

Non-native/Native Language Barriers' Effects on Managerial Intercultural Business Interactions when Using Idioms: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This paper deals with non-native/native language barriers' effect on managerial intercultural business interactions in three different countries. The focus is on the familiarity and use of idiomatic expressions by non-native speakers of English and how their familiarity affects cross-cultural communication in business transactions. The study is influenced by the Intercultural Business Communication and Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) fields. Intercultural communication focuses on how people from different cultures communicate with each other. Business English has become the lingua franca of the international business world. Business English as lingua franca has dominated the language of international business in the last few decades. It has also become an intrinsic part of communication in multilingual settings for many business professionals (Kankaanranta and Lu, 2013; Kankaanranta and Planken, 2010; Nickerson, 2005). The current study combines qualitative and quantitative analyses of data collected from responses to a questionnaire. These will be conducted with non-native speakers of English (NNS) from multinational companies in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Puebla, México and South Florida, USA. A questionnaire of business idiomatic expressions will be administered to the NNS who will rate their familiarity of these expressions by responding on a Likert scale. This paper seeks to raise cultural awareness and encourage cultural sensitivity among foreign managers in multinational corporations, using the case of Puerto Rico, Mexico and Florida. The research pursues to reduce ethnocentric views and negative attitudes of foreign managers.

Keywords

managerial communication, intercultural communication, fixed expressions, English as a lingua franca, negotiation and clarification, multinational companies

Introduction

In this research, we first intend to present case studies and research in the fields of Intercultural Business Communication and in Business English as a Lingua Franca at the international level. These studies will provide the basis and justification for the study we propose in this paper, which is focus on the case of Puerto Rico, Mexico and United States. Thus, secondly, we will focus and examine the experience of business communication in English in the particular context of the multinational companies in these three countries, through the familiarity of idiomatic expressions of non-native speakers of English.

Literature Review

Intercultural Business Communication

The approach taken in this study is primarily influenced by the Intercultural Business Communication and Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) fields. As cited in Kankaanrant and Planken (2010), English plays an essential role in spoken communication in the business context, such as negotiations, meetings, email and advertising. English is an intrinsic part of communication in multinational settings and a fact of life for many business people (Akar, 2002; Bilbow, 2002). As stated in Du-Babcock (2013), more and more, non-native speakers of English are using this language as means of communication, and thus its role has been increasing in use and in importance.

Intercultural communication focuses on how people from different cultures communicate and understand each other. Specifically, it is the communication among individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds in business environments (Vijaya and Tiwari, 2010; Varner, 2000). An important aspect of this field is to understand the meaning of culture. Culture is indeed a very broad term. As defined in de Mooij (2014), “Culture is what defines a human community, its individuals and social organizations... People are dependent in the control of mechanisms of culture for ordering their behavior” (de Mooij, 2014, p. 56-57). According to Jameson (2007), professionals that constantly interact in intercultural settings need to understand the meaning of culture and more so understand “the hidden force of culture” (Jameson, 2007, pp. 200). It is crucial that the field of Intercultural Business Communication emphasize on the importance of understanding each person’s and one’s own individual cultural identity (Jameson, 2007). Jameson adds that this field has focused its studies in the use of multiple languages and shared languages in multinational corporations

The single biggest barrier to the success of a company in the business world today is the lack of cross-cultural understanding (Vijaya and Tiwari, 2010). Understanding and appreciating intercultural differences will promote effective communication and will avoid breakdowns in communication. As stated in Ainsworth (2013):

Researchers studying internationalization of higher education agree that all undergraduates require contact with and understanding of other nations, languages and cultures in order to develop the appropriate level of competence to handle the increasingly complex and ill-structured nature of professional work and to function effectively in the rapidly emerging global environment (Ainsworth, 2013, pp. 29).

Internationalization component emphasizes the link between local and global, includes diversity and intercultural communication as well (Ainsworth, 2013).

Studies of workplace and employers' needs show that much importance is placed on developing good communication skills. Oral communication skills were identified as valuable for both obtaining employment and successful job performance in a national survey of 1000 human resource managers. Another survey with Fortune 500 executives, stressed that college students need better communication skills, as well as the ability to work in teams and with people from diverse backgrounds. There is also an increasing need to develop and strengthen effective oral and written communication skills, more tolerance and accommodation to different accents and jargons (Ainsworth, 2013).

