Bridging the Gap in Idiomatic Competence: ChatGPT as a Digital Assistant in EFL Instruction

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming education and creating new opportunities for language learning and teaching. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, idiomatic competence represents a persistent instructional challenge because it requires cultural awareness and contextual understanding. Traditional approaches often overlook these essential dimensions, limiting learners' ability to comprehend and use idiomatic expressions effectively. This article examines how ChatGPT, an AI-powered tool, can address this gap by serving as a digital assistant in EFL instruction. Through interactive and context-driven activities such as context-creating prompts, gap-fill exercises, and AI-generated visuals, ChatGPT fosters idiomatic comprehension in ways that engage learners dynamically. The discussion underscores the importance of teacher oversight to ensure linguistic accuracy, pedagogical soundness, and cultural appropriateness. Ethical considerations, including AI bias and the risk of over-reliance on automated tools, also receive careful attention. The article concludes that, when integrated with discernment, ChatGPT notably enhances EFL instruction by supporting the development of idiomatic competence in culturally informed, intellectually engaging, and dynamic ways.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) has dramatically reshaped the way we perceive many aspects of modern life. For many, life without AI's pervasive presence in daily activities has become almost unimaginable. Already embedded in numerous sectors, including business, agriculture, education, and science, AI has come to dominate the zeitgeist, accompanied by a growing fascination with its capabilities. The term "AI" has become ubiquitous and is often used colloquially to describe processes that simulate human intelligence, which has led to frequent confusion. But what, precisely, does AI mean? Its definition can vary, as no singular, universally accepted definition exists. In 1956, John McCarthy (2007) first coined the term "artificial

intelligence," describing it as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines" (p. 2). Technological advancements in the 20th century significantly expanded the scope of AI, and, as is common with evolving fields, its definition has continuously adapted. Wang (2019) defined AI by its ability to perform cognitive tasks and learn to adapt to new real-world challenges. For the purposes of this paper, however, AI will be defined as "the imitation by computers of the intelligence inherent in humans" (Sheikh et al., 2023, p. 15).

Today, AI refers to a broad range of algorithms that perform tasks requiring human-like intelligence. It has progressed from rule-based systems to advanced machine learning, deep learning models, and neural networks capable of generating realistic text and images, as well as detecting complex patterns (Banh & Strobel, 2023). These advancements have led to the rise of generative AI (GAI), with one key innovation being the generative pre-trained transformer, ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com). On November 30, 2022, OpenAI launched ChatGPT, which quickly saw widespread adoption and permeated many aspects of society. Users can enter concise prompts to generate text, engage in human-like conversations, explain concepts, generate images, and more, while new applications continue to emerge. Unsurprisingly, sectors such as the military (Biswas, 2023), medicine (Sedaghat, 2023), and education (Firaina & Sulisworo, 2023) rapidly began utilizing the platform's capabilities.

In education, ChatGPT serves as a crucial learning aid by improving educational processes and streamlining learning. Its personalized learning, teacher support, and interactive features foster critical thinking and knowledge acquisition (Jo, 2024). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, ChatGPT helps teachers generate lesson plans, quizzes, and exam materials, thereby easing their workload (Kiliçkaya & Liontas, 2018). Additionally, AI plays a significant role in teaching English idioms, enhancing learners' idiomatic competence and helping them better grasp contextual and cultural nuances (Liontas, 2006). As EFL learners develop their idiomatic competence, they gain a deeper understanding of cultural nuances embedded within idiomatic expressions. True mastery of English requires learners to progress beyond basic grammar and vocabulary studies to understand idiomatic expressions within their cultural contexts. EFL learners who acquire idiomatic competence are better equipped to engage in authentic dialogue with native speakers.

Teaching idiomatic expressions is an integral part of achieving linguistic proficiency for EFL learners despite the numerous pedagogical challenges teachers often encounter. A primary difficulty lies in selecting culturally appropriate idioms to teach. While some teachers stress the importance of choosing idioms that are congruent with the classroom's culture, others raise concerns about the possible confusion poorly translated idioms might cause. Furthermore, simplified textbook activities are often inadequate for conveying the authentic use of these idioms in real-world scenarios. Collectively, these obstacles may negatively impact learners' motivation and hinder their idiomatic development.

The implementation of ChatGPT can help alleviate obstacles teachers face when teaching idiomatic expressions and other linguistic aspects. The platform supports EFL teachers' pedagogical practices by providing interactive environments and instant feedback while generating customized content, leading to more effective responses to learners' needs. For example, a teacher can ask ChatGPT to generate a set of idioms aligned with the lesson objective and then generate sentences based on the created idioms in context. Utilizing these features can enhance the effectiveness of teachers' pedagogical practices, leading to better idiom acquisition (Kasneci et al., 2023; Su & Yang, 2023).

