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taught at the teacher-training colleges. These results also demonstrate a strong
preference for traditional techniques because of familiarity and curriculum
constraints. Teachers' awareness and usage of other methods, which are
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Abstract

The discussion on multiword expressions is an unavoidable aspect of any target language. Idioms, which are part of multiword expressions in the English Language, are viewed as one of the neglected areas in the second-language classroom. This study explored how teachers from the three main levels of education in two municipalities in the Bono Region of Ghana approached the teaching of idioms. This descriptive qualitative case study examined the resources available to teachers, assessing their preferences and awareness of approaches. The findings revealed that these instructors relied primarily on the core teaching materials and sometimes on other online resources for additional support. Due to changes in the curriculum, what emerged from the study is that idioms were not part of the content that was taught at the teacher-training colleges. These results also demonstrate a strong preference for traditional techniques because of familiarity and curriculum constraints. Teachers' awareness and usage of other methods, which are cognitively motivated, are limited. The implications could be linked to pedagogy, training, and resource constraints that teachers may face. It also highlights the necessity for curriculum adjustments to cater to the inadequacies. Addressing the identified concerns will improve the teaching and learning experience, to meet the approved standards, the expectations of teachers, and the needs of students. A focus on professional development programs tailored toward innovative teaching practices could address the training needs of educators and create more dynamic learning opportunities for learners.

Introduction

Interest in multiword expressions (MWEs) related studies, particularly idioms in recent times, contrasts sharply with the norm of decades earlier (Boers et al., 2004b). The lack of scholarly attention in this area could be attributed to three main assumptions about the nature of language and the relevance of teaching multiword expressions, such as collocations and idioms. The first assumption looks at language instruction from the premise of grammar and lexis, neglecting the teaching of multiword expressions in the process. The second assumption is that such expressions are considered merely stylistic and do not offer any critical relevance in interpreting the form and structure of language. The third assumption is that the meanings derived from idioms are considered highly arbitrary, making them too complex for systematic interpretation (Boers et al., 2004a). These three assumptions affect the teaching and learning of these expressions in the language classroom, especially in a second-language (L2) situation. Multiword expressions are essential to language mastery (Contreras et al., 2022) because they encompass phrases or word combinations that express meanings beyond the literal interpretation of individual words.

Idioms, as multiword expressions, are ubiquitous in all aspects of natural discourse (Siyanova, 2017), as they are considered an essential component of vocabulary acquisition and language users' communicative competence (Copper, 1998). Although idioms are a constant feature in the discourse of native users, Tarcaoanu (2012) believes that idioms are one of the neglected areas in L2 classrooms, since they receive less attention in second-language contexts for two reasons: the focus on grammatical rules and the quest to simplify the language for students (Wray, 2000). These explanations may hinder learners' acquisition of more nuanced communicative aspects of the language, resulting in their struggle to grasp and appropriately use such expressions. Also, this quest to simplify the learning experience may create a false sense of fluency and undermine the learners' ability to cope with the language learning situation.

Additionally, teaching multiword expressions presents a distinct challenge for language teachers. This stems from its arbitrariness and sociocultural underpinnings (Cakir, 2011), which affect its comprehension in the language classroom. The scholarship on teaching methodologies for multiword expressions appears scant (Cooper, 1998; van Dijk et al., 2022; Tran, 2012). In a multilingual context, such as Ghana, where English is an official language and the L2 for most learners, this issue is further complicated by students' limited exposure to native-like usage outside of the language classroom. Copper (1999) asserts that this inadequate experience could ultimately hinder learners' abilities to use these expressions in actual situations, thereby leaving a gap in their linguistic and cultural repertoire. This challenge calls for innovative teaching strategies (Berendi et al., 2008; Chen & Lai, 2013; Kovecses, 2000; Wang, 2020). Most teaching methodologies in the language classroom seem to promote rote learning.