According to Ainsworth (2013), many academics underline the importance of including an internationalization component to the undergraduate and graduate programs in order to produce students and futures professionals with strong communication and intercultural skills. Through the internationalization of the curriculum, students could receive intercultural communication training. It is not as simple as learning a foreign language; intercultural communication "constitutes a distinct yet complementary set of skills in relation to foreign language proficiency" (Ainsworth, 2013, pp. 32). In spite of the intercultural and language challenges that employers face in the multinational companies (MNCs), many business schools are failing to link the importance of language policies with international business practices (Ainsworth, 2013).

Ainsworth (2013) carried out a study to reveal the value students place on intercultural communication education and foreign languages for business studies and future careers. The authors administered two surveys, one target to Business French students and graduates, and other target to Business Administration students. The authors also sought to demonstrate whether students perceived language skills as a core management skill for International Business studies. The results of the survey showed that both groups of students valued cultural awareness as an important skill to develop early in their studies and career. According to the responses, most students agreed that this skill would help employers feel more comfortable with other cultures in addition to avoiding possible misunderstandings.

It is crucial to carry out more ethnographic studies to gain more information on different strategies adopted to conduct business according to intercultural encounters (Virkkula-Raisanen, 2010). Several studies in intercultural communication have identified multiple abilities that are considered crucial to attain effective intercultural communication. Some of them are the ability to communicate interpersonally; the ability to adjust to different cultures; the ability to adjust to different social systems; the ability to establish interpersonal relationships and the ability to understand one's own individual cultural identity (Hammer et al., 1978; Abe and Wiseman, 1983; Jameson, 2007). As discussed in Jameson (2007), cross-cultural business communication research is considered an applied form of ethnography where there are communicators closely observing and analyzing components of other cultures. She cites Victor (1992) who identified seven variables affecting business communication when shifting across cultures: language, environment/technology, social organization, contexting, authority, non-verbal behavior and conceptions of time.

Success in business interactions demands that participants have good communicative competence in the language and the situation. According to Virkkula-Raisanen (2010), global professionals

require more than good linguistic performance. In order to have a successful business interaction in an international context, professionals need to also command the field's terminology, strategies of negotiation in the particular country, intercultural business awareness, interactional competence and good interpersonal relations management, among others.

Ainsworth (2013) identifies several intercultural and international business communication skills that are crucial for business graduates to operate successfully in MNCs. Some of these are participating in meetings, teams, and informal work-related discussions, delivering formal presentations, listening and following instructions. In addition, networking is essential among employers in order to build and strengthen interpersonal relationships.

Multicultural team members need to have intercultural and communicative competence. This will enable them to obtain important information about other team members, and to reduce uncertainty and anxiety. In addition, it will help them develop empathy which is an essential communication skill in business relations. Cultural, historical and language backgrounds of each business person that interacts with another come into play in business interactions. In addition, if business professionals are empathic, they are able to step outside their own cultural and business environment and they create a new context. Business transactions will be more successful if each person or company has an understanding of each other's cultural and business background. In addition, corporations as well as individual business people have to take into account the national culture, the general business culture, and the specific corporate culture. Individual communication styles must also be considered in business transactions (Varner, 2000: p. 45).

Virkkula-Raisanen (2010) studied the participants' role alignment and interpersonal relationships in a business interaction setting between Finnish and Chinese employees of a small company in Finland, in which English was used as the lingua franca. The Finnish manager served as a mediator in a multilingual meeting. The study revealed that professionals working in international or multilingual business settings face several challenges in business interactions at the communication level. She states that in multilingual contexts in which English is used as the language of interaction, professionals' language skills are very unequal. Even individuals at the top management levels, such as top executives, may not have good command of English. It is crucial that individuals not only know English but that they also recognize how to use the language appropriately for the setting and situation, in this case, a business context.

