The Effect of Context on the Iranian EFL Learners' Idiom Retention

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Abstract

Idioms, forms of figurative language, are used pervasively in both spoken and written discourse. However, mainly due to their figurative nature, they are often considered difficult to learn. The present study tried to first of all briefly investigate the language learners' attitudes toward learning L2 idioms. It then compared the effect of written vs. video-graphic contexts on the language learners' long-term and short-term retention of idioms. To know about the language learners' attitudes to learning English idioms and their relevant experiences, a questionnaire was administered to a group of Iranian EFL learners. The results of the questionnaire proved their highly positive view toward learning idioms and their need for helpful and facilitating learning strategies. At the second stage of the study, two similar groups of intermediate EFL learners were exposed to unfamiliar idioms through a story in written and video-graphic contexts. The subjects were also given the definitions on a separate sheet to check. The subjects' long-term and short-term retention were then tested and compared. The results of the study showed no significant difference between the

performances of the two groups regarding their short term retention, while with respect to long-term retention; the animation group i.e. the one exposed to the video-graphic context significantly outperformed the text group. The results of the study also support the dual coding theory which emphasizes the role of mental imagery in retention.

Keywords: Idiom, Retention, Familiarity judgment, Video-graphic context, Written context

1. Introduction

1.1 Significance of Idioms in Language Learning

It is a well-established belief among scholars that lexicon is not limited to a repository of single words but a dynamic system, which includes larger lexical items as well (Read, 2000). Idioms as one group of those larger lexical items play an important role in our everyday linguistic repertoire. The word 'idiom' is a Greek term meaning 'own or 'peculiar.' An idiom is a figurative expression that can usually be interpreted literally but that takes a nonliteral meaning when used in a specific context. Idioms "are restricted collocations which cannot be normally understood from the literal meaning of the words which make them up"(Carter, 1998). Such expressions aren't just a few. The Collins COBUILD Idioms Dictionary (2002) provides a list of over 6000 idioms of common use in our daily life. As Pollio et al. (1977) estimate most English speakers utter about 10 million novel metaphors and 20 million idioms per lifetime. Altenburg (1998) estimates that about 80% of the language used by an adult native speaker may be formulaic.

This pervasiveness of idioms relates them to second language proficiency or higher levels of L2 fluency. Ellis (1997) suggests that sufficient knowledge and appropriate use of idioms in a second language is an important indicator of the language learners' communicative competence. According to Liu (2008), many L2 learners, especially intermediate and advanced students, are eager to learn more idioms due to the fact that these learners have had a good exposure to the target language and hence have learnt to appreciate the value and the importance of idioms, including their vividness and effectiveness in communicative tasks. A study by Liontas (2002) revealed that 75% of respondents reported not having been taught any idioms by their foreign language instructors, although they were highly interested in learning them.

Despite the keen interest of such learners to learn idioms as Moon (1992) states, they constitute one of the most difficult aspects in L2 acquisition. Some of these difficulties as those related to their inherent syntactic and semantic complexity; and also those concerning their pragmatic and stylistic functions. Kovecses (2002) also stresses that idioms are a notoriously difficult part of foreign language learning and teaching. Although it seems almost impossible to master the idioms of the second language completely, every language learner must be ready to handle such figurative expressions in different contexts.

1.2 Enhancing Teaching and Learning Idioms

Owing to the important role assigned to idioms in L2 acquisition and difficulties the language learners experience in their acquisition, finding a way to enhance their learning is pedagogically of high importance.

Lennon (1998) suggests that exercises of a problem-solving nature can help learners to discover the metaphors in idiomatic expressions. It is believed that due to the opaque nature of idioms, they require a problem-solving approach in teaching, which can make use of the learners' cognitive ability to make sense out of their environment. Lennon also claims that comparisons with L1 are effective because hereby the learners can become aware of the

differences between the metaphors in the target language and their native language. An exercise based on his suggestion looks like the one below:

Sample task: Try to work out the meaning of these idioms. Do you have idioms in your language which have the same meaning as some of these?

1) To be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth

2) To kick the bucket

3) To have a bone to pick with someone

Cross lingual and cross cultural comparison of idioms is also favoured by Kovecses (2005) who believes that ssuccessful L2 language pedagogy should be able to make L2 learners aware of the differences of conceptualization between LI and L2.