Moreover, with the shift towards practical approaches to language teaching and learning, the emphasis remains on grammatical and syntactic issues and the pragmatic aspects of language. The scholarship on language acquisition, in general, and multiword expressions, in particular, has focused on the frequency of use and learners' comprehension of idioms (Grant, 2007; Wray, 2000). The language curriculum appears to devote much space to teaching other content areas (Khan & Daskin, 2014). Furthermore, the arbitrariness of idioms presents a challenge in finding the most effective theoretical and pedagogical approach for their teaching as compared to other aspects of language, such as grammar and syntax. Apart from rote learning, little is known about the strategies used in teaching and learning idioms, particularly in the L2 context. However, the addition of cognitive-motivated strategies is expected to enhance students' exposure and learning experience in the classroom, as recent developments in cognitive linguistics have shown the contribution of

cognitive motivation in understanding these expressions (Callies, 2017; Kovecses & Szabo, 1996; Thomson, 2020).

The scholarship on multiword expressions, like idioms in English, especially in Ghana, seems limited and anecdotal. Moreover, the few studies from this context mostly emanate from other Ghanaian and African languages (Callies, 2017; Epoge, 2015; Laryea, 2015; Nyame et al., 2022). This is equally evident in the resources committed to its teaching and learning (McPherron & Randolf, 2014). Empirically, there seems to be minimal scholarship on how pre-service teachers are trained in content and methods to handle this curriculum area (Khan & Daskin, 2014). Therefore, this study seeks to examine the learning resources for the teaching of MWEs and investigate the strategies of teaching such expressions. It also endeavors to assess teachers' awareness of cognitively-motivated approaches to teaching idioms in the English-language classroom. This paper is intended to contribute to the scholarship on idioms, especially from an African context.

The following research questions were formulated to guide the paper. The questions are:

1. What learning resources are used in Ghanaian English-language classrooms?
2. What strategies are used in teaching idioms in this context, and what is the level of awareness among teachers of cognitively motivated approaches to teaching idioms?

Literature Review

Multiword expression refers to a series of phenomena that range from collocations to fixed expressions. Stengers (2007) defines MWEs as a combination of two or more words used to express a specific concept. A distinctive feature of such expressions is that they often have opaque meanings, for example, "kick the bucket" (which means to die). There are many terminologies associated with MWEs. The most used terminology is collocations, extended lexical units, fixed expressions, formulaic sequences, idioms, idiomatic expressions, multiword units, phraseological units, phrasal lexical items, and phrasal lexemes. Although different writers use MWEs to represent various concepts, this paper uses multiword expressions to refer to idioms.

For pragmatic and theoretical reasons, idioms are regarded as one of the most problematic aspects of second-language acquisition for teachers and students (Kovecses & Szabo, 1996). Burke (1998) states that an individual's knowledge of slang and idioms in a second-language situation is central to understanding the target language. This is because slang and idioms mostly appear in the language of their native users. Dancygier and Sweetser (2014) assert that such expressions give a text aesthetic appeal. Nonetheless, they believe that these serve other important purposes beyond mere decoration. Additionally, idioms are recognized expressions, frequently unique to a particular language, whose meaning may not be inferred from the literal meaning of their constituent words.

Kovecses and Szabo (1996) define idioms as language utterances whose meanings cannot be fully understood from the individual parts. They also claim that most idioms have a systematic mental motivation. For example, the meaning of "to show someone the ropes" cannot be deduced from the definition of each word; this indicates that a learner may encounter difficulties understanding the meaning of a particular idiom. Thus, fixed expressions with arbitrary meanings can be considered idioms.

This discussion, thus far, shows that there are several ways to define idioms, however, a common assumption in all the definitions seems to be that idioms are arbitrary and should be memorized. This has made the teaching of such phrases a challenging situation for learners and

instructors for practical and theoretical reasons (Kovecses & Szabo, 1996). Learners' comprehension of these expressions may be impeded by limitations in language proficiency and a lack of cultural immersion in the target language (Kovecses & Szabo, 1996), which is needed for understanding. Since culture and language are closely related, students may struggle to understand idioms with deep cultural roots if they have little to no knowledge of the target language's habits, beliefs, and standards (Brown, 1994). Even those who may know the intended meaning of an idiom may have difficulty with its usage. Chuang (2013) says that learners struggle to understand the meaning of idioms and, at the same time, find it challenging to use them in the proper contexts. Therefore, they face problems with idiom comprehension, since its meaning cannot be determined through its constituents (Chuang, 2013). Instructors may also face challenges in making an informed choice about the most effective pedagogical and theoretical approaches to teaching idioms. To this end, it is important to consider not just the content but also the various approaches that are needed in teaching the content in this context.

