; (Q3) I found the idioms without Turkish counterparts easier to produce on the test; (Q4) I found the idioms without Turkish counterparts' context easier to produce in the Writing Prompt; and (Q5) I would have preferred to leave Turkish out of the workshop.

Table 10.
The mode responses for the questionnaire items

| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mode | 4 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 3 |

The responses to the questionnaire revealed that the sample generally agreed with the idea that the idiomatic expressions and their respective contexts with L1 equivalents were easier to produce on the DCT and Writing Prompt. They generally disagreed that the expressions without an L1 equivalent were easier to produce. They were neutral as to whether Turkish should be left out of the learning process when dealing with idiomatic expressions. Overall, the questionnaire responses reveal a positive attitude towards the effectiveness of the study's treatment, focusing on L1 and L2 equivalent expressions when learning idioms.

## 4. Discussion

### *4.1. The Role of Explicit Instruction*

The current study confirms the role of explicit instruction in promoting the acquisition and use of formulaic language. The results of the DCTs and Writing Prompts increased greatly in accurately produced idioms in all three categories between the pre- and post-tests, which may be attributed to the explicit instruction of the idioms during the study's workshop. This notion is supported by various studies that claim explicit instruction of formulaic expressions promotes their acquisition and thus usage in appropriate contexts (e.g., Bardovi-Harding & Vellenga, 2012; Boers et al., 2006; Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012; Nesselhauf, 2003;Wood, 2009). For instance, Bardovi-Harding and Vellenga's (2012)

study found that metapragmatics and focused noticing activities regarding formulas (i.e. formulaic language training) were related to increased formulaic language use. Boers et al. (2006) concluded that raising students' awareness of formulaic language promotes the use of it, and therefore enhances speakers' perceived fluency. Boers and Lindstromberg (2012) also concluded that comparing and contrasting with L1 is ideal for learning formulaic expressions, which supports this initial finding of the current study. In addition, Wood (2009) confirmed that focused instruction and exposure to many authentic examples of L1 speakers using formulaic language have improved the learners' fluency and the amount and complexity of formulaic language used.

*4.2. Affinity Towards Category II, Conceptually Similar Idioms*

An interesting finding of this study is that while the improvement was proportionally similar over the three categories, the participants showed an affinity towards the Category II conceptually similar idioms in terms of the total number of correctly produced idioms in DCTs as well as the Writing Prompt. This may be attributed to the fact that proficient language learners can relate to a concept of an idiom but may be hesitant to translate it word for word. The prevalence of such a habit is accounted for in the literature and can be explained by the following arguments: Boers and Lindstromberg (2012) and Author(2013) claim that L2 learners may avoid word-for-word translations or expressions overly familiar to them. On the other hand, the conceptual knowledge of Category II idioms may allow the students to apply such idioms elsewhere as they may process them in chunks. Category III idioms were most likely distant and foreign to the participants and thus difficult to produce. The results of Author's (2013) study may also support this claim. Her study found that certain expressions already familiar to a student may be avoided in order not to sound cliché. In other words, this study's participants may have avoided the word-for-word translation (Category I) idioms and preferred the Category II idioms because they were both conceptually familiar with how the Category II idioms were used, and also aware that they were not the same exact expressions in Turkish. Author (2013) also found that the familiarity with speech contexts may enhance the adoption of formulaic expressions, meaning that knowing when to use the conceptually similar idioms of Category II (and to a slightly lesser extent, the word-for-word translation idioms of Category I) promoted their accurate production over the distinct Category III idioms. Similarly, Boers and Lindstromberg (2012) may support this notion that familiar speech contexts enhance the formulaic language adoption. They contend that many idioms can be problematic for L2 learners in terms of comprehension even with sufficient context. In other words, even with the authentic contextual cues given on the DCT, it is possible the participants did not understand the idioms, especially in Category III, where the idioms' usage was the most unfamiliar to them. In addition, errors made on the DCT in wording or grammar of the target idioms (one of the most common types of errors seen in this study) could be attributed to Boers and Lindstromberg's (2012) argument that whereas L1 speakers may store such expressions holistically, L2 learners may tend to construct the expressions word-by-word, allowing for such errors.