Some studies have concluded that for a better understanding of an idiom, it should occur in a linguistically supportive context. Liontas (2002) based on the results of his study, concludes that extensive and systematic exposure to idioms can lead to the effective development of idiomatic competence. He goes on to assert that idioms should be introduced to learners as early as possible.

Tompkins (2001) finds idiomatic expressions particularly challenging for ESL students; therefore, she suggests using concrete, student-made tools, such as idiom posters that illustrate literal and figurative meanings of idioms as part of the instructional process for teaching figurative language. Cieslicka's (2006) study also confirms the L2 learners' need for explicit guidance towards that literal meaning and an explanation as to how it contributes to the figurative, idiomatic meaning of the given expression.

Other studies suggest resorting to the literal meaning of an idiom to enhance its learning. The results of a study by Boers et al. (2008) indicate that connecting the figurative idioms with their non-figurative origin can be an effective technique to improve the language learners' retention. They also decided to add real pictures to clarify the verbal feedback in the origin multiple-choice exercises. Compared with the performance of the other group of students who had covered precisely the same idioms, the performance under the picture-enhanced version displayed a significant improvement in the meaning multiple-choice exercises.

Video-graphic context is another means to help the second language learners trying to learn idioms. Mayer (2002) describes video as a kind of multimedia material consisting of verbal and nonverbal presentations displaying simultaneous images, narration and, on-screen text. Viewing videos can boost understanding of concepts that are intricate to verbally explain (White, Easton, & Anderson, 2000). The use of pictures whether still or animated is supported by dual coding theory (Paivio, 1986) which claims that the association of verbal information with the mental images leads to enhanced remembering of information. The theory emphasizes that verbal and non-verbal processing both play important roles in the learning process. It suggests two different systems in human's memory which are interrelated while processing the information. These two systems are responsible for the processing of

visual and verbal information. The verbal system is particularly responsible for processing the linguistic information like words, and the visual system is specialized in processing images. Needed to say the two systems can be activated independently. According to this theory dual coded information is more easily retrieved and retained due to the availability of two mental representations.

However, as Lu (2010) states, the research on video yields mixed and contradictory results, with actual effects of video ranking from highly beneficial to detrimental to learning. While Myer and Galini (1990) favor the use of videos in teaching languages by saying "an illustration can be worth ten thousand words", Caspi et al. (2005) reported the student's possible frustration while using videos as a learning tool because such tasks include the demanding tasks of hearing, watching and writing. The results of an experiment by Boers et al. (2009) suggest that the contribution of images to retention of the form of idioms i.e. their precise lexical composition for the purposes of re-production may well be negligible. They also conclude that distraction by pictures may even have a detrimental effect when it comes to retaining unfamiliar and difficult words.

1.3 The Present Study

The present research is an attempt to find out the effect of context on the EFL learners' retention of idioms. This is done after a short investigation of the learners' attitudes toward learning idioms and their personal experiences.   The research questions are as follows:

1) What are the Iranian English learners' attitudes toward learning English idioms?

2) What do the Iranian EFL learners think of the effect of different contexts on their learning of idioms?

3) Do the experimental data confirm the Iranian EFL learners' ideas and predictions regarding the effect of different contexts on learning idioms?

4) Which method of presenting idioms i.e. through animation or written context leads to the EFL learners' enhanced short- term retention?

5) Which method of presenting idioms i.e. through animation or written context leads to the EFL learners' enhanced long- term retention?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Participants of the study were 60(2 groups of 30) intermediate freshmen studying English language at Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman-Iran. Their average age was 20. They were selected based on their performance on the Oxford Placement Test. Their first language was Persian and none of them had ever experienced living in English speaking countries. One group, studying English literature, was made up of 22 females and 8 males and the other, studying English translation, included 24females and 6 males.

2.2 Materials

To briefly investigate the subject's attitudes toward English idioms and their general preferences in learning them, a 10 item questionnaire was constructed following Liontas (2002). The items of the questionnaire were based on the original source (Appendix 1).

The subjects were also exposed to 23 idioms of common use through the cartoon animation "Symphony in Slang" by Tex Avery and its corresponding script. Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2005 edition) and Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Idioms (2002 edition) were consulted in selecting the aforementioned idioms.