There are quite a number of approaches to teaching idioms and other multiword expressions that could be identified in the literature. Although the traditional, cognitive, corpus, and cross-linguistic approaches seem to dominate, Rizq (2015) believes that the traditional and cognitively informed approaches are the most dominant in terms of applicability. Traditionally, idiom instruction relies heavily on memorization, where students are typically given lists of idioms to learn by heart through repeated exposure. According to Chen and Lai (2013), this approach is time-consuming and ineffective because it fails to connect idioms to students' existing knowledge. However, some teachers favor its use, due to its perceived ease and suitability for implicit learning. To these teachers, the traditional approach is important in vocabulary acquisition because of its repetitive nature (Nation, 2001). Kovecses and Szabo (1996) contend that the traditional approach also has special benefits for the students and should not always attract negative connotations.

On the other hand, cognitive linguistics (CL), which originated in the 1970s as a response to the prevailing linguistic methodologies, posits a strong connection between language, cognition, and the physical world (Tyler, 2012). Central to CL is exploring meaning, conceptual processes, and embodied experience about language and the mind (Evans, 2007). By investigating conceptualization patterns and the underlying cognitive mechanisms, cognitive linguists aim to uncover systematic structures within language (Evans & Green, 2006). Furthermore, while CL approves of the need for vocabulary memorization, it proposes an approach that allows lexical units to be seen as motivated, reflecting patterns that can provide principles that act as a schema for acquiring new vocabulary. Additionally, systematic, motivated explication is believed to hold a key position within language education, as it enhances learners' comprehension and retention of encountered lexical units (Tyler, 2012).

The use of CL in language instruction, particularly for teaching figurative language, has garnered significant scholarly attention (Komur & Cimen, 2009; Thomson, 2020; Wang, 2020), where several scholars have made unique contributions through their research. For instance, Evans and Green (2006) distinguished two distinct subfields within cognitive linguistics: cognitive approaches to grammar and cognitive semantics, which influence the scholarship of idioms. Boers (2011) adds that cognitive semantic approaches offer a promising method for teaching figurative language. This has been reiterated by cognitive semanticists, who believe that the study of language can be explored effectively through a cognitive lens (Evans & Green, 2006). The increasing consensus among scholars that cognitively informed approaches could offer an effective alternative to the teaching and learning of formulaic language cannot be overemphasized (Charteris-Black, 2002; Chen & Lai, 2013; Kovecses, 2000; Thomson, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Paivio's (1986) Dual Coding Theory. The choice of theoretical framework has to do with the integral role that these theories play in the teaching of formulaic language (Evans, 2007), as these underpin several strategies and activities for formulaic language teaching and learning cognitively informed approaches (Wang, 2020).

The main tenet of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) is that other tangible embodied experiences shape the understanding of abstract structures. This understanding is done through metaphoric mapping, embodied cognition, and systematicity. The theory highlights the importance of metaphors as a key component of human cognition. For example, Evans and Green (2006) maintain that metaphors, like "Life is a journey," could help learners conceptualize idioms such as "at a crossroads," or "on the right track." Additionally, although there are some methodological issues, empirical evidence in the literature reveals how this theory promotes learners' retention (Boers, 2011). For example, Rodriguez and Moreno (2009) used Disney movies to experiment with conceptual metaphors and confirmed the effectiveness of the approach, stressing its time efficiency in the classroom.

Also, in a 2000 study, Kovecses split 30 adult Hungarian learners of English at an intermediate proficiency level into two groups and gave each group a gap-filling task. Ten terms with definitions were taught to Group A to memorize, and Group B was given identical phrases, along with conceptual metaphor explanations. Both groups finished the assignment after becoming comfortable, although some sentences were difficult to figure out. The findings showed that Group B did better on both tests than Group A, because the former received explanations of conceptual metaphors. Kovecses concluded that learning an idiomatic language is considerably improved by the awareness of conceptual metaphors (Kovecses, 2000). Chen and Lai (2013) also assessed 19 Taiwanese university students who could write in English at the intermediate to high-intermediate level. These students were asked to write essays that expressed anger. They were then given assignments to identify idioms in an article and create metaphorical representations for the idioms related to anger. They were also taught conceptual and metaphorical language. After that, these idioms were included in the revised essays. The researchers affirmed the efficacy of this conceptual approach to teaching idioms by advocating for its adoption in the language classroom. While these studies demonstrate practicality (Rodriguez & Moreno, 2009) and empirical connections (Chen & Lai, 2013; Kovecses, 2000), they may be generally limited in scope and cultural specificity.