Kobayashi and Viswat (2011) carried out a study to examine intercultural awareness and accommodation phenomenon while business interactions are taking place. According to these authors, having intercultural awareness applied to communication is not enough. An individual may have intercultural communication knowledge, but it will be meaningless unless it can be applied to real situations. Thus, intercultural communication applied to business should be focused on helping people find solutions (Kobayashi and Viswat, 2011). When people from different countries are involved in business transactions, each must be willing to share the responsibility of cultural awareness. According to this study, the Japanese seem to accommodate unilaterally to American culture. In Kankaanranta and Planken (2010), the tendency of non-natives speakers of English was to also accommodate. Their interviewees adopted accommodation practices with different types of English as non-native speakers.

Culture defines our working behavior and customs. Vijaya and Tiwari (2010) carried out a study in which they observed Japanese and Indian business people's interactions in business meetings.

They also observed that the Japanese prefer more passive forms of criticism than Indians, but are stricter than Indians when it comes to turning in a report on time. Indians seemed to have some delays in their projects since they have flexible business practices. On the other hand, when Indians are carrying out business transactions in Puerto Rico, they seem uneasy with our lack of punctuality, which is a cultural norm.

Each language has its own idiosyncrasies and peculiarities that may produce different terminology, even in business. Some languages may share grammatical and semantic patterns, others, such as Japanese and English, don't. These are details that the professionals must take into consideration when preparing for international and intercultural business interactions (Aktan and Nohl, 2010). Idiomatic expressions may cause confusion among the second language speakers. These cannot be translated literally since the audience won't understand their meaning. "A literal translation for specific words would leave the foreign audience perplexed" (Aktan and Nohl, 2010: p. 4). As very well stated by Jameson (2007) "Language creates both division and unity in ways that affect business policy, decision making, and costs" (p. 215).

Still, there are other theories and academics that point out that equating culture with a country can be a misconception that can limit the real understanding of business issues and strategies (Jameson, 2007). According to Jameson, a person with the knowledge about a particular culture will not guarantee successfully communication with the person of that other culture. The view as cited in Jameson is that professionals should not view people from other cultures as representatives of a homogenous group. They need to understand that they will always be individual variations.

There are many benefits employers gain when they have been intercultural trained, and that is that they develop increased awareness of the roles among a diverse workforce, greater understanding of diverse cultures and one's own culture, developing empathy when understanding the differences in perceptions based on culture, and more effective business practices in a global economy (Ainsworth, 2013).

Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)

Language enables human beings to communicate. Thus, language enables individuals and companies to communicate (Charles, 2007). The language of communication in this era is English. The total numbers of people who speak English as a foreign language outnumber those who speak it as their mother tongue. About a quarter of the world's population speaks English; and by 2060, the non-native speakers of English will outnumber native speakers of English by 50% (Kashru, 1992).

Business English has become the lingua franca of the international business world. It is undisputed that Business English as Lingua Franca (BELF) has dominated as the language of international business in the last few decades. "BELF... is employed as substitute for Business English because of the wider application of Business English in international business communication among nonnative speakers" (Yu, 2013, pp. 130). It has also become an intrinsic part of communication in multilingual settings for many business professionals (Kankaanranta and Lu, 2013; Kankaanranta and Planken, 2010; Nickerson, 2005). More international business is done in English between non-native speakers than between native speakers (Charles, 2007). Yu (2013) states that

research and teaching in this field is influenced by globalization as well as by the growth of the domestic economy.

The research in this field has shifted its focus to identifying language strategies used by non-native speakers to achieve, for example, effective communication in business interactions (Nickerson, 2005). Scholars in this field have focused their work on identifying core linguistics elements that conform to native speakers' expectations so that they don't cause intelligibility problems, and distinguish them from noncore elements recognized by native speakers as anomalies but that do not cause problems (Charles, 2007: p. 262). Misunderstandings are somehow managed. They are solved, and will only rarely lead to complete breakdowns of communication (Hinnenkamp, 1999). According to Wu (2103):

...the literature research in this field has shown that many colleges, universities, scholars and teachers have taken initiative to explore BE in terms of teaching methods and modes, teaching materials and they have endeavored to relate theories to practice which it totally different from intuition-oriented" (Wu, 2013, pp. 131).