An idiom familiarity judgment task mainly following Nippold and Rudzinski (1993) was the instrument used to choose the idioms not familiar to the subjects. They were asked to choose their familiarity level, the frequency of previously encountering that specific idiom in spoken or written contexts, in a 4 point scale.

During the process of exposure to unfamiliar idioms, the Subjects were also given a handout including the definition of the 23 unfamiliar idioms (Appendix 3). The order of the definitions matched the order of underlined or paused at idioms in the written text (Appendix 2) and the animated cartoon respectively. The definitions were taken from Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2005 edition) and Collins COBUILD Dictionary of idioms (2002 edition).

To test the subjects' retention of the 23 unfamiliar idioms mentioned above, they were asked to write the definition of each idiom in the space provided either in English or Persian. To ensure the validity of the test, the idioms to be defined were contextualized in sentences taken from the original source.

2.3 Procedures

To investigate the subject's attitudes to idioms and the way they judge the significance of context, they were asked to fill in a 10 item questionnaire using a 5 point scale following Liontas (2002 see Appendix 1).

27 idioms used in the story "Symphony in Slang", an animated cartoon by Tex Avery, were selected consulting Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2005 edition) and Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Idioms (2002 edition) for their common use. The subjects' familiarity with the selected idioms was then tested through a familiarity judgment task following Nippold and Rudzinski (1993).The subjects in both groups were given the booklet including the aforementioned 27 idioms. They were asked to assess the familiarity level of each idiom by indicating how frequently they had encountered it before in written or spoken forms, using a 4-point scale (1= many times; 2= a few times; 3=once and 4= never). The highest score for each idiom in this task was 4 with lower scores indicating more familiarity. Just the idioms with the average score of 3 to 4 were selected resulting in a list including 23 items. The idioms rejected at this stage were "raining cats and dogs", "eat like a horse", "had his hands full" and "died laughing". Table (1) shows the idioms with the associated mean scores.

The participants of the first group, hereafter called the text group, were given a handout including the transcript of Symphony in Slang with the 23 selected idioms underlined (Appendix 2). Another handout was then given to them including the definition of each underlined idiom following the same order (see Appendix 3). After listening to the researcher's brief explanations about the story and being informed of the follow-up test, the subjects began to read the text and check the definition of each underlined idiom upon reaching it. Based on a pilot study the time allocated to the job was 20 minutes.

In the other group, hereafter called the animation group, after the researcher's explanations similar to those for the first group, the story was presented in its original form of animated cartoon. The subjects were also given a handout defining each of the 23 unfamiliar idioms in the right order. To let the subjects check the definition of unfamiliar idioms, there were 15 second pauses at each of them. All the materials given to the subjects in both groups were collected at the end of the sessions.

Table 1. Selected idioms, listed with their mean familiarity

Idioms	Average Familiarity
1. Well, I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth.	4
2. One day at the crack of dawn I got up.	4
3. I couldn't cut the mustard.	4
4. I was beside myself with anger.	3.9
5. I was all thumbs.	3.8
6. Mary's clothes fit her like a glove.	4
7. I put on my white tie and tails.	4
8. We went around together for some time, painting the town red.	4
9. At dinner, Mary let her hair down.	4
10. Mary ate like a horse.	2.8*
11. I was really in a pickle.	4
12. The proprietor drew a gun on me.	4
13. In no time the law was on my heels.	4
14. Every time I opened my mouth, I put my foot in it.	4
15. I felt myself going to pot.	4
26. The groom had his hands full, too.	2.6*
17. She turned her back on me, and got on her high horse.	4
18. I couldn't touch her with a ten-foot pole.	4
19. Guess the cat had her tongue.	3.6
20. After that I went to pieces.	4
21. The guy at the piano played by ear.	4
22. I heard from the grapevine	3.4
23. But the guy really spent his money like water.	3.9
24. But the guy got in my hair.	4
25. Outside it was raining cats and dogs.	2.1*
16. It sure felt good to stretch my legs again.	4
27. So all this struck me so funny that I died laughing.	2.4*

After finishing the first phase, i.e. exposing the two groups to the two versions of the story and the relevant idiom definitions, the subjects attended a test including the 23 unfamiliar idioms contextualized in sentences taken from the original source. The subjects of both groups were asked to define each idiom in English or Persian in the spaces provided in the adjacent column. The booklets were then collected and scored by both the researcher and an experienced university colleague. The few existing discrepancies in scoring were settled through negotiation. The same test was also administered to the same subjects 4 weeks later. To reduce the negative consequences of test effect, the subjects were not informed of it.