The second theory, the Dual Coding theory (Paivio, 1986), concerns human cognition and memory. It assumes that human information processing and representation happen in two unique and interconnected ways: through verbal and nonverbal systems. According to Wang (2020), a key aspect of memory is the fact that language and imagery subsystems are connected in the meaning-making process, as the stored information will be dually stored. In this way, concrete ideas could have referential and verbal associative connections. However, abstract objects rely mostly on verbal prompts in order to make meaning (Paivio, 1986, 1991). Applying this theory in different contexts is effective in formulaic language-learning strategies. This is evident in Luo's (2022) study of computer-assisted vocabulary teaching in language classrooms. The study discussed the benefits of using the two subsystems to enhance learner retention by integrating multimedia and cognitive-informed strategies. Although it provides a comprehensive overview of the theory in language teaching, it also appears to rely on theoretical discussion, rather than empirical exposition. Schnotz and Horz (2010) likewise explore the nuances of integrating multimedia to enhance learners' ability to construct coherent structures through the dual-coding theory. The study

delves into the key tenets of modality, redundancy, and coherence, which determine the efficiency of multimedia learning. Although there is a critical engagement with the theory, there is also an acknowledgment of its limited effects. These authors address this with the integration of other theoretical models. These two theories provide a complementary understanding of the cognitive processes that underlie figurative language teaching, such as idioms.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive qualitative case study to facilitate data collection. A qualitative research approach covers many empirical methods that describe and interpret the experiences of a study population in a particular context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The qualitative approach is suitable for this study, as it is deemed crucial in unearthing patterns through critical observation and analysis of issues, especially those concerning the teaching of idioms (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research offers in-depth and rich content that comprehensively captures the study's objective. Using a case study as a design presents a unique opportunity to explore the phenomena in a particular context (Rashid et al., 2019). The research design is one of the viable methods used in qualitative research, as it is considered convenient for this type of research that explores a small data set (Harrison et al., 2017).

Setting and participants

The study area covered English-language teachers in two municipalities from the Bono Region of Ghana. These locations were chosen because they have a higher concentration of English-language teachers for this study's three levels of focus. Also, the issue of accessibility was a factor in the choice of study area. Stratification was done according to the three main educational levels, where 13 respondents responded to questions based on their willingness and availability for the study. This sample was taken from a larger data set on sustaining continuous training of English teachers in the region. The respondents were eight females and five males whose ages ranged between 30 and 48 years, with teaching experiences encompassing six years or more. The 13 teachers were all graduates with at least a bachelor's degree in English or linguistics (see Table 1 for details). The respondents were recruited during the 2021-2022 academic year, when schools were still recovering from the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. This circumstance, which affected every aspect and level of the educational system in Ghana, also affected the study area and sample. However, it is within an acceptable study size for qualitative research, as confirmed by Sarfo et al. (2021), who recommend between four to 15 respondents for this type of investigation. The choice of this population reflects the unique characteristics and experiences concerning the issues under investigation.

Subsequently, the respondents in this study consented to participate and were informed that their participation was anonymous and confidential. To this end, pseudonyms were used to conceal respondents' identities. The selection represents the unique traits of the participants, reflecting the diverse teaching experiences from the three levels of education in the country. Demographic information was collected to understand their views on the study objectives. Respondents were given one week to respond to the questionnaire. However, it took four to five weeks to get thirteen responses. The participants were asked to share their experiences in teaching and learning idioms, along with the types of materials and activities that they found effective. They were also encouraged to elaborate on their responses, sharing their experiences where possible.

