

From Text to Context: Analyzing Idiomatic Expressions in Psychological Thrillers Through Corpus-Based Study Among Law Students in Uzbekistan Higher Education

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Abstract

Teaching English for Specific Purposes is a less explored branch in Uzbekistan and it has been a crucial part of discussion. Considering the process of student-centered learning with flipped classroom using corpus tools, focusing on cognition of idiomatic units in modern literature can be the most perspective part of the involvement. ESP teachers in Uzbekistan are aiming to design the syllabus in terms of meeting students' needs for their future professions. As researchers have already indicated, the most frequent type of psychological units' transformations in the corpus can assist the author's intention to specify the utterance, to revive the meaning of the phraseological unit intensifying its expressiveness (Bekhta et al., 2022). C.P.Amador-Moreno (2022) argues that using corpus linguistics techniques can be beneficial in illustrating value of literary (re)productions. M.N.L.Azmi's research (2015) stresses the elements of concepts of "meaning" and "truth" in literary works and Lazar (2009) proves that literature can be used as a tool for discussion, controversy, and critical thinking in ESP setting. Concerning these issues, we designed over four-week home reading classes on "The Silence of the Lambs" by Thomas Harris in three gradual steps: 1) collecting idioms; 2) analyzing the frequency list of idioms in COCA; 3) exploring Uzbek literary translations of idioms using parallel corpora (www.uzbekcorpus.uz). The results showed that the experiment can help law students to learn the most frequently used idiomatic units in modern English. The presenters will discuss the challenges they faced and the productivity of classes by focusing on idiomatic units in psychological thriller fiction.

Keywords: Psychological Thriller, Idiomatic Expression, Parallel Corpora, Home Reading, Flipped Classroom

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Introduction

The field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the Republic of Uzbekistan, particularly within higher education, has been evolving to meet the diverse needs of students pursuing various professional disciplines. Among these spheres, law students require not only a robust understanding of legal English but also an awareness of idiomatic expressions that permeate legal texts, courtroom discourse, and professional communication. Idiomatic expressions, which are phrases whose meanings are not immediately apparent from the individual words, pose unique challenges to non-native speakers. Understanding and appropriately using idioms are crucial for law students as these expressions often carry significant connotations, cultural references, and nuanced meanings that are essential in legal contexts.

In Uzbekistan, where English is taught as a foreign language, law students often struggle with idiomatic expressions due to limited exposure and practice in their academic curriculum. Moreover, psychological thrillers, a genre rich in idiomatic language and complex narratives, offer an intriguing medium for exploring these linguistic features. Psychological thrillers often delve into the human psyche, using language to create tension, suspense, and depth. These elements make the genre an excellent resource for teaching and learning idioms, especially within the context of legal education where precise and nuanced language use is paramount.

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of using psychological thrillers as a tool for teaching idiomatic expressions to law students in Uzbekistan's higher education system. By employing a corpus-based approach, this research aims to:

1. Analyze the frequency and usage of idiomatic expressions in selected psychological thrillers.
2. Assess how these idioms are understood and applied by law students in their academic and professional language use.
3. Explore the implications of integrating corpus linguistics tools in ESP teaching to enhance.
4. students' comprehension and usage of idiomatic language.

This study also seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application by contextualizing idiomatic expressions within legal and psychological narratives. The insights gained from this research will contribute to the development of more effective ESP curricula and teaching strategies that align with the specific needs of law students in Uzbekistan. Ultimately, this study aims to enhance students' linguistic competence, enabling them to navigate the complexities of legal English with greater confidence and precision.

Methodology

The research was carried out at Tashkent State Law University in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, focusing on law students who were enrolled in an ESP course. The course integrated psychological thrillers into the curriculum to facilitate the learning of idiomatic expressions. The study followed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The study involved 50 law students, with an equal representation of male and female participants. These students were in their second year of study and had an intermediate level of English proficiency, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). We selected "The Silence of the Lambs" by Thomas Harris

as the primary text for analysis due to its wide usage of idiomatic expressions and psychological depth. The text was chosen because it aligns with the interests and future professional needs of law students. The identified idioms were translated into Uzbek using the parallel corpora available at www.uzbekcorpus.uz. This step was crucial for understanding how idiomatic expressions are rendered in the students' native language and how they might influence comprehension.

The students participated in four-week home reading classes structured into three steps:

Step 1: Collection of idiomatic expressions from the text.

Step 2: Analysis of the frequency list of idioms in COCA.

Step 3: Exploration of Uzbek translations of the idioms using parallel corpora.

Home-reading classes in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts, particularly among law students, offer a unique and effective approach to language learning. By engaging with legal literature and related texts, students are not only able to enhance their language proficiency but also deepen their understanding of legal concepts and terminology. The incorporation of home-reading assignments allows students to explore complex legal narratives at their own pace, fostering critical thinking and analytical skills essential for their future careers. This method also encourages independent learning and the ability to apply language skills in real-world contexts, making it an invaluable component of ESP instruction.

Furthermore, home-reading classes facilitate the development of specialized vocabulary and contextual understanding that is crucial for law students. By interacting with authentic legal texts, students are exposed to the nuances of legal language and the specific jargon used in various legal documents. This exposure is critical in helping students to not only grasp the meaning of legal terms but also to understand their application in different legal scenarios. The structured analysis of these texts in a classroom setting, coupled with guided discussions and tasks, enables students to articulate their understanding more effectively, thereby improving both their written and spoken English skills. The integration of home-reading into ESP curricula aligns with contemporary pedagogical approaches that emphasize the importance of content-based instruction in developing language proficiency for specific professional fields.