3. Results

Table 2 shows the results of the questionnaire (Appendix 1) investigating the learners' attitudes toward learning idioms and their preferred learning context.

Table 2. The mean score for each item of the questionnaire

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mean score	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.3	2.0	1.9	4.7	3.8	4.1

A careful inspection of the results reveals some interesting patterns. Item number 1 of the questionnaire asked the learners to rate the importance they assigned to the role of idioms in daily language use. The majority of learners (87%) rated it either 4 or 5 with the average of 4.5, indicating the significance of idioms in the respondents' view. Items 2, 3, 4 and 5 focused on the involvement of idioms in the content of language classes. As table 2 shows the average scores for these items are relatively high, which in turn shows how positively they thought of the inclusion of idioms in the language curriculum. Such an attitude toward idioms is in harmony with the highly positive attitude of Iranian EFL learners to English language reported by Chalak and Kassaian (2010). Their positive answers to item 5 also indicated their desire for a systematic approach to teaching idioms in English language classes and their awareness of their need for facilitating strategies. Items 6 and 7 indicated how dissatisfied the respondents were with their present knowledge about idioms and the way idioms were dealt with in language classes. Only 5 respondents (less than 10%) were satisfied with their knowledge about idioms and the way they were taught. The majority (55 participants) reported either being only partially satisfied or even not satisfied at all. It's important to note that not even a single respondent was very satisfied with his or her present knowledge of idioms in English.

The strongest agreement among the respondents centered on the manner in which idioms should be presented. The high mean score of item number 8 (4.7) showed the learner's high desire to learn idioms in appropriate contexts. Items 9 and 10 investigate the preference of the respondents regarding the best context i.e. textual or video-graphic to learn idioms. The findings showed that the respondents almost equally favored the use of both video-graphic and written contexts for acquiring idioms. The average score of item number 10 is just 0.3 more than number 9 indicating a negligible difference. These two items can also be used to

compare the degree of agreement between the language learners' expectation regarding their performance in the two contexts and their real achievements.

To directly test the effect of context on the language learners' long-term and short-term retention, two independent t-tests were conducted. With Means=19.53 and 18.80 and SDs=2.31 and 2.51 for the animation and text groups respectively, t (58) = 1.39, p >0.05(see table 3). The results indicated no significant difference between the scores of the two groups.

Table 3. T-value for the mean performance of the two groups in short-term retention

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for equality of means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Short-Term Retention	Equal variances assumed	.051	.821	1.391	58	.169
	Equal variances not assumed			1.391	57.996	.170

But as table 4 indicates, the animation group outperformed the text group in long term retention (Means=18.66 and 16.73, SDs=2.55, 2.77 for the animation and text groups respectively).The performance of the two groups differed significantly t (58) =2.34, p < 0.05.

Table 4. T-value for the mean performance of the two groups in long-term retention

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for equality of means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Long-Term Retention	Equal variances assumed	.207	.651	2.348	58	.022
	Equal variances not assumed			2.348	57.764	.022

4. Discussion

The present research was an attempt to first of all investigate the Iranian language learners' attitudes toward learning L2 idioms. It then studied the effect of two different contexts on the language learners' long-term and short-term retention.

The results of the first part of this experiment were in fact answers to the first 2 research questions. The learners proved much interested in learning idioms. They acknowledged the importance of idioms in the daily discourse. However, they expressed their dissatisfaction with the way idioms were treated in language classes and their knowledge about them. The respondents highly acknowledged the positive role of context in language learning.

Regarding the third research question, the subjects almost underestimated the difference between the effects of different contexts on idiom retention. As the results showed, the subjects in the animation group significantly outperformed those in the text group with respect to long-term retention. The difference between the learners' expectations regarding the effect of written vs. video-graphic contexts on their retention and the practical results could be attributed to their lack of experience.