Some studies have shown that problems in business interactions arise when there is linguistic imbalance between native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English (Pullin, 2010). Still, other studies have pointed that BELF speakers avoid and overcome misunderstandings in spite of the usage of non-standard forms of English. For most business professionals, having competence in BELF is an essential skill to be used along with their business knowledge (Kankaanranta and Lu, 2013; Kankaanranta and Planken, 2010). BELF should follow the principles of clarity, simplicity, and relational orientation.

The phenomenon of BELF has produced many varieties of English in countries where English is spoken as a second, third, or even fourth language. As BELF is adopted in other countries, it receives linguistic and cultural influence from the non-native speakers (Kankaanranta and Planken, 2010; Nickerson, 2005; Charles, 2007). BELF will carry the non-native speaker's culture, as well as his/her mother tongue discourse (Kankaanranta and Planken, 2010). In the companies included in Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) study, the researchers found that there was a hybrid version of English that contain features from the speakers' mother tongue. The authors described it as: "...a simplified, shared code whose basis is English with highly specialized vocabulary and a variety of discourse practices" (Kankaanranta and Planken, 2010: p. 402). These processes are similar to one of the theories of the pidgin and Creole language development in which speakers of different language background simplified their language to facilitate communication in a highly multilingual setting (Alleyne, 1988; Mufwene, 2001; Devonish, 1986).

Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) carried out a study with five globally-operating Finland-based companies, where they administered an online questionnaire. The authors wanted to learn about the business professionals' perception of their BELF communication skills and that of their partners. The interviewees admitted facing several challenges in business interactions using BELF with native speakers of English. They showed lack of competence in English, limited repertoire of idioms, and incomprehensibility of some regional U.S. and U.K. accents (Kankaanranta and Planken, 2010). When these interviewees interacted with natives speakers of English, they tried to adopt their pronunciation or just made efforts to keep up with the conversation. In this study, the researchers found that the shared business domain of BELF, shared special field of expertise and length of relationship affected the participants' BELF discourse. The interviewees stated business

English was more useful for their work than “general” English, since BE was more persuasive, task-oriented, and goal-based. Terminology and concepts of certain fields is usually more widely understood in English across cultures. Therefore, the expertise in the field meant an increase in business-related terms that helped in the communication process in cross-cultural settings. According to the findings in their study, Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) described some of the characteristics of BELF discourse as a simple and clear version of English, with no usage of idiomatic expressions or complex sentence structures. This could aid in the communication process among various non-native speakers. The participants admitted accommodating to simple and clear English.

In their interviews, the participants observed that in general, even if they spoke English as a second or third language, their core message would most of the time get through. In their oral communication process, the grammatical inaccuracies did not break down communication. Still, there were some instances in which misunderstanding did occur and interrupted communication. Some of these interviewees admitted feeling frustrated with the usages of English as the corporate language, since their non-native proficiency sometimes affected their work. In Charles (2007), interviews carried out in a company showed that in general, participants felt disempowered due to their relative lack of language skills. They showed a sense of frustration and a struggle to maintain dignity. If the employees feel that the frame of reference in communication is the native speaker, the challenge of communicating appropriately becomes quite acute. Their language affected their perception of themselves or others. In Puerto Rico, most Puerto Rican non-native speakers of English, feel ashamed and intimidated when speaking English in public. In many cases, lingua franca speakers complain that native speakers of English don’t adjust or simplify their language. But, sometimes the frustration emerges due the non-native speakers’ lack of proficiency in English. Sweeney and Hua (2010) explain that often, the miscommunication problems in intercultural business interactions are due to native speakers of English. They argue that native speakers of English continue to speak idiomatically.

The BELF nature of providing flexibility, tolerance and ability to negotiate meaning can help provide insight to raise awareness among native and non-native speakers concerning effective business communication and international communicative competence (Pullin, 2010).

The review of literature in these fields shows some gaps in research concerning intercultural communication interactions using BELF, thus a study focused in this topic is much needed. “The field of intercultural communication needs more investigations into connections between culture language and power” (Jameson, 2007, p. 222). “Each achievement in BELF teaching and research will have a positive impact on economic development and global communications. There is no other subject that can surpass the great effect BELF has produced on international communications” (Yu, 2013, pp. 134).