Assessment

To evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional sessions, we administered pre- and posttests. The tests measured the students' ability to recognize, interpret, and use idiomatic expressions in context. Additionally, qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions to gain insights into the students' experiences and challenges.

Results

The results from the study were encouraging and indicated a significant improvement in the students' understanding and use of idiomatic expressions.

1. Pre-Test Results:

- Only 30% of students could correctly identify and interpret idiomatic expressions before the instructional sessions.
- A majority of students (70%) found idioms challenging, often misinterpreting their meanings or failing to recognize them altogether.

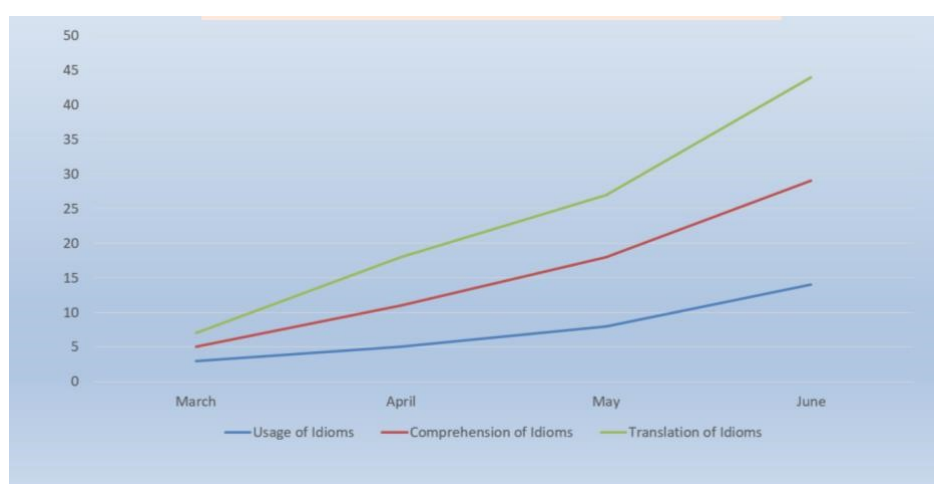
2. Post-Test Results:

- After the instructional sessions, 75% of students were able to correctly identify and interpret idiomatic expressions, showing a 45% improvement.
- The students also demonstrated a 40% increase in the correct usage of idioms in their writing and speaking tasks.

3. Qualitative Feedback:

- Students reported that the use of psychological thrillers made the learning process more engaging and relevant to their field of study.
- The integration of COCA and parallel corpora helped bridge the gap between English idioms and their Uzbek equivalents, enhancing comprehension.

The following bar graph illustrates the pre- and post-test results, showing the percentage of students who correctly identified and interpreted idiomatic expressions.



Graph 1: Improvement in Students' Comprehension of Idiomatic Expressions

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the effectiveness of using psychological thrillers as a medium for teaching idiomatic expressions in an ESP context. The significant improvement in students' comprehension and usage of idioms underscores the importance of contextualized learning in ESP courses. Our research aligns with Bekhta et al.'s (2022) assertion that the transformation of psychological units in literary works can enhance the expressiveness and specificity of language learning. Similarly, C.P. Amador-Moreno (2022) emphasizes the value of corpus linguistics techniques in illustrating the literary (re)productions, which is evident in our successful use of COCA for analyzing idioms. The study also resonates with M.N.L. Azmi's (2015) focus on the concepts of "meaning" and "truth" in literary works, demonstrating how idioms can convey deeper meanings in legal contexts. Lastly, Lazar (2009) and Bennett et al. (2020) advocate for the integration of literature into ESP, arguing that it fosters critical thinking and discussion—outcomes that were clearly observed among our students.

Conclusion

The study confirms that incorporating psychological thrillers into ESP instruction is an effective strategy for enhancing law students' understanding and use of idiomatic

expressions. The corpus-based approach, combined with contextualized learning, provides a robust framework for addressing the linguistic needs of law students in Uzbekistan. Future research could explore the long-term impact of this approach and its applicability to other genres and professional contexts. By integrating literary works like psychological thrillers into ESP courses, educators can create more engaging and meaningful learning experiences that equip students with the linguistic tools they need for their future careers. The findings of this study shed light on the profound impact that psychological thrillers can have on the cognitive and analytical capabilities of law students. By delving into complex characters and intricate plots, students are exposed to scenarios that enhance their critical thinking and empathy—skills that are indispensable in legal practice. This research not only reinforces the importance of integrating literature into legal education but also highlights the unique role that psychological thrillers can play in developing a deeper understanding of human psychology and behavior, which is crucial in interpreting the law.

Moreover, these results suggest practical applications for educational settings. Incorporating psychological thrillers into the curriculum could serve as a valuable tool for fostering analytical skills, encouraging students to approach legal cases with a more nuanced perspective. This interdisciplinary approach bridges the gap between legal studies and literature, offering students a well-rounded education that prepares them for the complexities of legal practice. This study aligns with existing literature, such as Bennett et al. (2020) and Lazar (2009), which advocate for the use of literary works in specialized education to cultivate critical thinking and discussion. However, our research offers new insights by specifically focusing on law students and the genre of psychological thrillers, thereby contributing a fresh perspective to the ongoing discourse on the role of literature in education. Looking forward, future research could explore the effects of different literary genres on various aspects of legal education, or extend the study to include students from different academic backgrounds. Such studies would further enrich our understanding of the intersection between literature and professional education.

In conclusion, this research underscores the potential of psychological thrillers not only as a tool for entertainment but also as a means of enhancing educational outcomes in law. By fostering critical thinking and empathy, these narratives can play a pivotal role in shaping the legal professionals of tomorrow, making a compelling case for their inclusion in academic curricula.

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