From the results of this study and the support of the above mentioned studies it can be concluded that while focused instruction on the idioms improved the accurate production of idioms in all categories at an even rate, L2 learners may have an affinity towards conceptually similar idioms (Category II) over all in terms of total correct in the pre- and post-tests, because as competent language learners, they may try to avoid translating word-for-word (Category I), and are unaccustomed to the usage of expressions not in their native language repertoire (Category III).

*4.3. EFL Learners' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Focusing on L1 and L2 Equivalent Expressions When Learning Idioms*

The responses to the questionnaire showed that the participants mostly agreed with the idea that idiomatic expressions and their respective contexts with L1 equivalents were easier to produce on the DCT and Writing Prompt. They generally thought that the expressions without an L1 equivalent were more difficult to produce, which is supported by the low number of accurately produced Category III idioms and the respective contexts in the study's DCT and Writing Prompt, respectively. They were neutral as to whether Turkish should be left out of the learning process when dealing with idiomatic expressions. Overall, the questionnaire responses revealed a positive attitude towards the effectiveness of the study's treatment, focusing on L1 and L2 equivalent expressions when learning idioms.

These results are supported by the literature that says explicit instruction of target idioms promote their acquisition and thus usage in appropriate contexts (e.g., Bardovi-Harding & Vellenga, 2012; Boers' et al., 2006; ; Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012; Nesselhauf, 2003;Wood, 2009). In addition, the participants' positive attitude towards the study's treatment is parallel to those studies in the field that support comparing L1 and L2 equivalences (e.g., Nesselhauf, 2003; Yamashita & Jiang, 2010) and opposes those studies which hold that L1 and L2 equivalences come automatically and naturally to L2 learners and thus more attention should be given to L1 and L2 differences (e.g.,Bahns & Eldaw, 1993).

**5. Conclusion and Implications**

The current study aimed to determine the effectiveness of focusing on the availability of equivalent formulaic expressions, namely idioms, in an individual's native language (L1) and second language (L2) on that sample's ability to accurately produce them and their contexts in the second language. The results of this study revealed that a) focused instruction on the idioms improved the accurate production of the expressions themselves and their contexts in all categories at an even rate, and b) L2 learners had an affinity towards working with conceptually similar idioms (Category II) because as competent language learners, they might have tried to avoid basing their usage of the idioms on translating word-for-word (Category I), and were unaccustomed to the usage of expressions not in their native language repertoire (Category III). Thus, certain important pedagogical implications can be derived from the present study regarding formulaic language and specifically, idioms. The primary pedagogical implication is that target formulaic expressions, namely idioms, should be focused on and taught explicitly as explicit instruction helps students acquire idioms and use them in appropriate contexts (e.g., Bardovi-Harding & Vellenga, 2012; Boers' et al., 2006; Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012; Meunier, 2012; Nesselhauf, 2003; Wood, 2009). It is the responsibility of the instructors to bring students' attention to these expressions, how they are used appropriately, and when appropriate, the ability to translate word-for-word and/or conceptually from the students' L1.

Another pedagogical implication that can be derived from the present study has to do with student preferences. Given that the current study's participants had a generally positive attitude towards the methodology that involved emphasizing L1 and L2 equivalents but had a neutral attitude towards whether or not L1 (in this case, Turkish) should be left out of the process altogether, it is the instructors responsibility to analyze and determine the appropriateness or favorability of such a strategy based on their own particular group of students and their respective needs and interests. It is the duty of the teacher to be dynamic and base their methodology on the preferences of the students.

Teachers and students can benefit from the findings of this study by including target formulaic expressions in their course curricula, and determining the appropriateness or favorability of drawing comparisons to the students' L1 when learning such expressions in L2. By determining the effect of L1

congruencies on the production of L2 formulaic expressions, the results of this study may provide foreign language teachers with an effective strategy for promoting and accelerating students' production of L2 formulaic expressions, in turn making their language more fluent and native-like.