Charles (2007), states that research is needed to make us understand better the process of how people relate to each other across language barriers. It is crucial to carry out more ethnographic studies to gain more information on different strategies adopted to conduct business according to intercultural encounters (Virkkula-Raisanen, 2010). This study may provide a basis for improving cross-cultural communications and business relationships.

Hypothesis and Research Question

In view of the literature review and justification exposed, we develop the hypothesis and several research questions. The hypothesis is stated as: 1) The more non-native speakers are familiar with idioms, the more likely they are to have successful communications with native speakers.

The major research question is: As a policy decision, is there evidence to support that teaching business idioms in Business Communication courses is beneficial for non-native speakers of English throughout their professional careers?

If so:

1. Which idioms are respondents most likely to recognize?
2. Which idioms are respondents most likely to use/employ?
3. Which idioms are respondents most likely to be able to explain to others?
4. Which idioms do respondents perceive as the most important for their business communication?
5. Which benefits derived from knowledge of idiomatic expressions do respondents perceive as most important/salient/outstanding?
6. Is there any perceived relationship between knowledge of business idiomatic expressions and:
 - a. Increased self-esteem
 - b. Greater job satisfaction
 - c. Greater job productivity
7. Are there any meaningful subgroups of respondents who benefit by knowing/mastering business idioms?
8. What recommendations, if any, do respondents contribute regarding the importance of including business idiomatic expressions in BC curriculum?

Objective

The research deals with non-native/native language barriers' effect on managerial intercultural business interactions. Specifically, the focus is on the familiarity of idiomatic expressions by non-native speakers of English and how their rate of familiarity affects cross-cultural communication in business transactions.

Motivation and Justification

Increased globalization has brought people from different cultures together to collaborate and compete internationally (Vijaya and Tiwari, 2010; Virkkula-Raisanen, 2010). As part of the global village we live in, the ability to communicate effectively with other cultures is a key to success and also a fundamental skill that companies seek in business graduates. Communication skills in business are crucial to establish and strengthen good business relationships and interpersonal skills. But, for global business to succeed internationally, their members must develop effective intercultural skills. Companies that spread to other countries must have a clear understanding of the cultural differences between locals and foreigners that work in the companies.

The research sites selected are San Juan, Puerto Rico; Puebla, Mexico; and South Florida, United States. Each one of these cities has multinational companies (MNCs) that employ local business people, and in the case of Florida many non-native speakers of English are working in these MNCs. Puerto Rico is a leader in the corporate world with many multinational corporations operating locally (PRIDCO, 2011). This means that many Puerto Ricans work with supervisors and executives who only speak English. Many of the supervisors that work in these companies are native speakers of English, often with basic, or no knowledge of Spanish. Puebla in Mexico has become a center of economic activity. With a population of 1.6 million inhabitants, Puebla is the 5th largest city in Mexico and one of the destinations for the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). It is becoming a business process outsourcing (BPO) center. Puebla has been attracting automotive industry and in fact, it has one of the largest automobile factories – Volkswagen. South Florida also has an extensive population of non-native speakers of English and in addition it serves as the headquarters for more than 1000 multinational companies.

Methodology

As a first step, a total of 528 idiomatic expressions in business as well as in other fields were retrieved from the mass media (Griffin, 2004), from business professors and from business idioms sites in the internet. These idioms were included in the first section of the survey and a second section contained classification questions. This survey was to be completed online using Qualtrics platform. A group of experts were then recruited to complete the survey with the purpose of serving as a filter to select, from the 528 idioms, a total of 20 to 25 idioms considered to be most important in their fields and workplace. The experts were business professionals and professors from Finance, Accounting and International Business fields and whose native language is English. It is important to point out that the judges spoke different types of English: British English, Indian English and American English.

These judges rated the importance of these idioms to be able to succeed in business related careers. They were independently and anonymously asked to forecast what they view as the most important idiomatic expressions for non-native English speakers who seek success in business setting. Experts were given a questionnaire to rank their perceived importance of 528 idiomatic expressions using a Likert Scale where 5 = I consider this (expression) very important, 4 = I consider this somewhat important, 3 = I may consider this important, 2 = I don't consider this important, 1 = I absolutely don't consider this important. Fourteen experts completed the questionnaire. The average time required to answer the questionnaire was between 35-40 minutes. All respondents mentioned "fatigue" and that the questionnaire was very long. For this reason, we did not continue with several rounds of questionnaires to look for increasing degrees of consensus. The judges also provided suggestion as possible questions to pose in the classification section, as well as an interesting discussion of idioms that should be or not be included.