Data collection and analysis

The available literature on the teaching and learning of MWEs, such as idioms, was surveyed to determine the key issues and themes that would meet the requirements for the research objectives. Then, a working framework, based on the theoretical and empirical research, was applied to design suitable questions for data collection (Boers, 2011; Chen & Lai, 2013; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Luo, 2022; Paivio, 1986,1991; Schnnotz & Horz, 2010). A semi-structured questionnaire was employed as a data collection method for this study, due to its flexibility in allowing the researchers to ask questions with minimal restrictions, allowing respondents the space to provide rich, in-depth responses. A semi-structured questionnaire is one of the open-ended methods for data collection in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative content analysis was deemed to be an appropriate type of analytic method for this study, where English-language teachers from different levels were selected. Content analysis is a data-analytic method that systematically describes qualitative data (Schreier, 2014). In this study, patterns and relevant data were identified, coded, and categorized, with related themes being grouped and organized according to the ideas shared in the documents. This was done to capture the data information's frequency, content, and context. Inductive and deductive approaches were used to analyze the data (Patton, 2002). The analysis of the findings was discussed using excerpts (quotations) from the data, and the theoretical and empirical evidence from the literature underpinned the views of the researchers on the issues identified.

Results and Discussion

Biodata of the respondents

The demographic details of the thirteen respondents are displayed in Table 1, which shows the gender, qualification, teaching level, and teaching experience for each participant. The demographic dispersal was not evenly distributed at the individual levels, but was representative among males than among females. More than 61.5% of the respondents were females, while 38.5% were males. About 46.2% of the teachers had at least a bachelor's degree, while 53.8% had a master's degree. Therefore, in terms of qualifications, these instructors, especially those who are at the primary and secondary levels, have the necessary teacher education. However, it must be noted that although a second degree may not be a requirement to teach in these grades, it may be the basic entry requirement for teaching at the college level, in the absence of doctoral degrees. Such teachers must have at least a research master's degree that aligns with the first degree to teach at post-secondary institutions, according to the regulatory body, the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). This has become the norm, especially after ratifying the Colleges of Education Act of 2012 (Act 847) (Buabeng et al., 2020).

Also, the data reveals that most of the respondents (69.2%) had teaching experience of ten years and above. Therefore, their responses were deemed richer and regarded as a more valuable data source. Including different respondents from the three levels also offered a diversified and unique data source, which was important for data triangulation.

Table 1: Demographic details of the respondents.

Gender	Qualification	Experience	Level
Female	First	8	Basic
Female	First	17	Basic
Male	Second	11	Basic
Female	First	10	Basic
Male	Second	20	Basic
Female	First	6	Basic
Female	Second	13	Senior
Male	First	6	Senior
Male	First	15	Senior
Female	Second	15	Senior
Female	Second	8	Senior
Female	Second	18	College
Male	Second	20	College

Resources for the teaching and learning of idioms

The data analysis on teaching materials revealed teachers' reliance on the syllabus and textbooks. There were, however, those (31%) who indicated the additional use of online resources in teaching, including MWEs. Respondents B2, S7, C12, and B6 shared the following:

Excerpts 1, 2, 3, and 4
i.   We usually rely on the syllabus and the students' textbooks to teach, but when it comes to giving them more examples, I direct them online for them to create their list of idioms.

ii.   Aside … the teaching materials, the compiled past questions are a good source for relevant content…

iii.   We had enough resource materials to teach the various aspects of the English language, [but] unfortunately, idioms are not part of the content [that] we currently treat with students who are reading [in] the four-year degree program.

iv.   I have about five different books [that] I consult… but idioms are not treated regularly, like the other aspects.

These responses indicate the resources that teachers employ in the language classroom. They also reveal their interests in various teaching materials to help engage learners. The comments also highlight some teachers' innovative ways to source content to teach MWEs, such as idioms. Using online media to augment what is provided in the classroom for students is encouraging, as these are readily available. These additions are important, though other ethical concerns, in terms of usage, may need further clarification.

As echoed by the majority (69.2%) of the respondents, idioms are not part of the regular content that teachers treat in the classroom, due to their coverage in the curriculum, suggesting

that their role in the language acquisition process may not be adequately emphasized. The respondents (15.3%) from the college indicated that the teaching resources did not treat idioms as part of the current curriculum content; the reason being the changes in the current curriculum for colleges of education in the country. However, this may pose problems because teacher trainees will eventually teach this topic in schools when they graduate. This situation confirms Tarcaoanu's (2012) and Wray's (2000) assertion that idioms are one of the neglected areas in L2 classrooms, and as a result, hinder the acquisition of the more nuanced communicative aspects of the language, resulting in learners struggling to grasp and appropriately use such expressions. The findings of this study highlight the pressing need to reexamine the initial and continuous training materials for language instructions in the country, as all educational institutions, especially government-sponsored ones at the pre-tertiary levels and the colleges, have a uniform course structure for both content and pedagogic instructions. Also, the exclusion of some MWEs, such as idioms, from the current language course structure of the colleges raises critical concerns, as it is further going to exacerbate the situation for both teachers and students, where teachers may lack the content and pedagogic knowledge to handle idioms and other related content effectively.