The result of the first t-tests was an answer to the 4th research question. The 2 different contexts didn't have significant difference in enhancing the language learners' short-term retention. None of the groups could significantly outperform the other. While the answer to the 5th research question "which context had more significant impact on the language learners' long-term retention?" was not the same. The results of the second t-test showed a significantly better performance of the animation group, which in turn shed further light on the significance of context type in language teaching and learning. The result is also in harmony with the dual coding theory emphasizing the role of images for better retention.

Based on the results of the study, the use of multimedia to introduce idiomatic expressions can further ease the burden of learning this particular area of language. So the language teachers are highly advised to mix their traditional methods with some use of technology in teaching idiomatic expressions. Unfortunately, little if any attention is paid to the systematic inclusion of idioms in the instructional videos. Those in charge of preparing language teaching materials are recommended to pay more attention to such a need and the scarcity of appropriate materials the field suffers form.

The present study had its own limitations. Idioms can be classified into different types such as compositional vs. non-compositional, but such classifications were not applied to the selection of idioms due to the limitation of available materials. So, further studies are needed to compare the effect of context on the retention of different classes of idioms.

The next limitation of this study is the fact that not all idioms can lend themselves equally to images. Some idioms are so opaque that they can't be clarified through images or animations. Other types of contextualization may prove more useful regarding such idioms.

The present study was limited to Iranian Intermediate EFL learners and to generalize the results to other situations, further studies are needed. In addition, this study tried to compare just two types of contexts, i.e. written vs. animated. Other studies are required to compare other types of contexts like still pictures.

The subjects in the two groups were only exposed through different channels to the martials while there was no formal treatment or teaching. Other studies can focus on different methods of teaching applied in different contexts.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to gather information on your attitude toward English idioms and how best to teach and learn them in the second language context.

Read each item and mark one of the answers from 1 to 5 (with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 unsure, 4 agree and 5 strongly agree).

Name: …………………………   sex: ………………
age: ……………………..

1. I think idioms are useful in everyday communication.
   1.□2.□3.□4.□5.□

2. Idioms should be included in the foreign language curriculum.
   1.□2.□3.□4.□5.□

3. Idioms should be used for classroom practice and testing.
   1.□2.□3.□4.□5.□

4. I like to study idioms on a regular basis.
   1.□2.□3.□4.□5.□

5. I like to be taught specific strategies in learning idioms in English.
   1.□2.□3.□4.□5.□

6. Overall, I'm satisfied with my present knowledge of English idioms.
   1.□2.□3.□4.□5.□

7. Overall, I'm satisfied with the way idioms are treated in English language classes.
   1.□2.□3.□4.□5.□

8. Real texts or audio-video recordings should accompany the study of idioms.
   1.□2.□3.□4.□5.□

9. I learn a new idiom better while a text supports its use. .
   1.□2.□3.□4.□5.□

10. I learn an idiom better while video-graphic information supports its use.
    1.□2.□3.□4.□5.□

Thank you

Appendix 2. Transcript of Symphony in Slang by Tex Avery with Underlined Idioms

Young man: How day, Dad. What's new? How's tricks? What's cooking?

Old man: "What's cooking? How's tricks!" What a strange language you bring from the Earth. I, I don't seem to follow you. I shall refer you to the master of the dictionary, Noah Webster. Perhaps he could understand you.

Old man: Mr. Webster, [Yes?] this newcomer's vocabulary is so unusual that I am unable to record his life on earth. Would you mind seeing if you can comprehend his odd manner of speech? … Now, young man, go ahead with the story of your life.

Young man: Sure thing, Dad. Well, I **was <u>born with a silver spoon in my mouth</u>.**

Mr. Webster: Silver … spoon in your mouth?

Young man: Yes, silver spoon in my mouth.

Mr. Webster: Mm-m. Proceed.