In order to determine the most important idioms, we calculated the means of each expression and ranked them in descending order. The results of this first part were entered in a excel date spreadsheet. To be able to obtain the idioms which were rated as most used or most important to succeed in a professional career, we calculated the mean and organized the scores in the order from largest to smallest scoring. We selected the first 25 idioms that scored the highest in this scale and which were the following:

1. Murphy's law
2. Give them an inch and they'll take a mile
3. Apples and oranges
4. To save face
5. Keep your fingers crossed
6. To lose face
7. Bottom line
8. Don't put all your eggs in one basket
9. A piece of cake
10. Speak the same language
11. See eye to eye
12. To know the ropes
13. What goes around, comes around
14. Give me a ball park figure
15. Wing it
16. To get lost in translation
17. The last straw
18. You need to read between the lines
19. Don't burn your bridges
20. The light at the end of the tunnel
21. Don't rock the boat
22. Just for the record
23. Loophole
24. You can't teach an old dog new tricks
25. Save your pennies for a rainy day

The Delphi method usually comprises a small number of respondents and the results are not intended to be statistically significant. The results represent the synthesis of opinion or judgments of the group of experts; in this case the professors of business and business English who were willing to take the time to participate by answering the lengthy questionnaire.

The second survey, uploaded online by Qualtrics platform, was then prepared using these 25 idioms plus a classification section which was then administered as a pilot study to a total of 10 business professionals who were at the moment working in a global/multinational company and whose second language was English. The pilot study was used to assess how many minutes it would take participants to feel out, clear up any ambiguous or unclear questions. Participant in the pilot study were asked to provide their feedback. Once comments and suggestions were gathered and considered, we proceeded to produce the final survey (see Appendix). The participants of this step in the survey building process reported taking between 20 to 25 minutes to complete the survey. They also made comments about certain idioms some of them thought were not appropriate.

The final survey (see Appendix – not online version) was finally produced, using Qualtrics, after the steps described above. This process guaranteed a more rigorous methodology producing a survey that contained idioms which were selected by experts in different business fields.

The subjects responded to a questionnaire which contained three sections. In the first section, they rated on a Likert Scale their familiarity, frequency of usage and rate of importance of business idiomatic expressions. Then, in the second section subjects rated on a Likert Scale the potential benefits of knowing these idioms for their professional career. Finally, they responded to Classification Information section. Data triangulation will be used to increase the validity of the data retrieved in the study. Specifically, we will identify certain variables obtained from the classification questions in the questionnaire and correlate them with variables obtained from data collected from the familiarity, rate of usage, importance and benefits of knowing idiomatic expressions.

The subjects were non-native speakers of English who are employees of multinational companies in each of the three countries. This group will complete the questionnaire with the most important idioms according to the experts. Some of the statements were based on a previous survey designed by Griffin (2004). Initially, this task would be administered only to native-native speakers of English to see how their degree of familiarity with idioms might affect communication interactions. Additional assessments of a similar nature can be used with control groups, and in similar designs pairing manager-subordinate dyads to test for more specific effects and to further refine the recommendations for improving the intercultural communication process in multinational firms.

Results

At this stage, the final survey is still being administered. We have already a total of 79 responses. We will continue to collect data in the following weeks until the established sample of 300 respondents is reached. We will then proceed to perform statistical analysis of the results.

Limitations and Recommendations

There are several limitation observed at this stage. The experts completed the survey which displayed the idioms in the same exact order. As pointed out above, some of the judges manifested fatigue halfway through the survey. This fatigue could have affected the rating judges gave to the idioms. Some of the judges might have not even paid closed attention to the idioms placed at the end of the list in the survey. One recommendation at this stage is to have two surveys in which the idioms are placed in different orders in each one; then administer one survey to half the judges, and then the second survey to the other half. This would guarantee a more accurate selection of the most used idioms. Also, increasing the number of judges would have also provided a more reliable result in terms of the 25 most important idioms.