To this end, the criteria used in selecting content for teaching are not explicitly indicated. This may allow teachers to decide on the specificity of content to treat, which may lack uniformity. This means that the class of idioms addressed is partially at the personal discretion of the teachers involved and the content of idioms in the textbooks. This is evident from responses (B1 and S8) below:

Excerpts 5 and 6
    i.   The syllabus mostly gives some pedagogical guidelines as to how to treat idioms, but it doesn't provide details of the content… the specific examples of idioms are mostly found in the textbooks.

    ii.   For the content, I pick the ones I know [that] students may encounter in the language.

The reliance on personal discretion and creativity may help teachers make practical decisions regarding the actual content that the students may need. While this approach may seem flexible for teachers, it lacks the structured framework to handle MWEs effectively. This mirrors Wray's (2000) assumptions about the limited attention MWEs receive in second-language contexts, attributing it to the heightened focus on grammatical rules and the quest to simplify the language for students. This could also hinder learners' acquisition of the more nuanced communicative aspects of the language, resulting in them struggling to grasp and appropriately use such expressions.

Again, the quest to simplify the learning experience may create a false sense of fluency and undermine students' abilities to cope with the language-learning situation. It is also an indication that the attention given to idioms and other figurative language appears inadequate, as reported by most respondents (69.2%). This could have far-reaching implications for both teachers and learners in the language classroom. A critical evaluation of the course content regarding MWEs could therefore be addressed. This observation aligns with Khan and Daskin's (2014) information on the limited content coverage of MWEs in the language classroom, however, there is little indication of the specificity of the content covered. Based on the examples given in the present study, however, metaphorical idioms, like "as blind as a bat," metonymic idioms, such as "hate someone's guts," and hyperbolic idioms, "raining cats and dogs," for instance, are the

common content that is taught. The next section discusses the preferred approaches to teaching MWES.

Preferred approaches to teaching idioms

The data revealed that respondents teach idioms using varying techniques, some of which are underpinned by traditional and cognitively informed approaches. This is evident in what these respondents (B1, B2, S8, and S11) had to say about their teaching strategies for MWEs.

Excerpts 7 to 10

i.   I prefer the traditional method of teaching idioms, because it is straightforward… I give a direct explanation of the idioms, by giving their literal and figurative meanings, then give examples of their applications in sentences…

ii.   The traditional method is the only method I'm conversant with …

iii. After teaching them the meanings, I practice with students… demonstrating the use in conversations…. But generally, in the final assessment, students write essays to show their understanding …

iv.   Most often, I teach the meaning of the idioms and give students work afterwards… I sometimes create scenarios that depict the meaning…

These strategies employed by teachers enhance students' learning experiences in different ways. Respondents appeared to appreciate traditional strategies. This preference highlights several key points about their reasons for this choice, as revealed in the excerpts.

In excerpt (i), the teacher prefers the traditional method because of the belief that it is uncomplicated. The respondent also emphasized the straightforwardness of the traditional approach, highlighting its simplicity and ease of implementation. Another respondent, from excerpt (ii), revealed its frequency of use because it was the only known approach in the teacher's experience. In excerpts (iii and iv), there is an effort to involve students in the learning process, but it is still more product-oriented than a process-oriented learning experience. This indicates that teachers tend to choose approaches that demand little preparatory effort and align with their existing knowledge and expertise. Due to its simplicity, they may find the traditional approach manageable, particularly those with limited professional development opportunities and heavy work schedules. Their views are in line with what Nation (2001), Rizq (2015), and Chen and Lai (2013) reveal about the positive aspects of the traditional approach to idiom teaching. This also shows that teachers' preference for traditionally related methods stems from their experiences and needs in the language classroom. Respondents also raised comments about the efficiency of the traditional approach. Excerpts (i and ii) mentioned that the traditional approach was more effective, regarding ease of use. According to respondents, the traditional methods often involve explicit teaching, which can be seen as providing clear and concrete instructions. This approach could be effective for teachers and students who benefit from clear, straightforward explanations. This is confirmed in studies (Chen and Lai's, 2013; Thomson, 2020) about using such approaches to teach multi-word expressions. Charteris-Black (2002) believes that teachers prefer traditional strategies due to the institutional structures within the L2 context. Subsequently, the school curricula, textbooks, assessment methods, and other teaching resources might favour traditional strategies, making it easier for teachers to align their teaching practices with institutional expectations.