Young man: Then I seemed to grow up overnight. One day **<u>at the crack of dawn,</u>** I got up with the chickens to hunt a job, and got a job slinging hash because the proprietor was short-handed, but I **<u>couldn't cut the mustard</u>**. So the guy gave me the gate. So I went back to my little hole in the wall. I was **<u>beside myself with anger</u>**. Then I decided to get a train ticket to Texas, and there I made some dough punching cattle. From there I flew to Chicago. There a beautiful girl stepped into the picture. Our eyes met. My breath came in short pants, and I got goose-pimples. I was **<u>all thumbs</u>**. Mary's clothes **<u>fit her like a glove</u>**. And she looked mighty pretty with her hair done up in a bun. She had good-looking pins, too. Finally, she gives me a date. I put on my **<u>white tie and tails</u>**. And brother, did she put on the dog! We went around together for some time, **<u>painting the town red</u>**, going' to the Stork Club and a box at the opera. After the opera, I had a cocktail, and Mary had a Moscow mule. At dinner, Mary **<u>let her hair down</u>** and ate like a horse. By then my money was running out on me. So, I wrote a check. It bounced. Brother, I was really **<u>in a pickle</u>**. The proprietor **<u>drew a gun on</u>** me. But I gave him the slip and hid in the foothills .In no time the law was **<u>on my heels</u>**. On the witness stand, the judge tried to pump me. But, it seemed that every time I opened my mouth**<u>, I put my foot in it.</u>** So he sent me up the river to do a stretch in the jar. I was up against it and felt myself **<u>going to pot.</u>** But I raised a big stink, and they finally let me talk to an undercover man. After going through a lot of red tape, he sprung me. It sure felt good to **<u>stretch my legs</u>** again. Then I went straight to the bus station and caught a Greyhound for New York. On arriving, I dropped in on Mary and threw myself at her feet. I asked her to marry me, but she turned her back on me ,and got **<u>on her high horse.</u>** I couldn't **<u>touch her with a ten-foot pole.</u>** She wouldn't say a word. Guess the **<u>cat had her tongue</u>**. So I walked out on her. After that I **<u>went to pieces.</u>** Feeling lonely, I went down to Joe's malt shop where a bunch of the boys were hanging around. And the music was nice. The guy at the piano **<u>played by ear.</u>** I felt a tug at my elbow. It was the soda clerk. We sat down and chewed the rag a while. I heard **<u>from the grapevine</u>** that Mary was going around with an old flame. That burned me up because I knew he was just feeding her a line. But the guy really spent his money **<u>like water.</u>** I think he was connected with the railroad. As they danced, I tried to chisel in. But the guy **<u>got in my hair</u>**, so I left. Outside it was raining cats and dogs. I was feeling mighty blue, and everything looked black. But I carried on and went to the Thousand Islands. There I became a beachcomber. But I still thought of Mary. And a tear ran down my cheek. So I sent her a cable. Next day she sends me back a wire. I rushed back to the U.S. on a cattle boat and hot-footed it over to Mary's apartment. But when I opened the door, I noticed quite a few changes. Why Mary, Mary had a bunch of little ones! The groom had his

hands full, too. So all this struck me so funny that I died laughing. And here I am. Well, what do you think? Did you follow me? What's the matter? Can't you talk? Has the cat got your tongue?

Appendix 3. Selected Idioms with Their Definitions

Selected Idioms	Meanings
1. I was *born with a silver spoon in my mouth.*	born into a wealthy family
2. One day *at the crack of dawn* I got up.	At the start of the day
3. I *couldn't cut the mustard.*	couldn't do the job well
4. I was *beside myself with anger.*	couldn't control my anger
5. I was *all thumbs.*	unable to do something well with one's hands
6. Mary's clothes *fit her like a glove.*	fit perfectly
7. I put on my *white tie and tails.*	a suit for very formal occasions
8. We went around together for some time, *painting the town red.*	Enjoying ourselves; getting drunk
9. At dinner, Mary *let her hair down.*	let go of her inhibitions
10. I was really *in a pickle.*	very difficult situation
11. The proprietor *drew a gun* on me.	The owner took out a gun and pointed it
12. In no time the *law was on my heels.*	The police were pursuing me
13. Every time I opened my *mouth, I put my foot in it.*	I said something inappropriate.
14. I felt myself *going to pot.*	feeling depressed and lazy
15. It sure felt good to *stretch my legs* again.	to be able to walk; to exercise
16. She turned her back on me, and got *on her high horse*.	Thought she was better than others
17. I couldn't *touch her with a ten-foot pole.*	She remained out of my reach.
18. Guess the *cat had her tongue*.	I suppose she couldn't say anything.
19. After that I *went to pieces*.	lost control of myself
20. The guy at the piano *played by ear.*	improvised music
21. I heard *from the grapevine*	by talking informally to others
22. But the guy really spent his money *like water.*	In large quantities
23. But the guy *got in my hair*.	annoyed me