As future research, additional assessments of a similar nature can be used with control groups, and in similar designs pairing manager-subordinate dyads to test for more specific effects and to further refine the recommendations for improving the intercultural communication process in multinational firms.

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*Non-native/Native Language Barriers' Effects
on Managerial Intercultural Business Interactions when Using Idioms: A Comparative Study*

Introduction

Dear participant:

The Business Departments of University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus (Puerto Rico), Universidad de las Américas, Puebla (México) and University of Florida, Gainesville (USA) are conducting a study in order to understand the current challenges facing non-native speakers of English with respect to idiomatic business expressions. Idiomatic expressions are expressions whose meaning is not clear from the usual grammatical rules of a language.

The purpose of this study is to uncover improvements to current curricula in Business Communication courses. We recognize that your participation is an imposition on your valuable time; however, we will happily share the results with you. We anticipate that your participation will require 20-25 minutes.

Your communication experiences in business are vital to help us to improve university programs and expand knowledge in both academics and practice. Please note that all information you supply is confidential. Personal and company information requested will be used exclusively for data classification purposes.

We thank you in advance for your participation in our study and we will be pleased to provide you with a summary of the results upon request at the address/email below: anamari.irizarry@upr.edu.

Sincerely,

Anamari Irizarry, Ph.D., University of Puerto Rico
Camille Villafaña, Ph.D., University of Puerto Rico
Robyn Lynn Johnson, Ph.D., Universidad de las Américas, Puebla
Linda Clarke, Ph.D., University of Florida, Gainesville

Part I: Idiomatic Expressions

The following examples are intended to identify business idiomatic expressions that are most likely to be recognized, used, explained, and important. Please indicate how you feel about these examples **based on your job and business environment and communication experiences**.

Idiomatic expressionS	5	4	3	2	1
1. Murphy's Law	<i>A. I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>B. In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>C. I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>D. I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
2. Give them an inch and they'll take a mile	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>

	5	4	3	2	1
3. Apples and oranges	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
4. To save face	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
5. Keep your fingers crossed	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>

	<i>used this more than four times.</i>	<i>used this three to four times.</i>	<i>used this two to three times.</i>	<i>used this one to two times.</i>	
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
6. To lose face	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
7. Bottom line	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>

	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
8. Don't put all your eggs in one basket	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
9. A piece of cake	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
10. Speak the same language	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>

		<i>idea of what it means.</i>		<i>know what it means.</i>	
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
11. See eye to eye	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
12. To know the ropes	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>

	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
13. What goes around, comes around	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
14. Give me a ball park figure	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>

	5	4	3	2	1
15. Wing it	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
16. To get lost in translation	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
17. The last straw	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>

	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
18. You need to read between the lines	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
19. Don't burn your bridges	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>

	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
20. The light at the end of the tunnel	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
21. Don't rock the boat	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1

22. Just for the record	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
23. Loophole	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
24. You can't teach an old dog new tricks	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>

	<i>used this more than four times.</i>	<i>used this three to four times.</i>	<i>used this two to three times.</i>	<i>used this one to two times.</i>	
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
25. Save your pennies for a rainy day	<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>
	<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
	<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>
	<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>

26. Overall, the idiomatic expressions in the list A:

5	4	3	2	1
<i>I have heard this, and I know what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, and I have an idea of what it means.</i>	<i>I have heard this, but I am not sure what it means.</i>	<i>I may have heard this, but I do not know what it means.</i>	<i>I have never heard this before.</i>

27. Overall, the idiomatic expressions in this list B:

<i>In a typical month, I have used this more than four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this three to four times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this two to three times.</i>	<i>In a typical month, I have used this one to two times.</i>	<i>I have never used this before.</i>
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28. Overall, the idiomatic expressions in this list C:

<i>I can explain this easily to others.</i>	<i>I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>Maybe I can explain this to others.</i>	<i>I can't explain this to others.</i>	<i>I absolutely can't explain this to others.</i>

29. Overall, the idiomatic expressions in this list D:

<i>I consider this very important.</i>	<i>I consider this somewhat important.</i>	<i>I may consider this important.</i>	<i>I don't consider this important.</i>	<i>I absolutely don't consider this important.</i>

Part V: Benefits of knowing idioms for success in business

Overall, how important would you rate the potential benefits of knowing business idiomatic expressions?