Also, culturally-related factors, prevailing in some school contexts, may affect attitudes towards using other approaches, such as the cognitive ones that may be deemed more demanding, in terms of time and resources, thus influencing teachers' preferences. Again, in some educational contexts, traditional methods are valued for their structure and discipline, which can lead to teachers' preference for the traditional over other innovative strategies. The current literature, however, does not explicitly indicate the culturally-specific issues that hinder the use of cognitive-related approaches to teaching, especially in an L2 context.

Also, it is expected that students will engage in writing activities that depict the meaning of particular idioms, as this could affect their cognition and emotions, aiding in the consolidation of abstract concepts. However, from the data (iii and iv), students' writing experiences seem to emanate from the final assessment, where attention is on students' abilities to reproduce what they learned from teachers' direct instruction. Again, there is little evidence to depict the use of visual aids and imagery from the gathered responses. Although it is believed to provide a concrete representation of what is being taught (Paivio, 1986) to promote retention, there is no indication in the data on its usage. However, the findings emphasized how idioms are connected to everyday experiences to promote retention. For example, in this excerpt (11, S10), a respondent explained, "In my introduction, I ask learners to think about a similar circumstance where such idioms may be applied… this helps in understanding and application". Providing students with the opportunity to connect their experiences to the learning situation helps them to apply what is learned in differing contexts.

Furthermore, interactions during teaching are an important aspect of idiom usage. Teachers employ various strategies to engage students in the language classroom. Some teachers, particularly those from the primary-grade levels, shared their experiences in the language classroom, where some preferred role-playing. These teachers explained that students can depict usage situations "…with role play and stories, learners get the chance to practice in a natural environment…" (excerpt 12, B3). Another excerpt (13, B6) added that "completion activities work well with pupils." As seen in excerpt 14 (S9). "Sometimes debates about topical themes allow students to critically engage with others." This fosters collaboration among students, which is critical in the language classroom. Such collaborations make the learning experience interesting and meaningful (Ibrahim et al., 2015). The findings highlight the varied strategies these language-classroom teachers employed in teaching, emphasizing context-specific usage and interactive practices. This helps create a learning ecology that is effective and exciting, thereby aiding the retention process. To this end, providing structured resource materials and continuous training will enable teachers to engage students and promote comprehension. The level of teachers' awareness regarding cognitively-motivated approaches is discussed in the next section.

Awareness of cognitively motivated approaches

The awareness of specific cognitive approaches was not a common indication, as the majority of the teachers (77%) reported being unaware of such strategies. The reasons for this limited knowledge can be attributed to several factors. From the data, curriculum constraints, such as the minimal focus on idioms, contribute to teachers' awareness levels, or lack thereof. If idioms are not prioritized in the syllabus, teachers may not seek out or receive training on innovative teaching methods. Respondents (B1 and B3) noted that idioms are typically given as lists for students to memorize, indicating that they occupy a small space in the overall curriculum. From the discussion on this finding, educators seem to employ strategies with cognitive underpinnings, without naming particular cognitive approaches. This could account for the gap that was shown in their awareness

levels. In addition, the response from B3, who indicated how such approaches were yet to be applied to instruction, suggests that such methods might have different connotations in the context. This finding may demonstrate teachers' limited exposure to such methodologies. Another contributing factor may also be the inadequacies of resources or training, as, without these, teachers would be less likely to experiment with new models. This may be a result of the resistance-to-change syndrome. In the context of this study, it could be the reluctance of teachers to adopt new teaching methods, especially if they have been using conventional and time-tested approaches with some visible success. Another consideration may be fear of the unknown and comfort with established practices. Some implications of the present study align with the findings of previous ones (Chen & Lai, 2013; Nation, 2001; Rizq, 2015), which underscore the positive qualities of conventional approaches. These studies highlight the clarity and directness of such methods in promoting teaching efficiency. However, respondents' reliance on more conventional approaches does not negate the significant potential of cognitively motivated approaches to teaching idioms. As practices which rely on cognitive linguistics ideas, they offer enormous pedagogical insights for the L2 classroom (Thomson, 2020; Tyler, 2012). In addressing these issues, educators need access to targeted training opportunities where practical strategies embody the cognitive linguistic principles.