In line with the criticisms Truscott (1998) raised in relation to the role of noticing in the acquisition of grammatical forms (e.g., lack of long-term follow-up and a limited amount of instruction), this study involved certain limitations that may suggest that the reader handle its findings with caution. The first and foremost limitation of the study was the time constraint. Due to the fact that idiomatic expressions represented a topic area outside of the curriculum of the participants' normal class instruction, the researchers were only provided with four classroom hours for both the workshop and the data collection phases of the study. Needless to say, a larger time frame reserved for the workshop may have affected the students' ability to produce the idioms and their contexts. Also, the lack of a recall test inhibits the researchers from drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of the study's methodology on a more long-term ability to produce the target idioms and their contexts. Further research with a longer intervention period and a recall test could be conducted to determine whether the current study's results were more about short-term memory than long-term acquisition and retention.

Recent literature in the area of formulaic language has confirmed the benefits of using it and the elevated level of proficiency its users are perceived to have (e.g., Wray, 2008, Wood, 2006). Many studies attest to the positive effect memorization can have on the ability to use formulaic language (e.g., Wray & Fitzpatrick, 2008) or the effect L1 has on the ability to understand L2 formulaic language (e.g., Yamashita & Jiang, 2010), but little research has investigated the ways to *promote* the memorization and production of L2 formulaic expressions and their contexts. To conclude, it is hoped that the findings and pedagogical implications of this study demonstrate the effect that drawing students' attention to the existence of L1 equivalences has on the memorization and subsequent production of those expressions and their contexts in L2, and the benefits of explicit instruction on formulaic expression production across all categories of idioms: word-for-word translations, conceptually similar idioms, and idioms particular to the English language.

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**Appendix A**
Expression List

| Category I: Equivalences (11) | Category II: Conceptually Similar (11) | Category III: Distinct (12) |
|---|---|---|
| Other fish in the sea. (13)<br>(Denizde başka balıklar da var.) | Welcome aboard. (132)<br>(Aramıza hoş geldin.) | With a grain of salt. (233) |
| Calm before the storm. (36)<br>(Fırtına öncesi sessizlik.) | Breathing down my neck. (21)<br>(Polis ensemde.) | Through the grapevine. (89) |
| Go with the flow. (213)<br>(Akışına bırak.) | Better late than never. (77)<br>(Geç olsun güç olmasın.) | Under the weather. (70) |
| Off the top of my head.* (106)<br>(Aklıma ilk gelen.) | Apples and oranges. (217)<br>(Elma ile armut.) | The straight and narrow. (155) |
| Water under the bridge. (77)<br>(Köprünün altında suyu.) | Speak of the devil. (39)<br>(İti an, çomağı hazırla.) | Have a handle on X.* (676) |
| In the long run.* (3249)<br>(Uzun vadede.) | A piece of cake. (261)<br>(Çocuğun oyuncağı.) | X is on the horizon.* (2046) |
| Draw the line.* (717)<br>(Çizgi çekmek.) | Spill the beans. (63)<br>(Ağzındaki baklayı çıkarmak.) | Up for grabs.* (600) |
| At your fingertips. (163)<br>(Parmaklarının ucunda.) | Give me a break.* (529)<br>(Beni rahat bırak.) | Rule of thumb.* (826) |
| Up in the air.* (1198)<br>(Havada kaldı.) | Up to something.* (281)<br>(Bir işler çevirmek.) | Arm and a leg. (101) |
| Get my hands on.* (175)<br>(Elime geçerse.) | From scratch.* (1829)<br>(En baştan.) | On the ball. (684) |
| (The ball is) in your court.* (33)<br>(Top sende.) | Keep an eye on X.* (1490)<br>(Göz kulak olmak.) | Hit the nail on the head. (117) |
| | | Out of the blue. (896) |