Potential Benefits	Very important (5)	Somewhat Important (4)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat unimportant (2)	Very unimportant (1)
1. Efficient communication/fast					
2. Effective communication/exchange of ideas					
3. Easier communication in multicultural settings					
4. Facilitated negotiations					
5. Enhanced conflict resolution					
6. Improved interpersonal relationships					

7. Strengthened leadership skills					
8. Faster climbing of the corporate ladder					
9. Greater frequency of salary raises					
10. Increased earning power					
11. Increased self-esteem					
12. Greater overall job satisfaction					
13. Greater overall job productivity					

14. Overall, I believe that benefits associated with knowing idiomatic expressions are:

Very important (5)	Somewhat Important (4)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat unimportant (2)	Very unimportant (1)

Part VI: Benefits of knowing idioms in general

15. Overall, how important do you consider the knowledge of idioms for your success in business?

5	4	3	2	1
I consider this very important.	I consider this somewhat important.	I may consider this important.	I don't consider this important.	I absolutely don't consider this important.

Part VII Classification information

Please provide the following information so we can group your answers with similar participants.

16. **Gender**

- Male
- Femenine

17. **Age**

- 18- 21
- 22-30
- 31-39
- 40 -49
- 50-59
- 60-69

18. **How important is English for your professional career?**

- Very important
- Important
- Neutral
- Unimportant
- Very unimportant

19. What is/are your nationality/nationalities?

- Mexican
- Puerto Rican
- Chinese
- Indian
- Cuban
- Dominican
- Other _____

20. What is/are your native languages?

- a. Chinese
- b. Spanish
- c. French
- d. German
- e. Korean
- f. Italian
- g. Portuguese
- h. Japanese
- i. Hindi
- j. Arabic
- k. Others _____

21. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? *If currently enrolled, highest degree received.*

- a. No schooling completed
- b. Nursery school to 8th grade
- c. Some high school, no diploma
- d. High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- e. Some college credit, no degree
- f. Trade/technical/vocational training
- g. Associate degree
- h. Bachelor's degree
- i. Master's degree
- j. MBA
- k. Professional degree
- l. Doctorate degree

22. Which of the following best described the company where you work for?

- Local (served a regional market within a nation)
- Domestic (served primarily one national market)
- international (replicates its home offering in overseas operations)
- multinational or multi-domestic (operates in several countries, exploits local opportunities and adapts accordingly)
- global (is centralized with worldwide operations and highly standardized offerings)
- transnational (has highly integrated worldwide operations with differentiated offerings)
- I am not employed at this moment

23. How would you describe your position/title in the Company?

- Top/Senior management
- Middle management
- Low management
- Entry level
- Others _____

24. Information about the Company

In what sector would you place your company?

Goods

- Food/beverages and tobacco
- Car parts
- Leather and shoes
- Electronic goods and electronics
- Jewelry, handcrafts and gifts
- Construction material
- Machinery tool and manual manufacturing
- Furniture and furniture parts
- Plastics
- Chemicals and pharmaceuticals
- Textile, clothing and accessories
- Other manufactured goods

Services

- Animal care
- Childcare
- Financial and Accounting services
- Banking services
- Education
- Health care
- Hospitality
- Advertising
- Insurance
- Legal services
- Marketing
- Online services
- Public Services
- Sales
- Travel
- Transportation or Logistics
- Warehousing or storage
- Other

25. Size of the company *BUSCAR CLASIFICACION

- a. 0-30 employees
- b. 30-100 employees
- c. 101-500 employees
- d. 501 or more employees

26. How important is it for your Company to speak English to be able to reach top/senior management positions?
- a. Very important
 - b. Important
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Unimportant
 - e. Very unimportant
27. The person/persons with whom I interact in my job whose first language is English is/are:
- Supervisor
 - Customers
 - Suppliers
 - Colleague/coworker
 - Business partners
 - Government or public services
 - Others _____
 - Does not apply
28. Have you spent time or lived abroad? If yes, indicate for how long.
- One to six months
 - Seven to eleven months
 - One to five years
 - Six to ten years
 - More than 10 years
 - Does not apply
 - Others _____