Additionally, curriculum and other pedagogical revisions could be done to incorporate other novel and innovative approaches to teaching multi-word expressions, including idioms. Providing resources and materials that support teachers' adoption of cognitively motivated approaches can promote efficiency in teaching. Such items could include teaching aids, access to research materials, and other online resources. Teachers could also benefit from funding opportunities or creating an enabling working environment that promotes shared experiences.

Furthermore, this study unveils various concerns about the teaching of MWEs. Among them are the lack of space for treating MWEs in the language classroom, as well as the limited resources and training opportunities for teachers. The syllabus has little room for treating MWEs as a key component of the language-learning process. This affects the depth of its coverage, as indicated in this excerpt (15, S10), which states, "The textbook has a tall list of idioms [that] students learn, but the syllabus just gives it a brief mention, so you cannot spend all your time on it…" This forces the teacher to decide on the specific idioms to treat within the limited space provided, which may not be adequate for effectively teaching and learning such abstract concepts. Because of the brief mention in the syllabus, there is also little indication of the pedagogical strategies that could be employed. This provides an avenue for teachers to determine the most appropriate approach, which could be overwhelming. In response to the issues raised, teachers also suggested some practical strategies to make instruction more effective by using other teaching resources, such as online materials, to augment the formal resources they have available. Teachers sometimes direct students to use online resources to assist them in their learning. This is evident in the response of B2 in excerpt 1. Such practices will equip instructors to meet their teaching objectives.

This section of the study focused on teachers' level of awareness regarding cognitively motivated approaches to teaching MWEs. It highlighted some inadequacies in teachers' awareness of cognitively motivated approaches. These shortfalls primarily stem from curriculum constraints, limited training opportunities, and reliance on conventional approaches. Also, the minimal attention given to the teaching and learning of MWES gives room for more traditional methods to thrive, although such methods may not promote adequate engagement. While such methods seem clear and familiar to teachers, the learning potential of combining approaches could be lost. Therefore, curriculum review is recommended to help integrate methodologies that will enhance

student engagement and results. Such a review could consider the material resources for teaching and learning, where contemporary resources, such as online media and artificial-intelligence tools, are incorporated into teaching resources available to educators. The review could also consider the content that is taught to teacher trainees, who will eventually end up in the classroom, but may not have the requisite knowledge and expertise to handle this aspect of the language, since it is no longer a part of the curriculum at this level. Also, promoting collaborations on best practices among teachers could encourage the exchange of ideas. These recommendations will help to create a robust system where teachers' engagement with students in the language classroom promotes a richer and more dynamic learning experience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the relevant insights for meeting the diverse needs of teachers and learners could be accomplished by examining the preferred resources and approaches to teaching MWEs. This study has established that using various teaching methodologies depicts resourcefulness on the part of teachers. However, it may also lack a structured framework that would be needed in this context, where the specificity of content is an important learning input. Also, the current changes in the curriculum content for teacher trainees do not reflect the realities that await them in the second-language classroom. In response, institutions should reconsider these curriculum decisions to position teacher trainees as future-ready for language instruction.

Teachers' preferences for more conventional teaching approaches are mostly motivated by their ease of use, familiarity, perceived efficacy, and issues with institutional structures. However, the lack of awareness of other contemporary methods highlights significant areas for advancing professional and curriculum development. By looking at these areas, students could have richer and more nuanced experiences in the L2 classroom, as educators' pedagogical practices would be enhanced. Continuous professional-development programs for teachers are crucial in the transformation that is sought in the language classroom, in terms of material resources and innovative teaching practices. Such programs will empower teachers to use diverse methods that are expected to enrich their learning experiences. Teachers' awareness of, and access to, diverse tactics could create a holistic approach to the teaching and learning of MWEs, promoting proficiency in second-language acquisition. In a multilingual setting, like Ghana, these findings indicate the need for teaching practices and resources that better appeal to teachers and learners' cultural and linguistic context.

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