In this article, we first review the literature on the use of ChatGPT across diverse

instructional settings. We then propose key pedagogical considerations for incorporating ChatGPT into idiom instruction. Following that, we present specific, actionable strategies and activities that EFL teachers can implement to enhance idiomatic competence among learners. Finally, we argue that integrating ChatGPT into idiom instruction offers a structured, interactive, and adaptive learning environment capable of improving both comprehension and production. We also discuss potential limitations and suggest directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recognizing the potential of AI tools to improve education, many educators have integrated them into their instructional methods, taking advantage of their various affordances. This integration has notably grown in the field of EFL, where AI tools enhance both teaching and learning processes (Alhalangy & AbdAlgane, 2023; Alqahtani et al., 2023; Holmes & Tuomi, 2022; Huang et al., 2023; Rizvi, 2023). One such tool is ChatGPT. According to Valentini (2023), ChatGPT provides multiple educational benefits, such as enabling Socratic dialogues, which help generate novel concepts and promote deeper comprehension. Additionally, ChatGPT functions as an educational tutor that delivers precise feedback and serves as a source of ideas for learners who can explore different subjects by engaging with interactive prompts.

In the EFL context, there have been numerous studies that investigated the role of ChatGPT in educational contexts. For example, Octavio et al. (2024) conducted a seven-month study (January–June 2023) in an EFL classroom in Spain. By observing a single teacher, the researchers found that the platform contributed to enhancing the teacher's pedagogical strategies and increased her digital competence. The teacher integrated the platform into classroom activities and generated and designed lesson plans. The in-class application enabled learners to witness firsthand how AI could be used as a tool to enhance their learning process. Similarly, Kohnke et al. (2023) examined the role of ChatGPT in vocabulary acquisition. The study found that the platform effectively provided context-based definitions, offered feedback, and corrected learners' linguistic errors. Moreover, with its ability to generate refined dialogue, learners reflected a high interest in the platform to practice conversations.

Polakova and Ivenz (2024) conducted a study to evaluate the efficacy of ChatGPT's feedback in enhancing EFL learners' writing performance. Over three sessions, learners wrote summaries of academic texts and submitted them to ChatGPT for evaluation and feedback. The results revealed that the platform's feedback improved learners' writing skills in different aspects such as conciseness, grammar, inclusion of key information, and the use of passive voice. Similarly, Song and Song (2023) implemented a mixed-methods research approach to examine how ChatGPT affected Chinese EFL learners' writing skills and motivational levels. Learners who experienced AI instruction demonstrated greater writing skill advancement and motivation than learners taught traditionally. The qualitative results showed a range of opinions including recognition of AI's innovative potential in education and concerns about its lack of accuracy and over-reliance.

Shifting the focus to writing assessments, Mizumoto and Eguchi (2023) explored ChatGPT's effectiveness in Automated Essay Scoring (AES) by evaluating 12,100 TOEFL11 essays using GPT-3 (text-davinci-003). The findings indicated a reliable level of accuracy, with results matching benchmark scores, suggesting that ChatGPT could be a valuable tool for automated writing assessments and feedback.

A key feature of ChatGPT lies in its capability to produce content in response to users'

prompts. The study by Kim and Park (2023) explored how elementary learners view ChatGPT-written scripts compared to textbook scripts in reader's theater exercises. The study showed no significant differences between ChatGPT-generated scripts and textbook-based scripts. However, one key difference was observed in English proficiency, where textbook scripts performed better than ChatGPT's generated ones. Nonetheless, some learners found the generated scripts more engaging despite their difficulty. This suggests that the platform's generated scripts, though judged challenging, learners exhibited more effort to understand the content. Similarly, Young and Shishido (2023) studied how ChatGPT can produce dialogue materials for EFL learners as well as its effectiveness as a dialogue reference for chatbot systems. The researcher used three readability metrics, such as Flesch Reading Ease, Dale-Chall Readability, and McAlpine EFLAW, to evaluate the difficulty of the platform's created dialogue. They demonstrated that the 450 dialogues created were suitable for beginner learners while also introducing new vocabulary to learners at the B1 proficiency level. Additionally, the dialogues refrained from using colloquial phrases, which enhanced their clarity for learners and increased their engagement.

Another area where researchers have examined ChatGPT's impact is reading skills. For instance, Kim (2024) conducted a mixed-method study to investigate when and to what extent ChatGPT enhanced reading comprehension among Korean EFL students. Participants were divided into an experimental group that received ChatGPT assistance and a control group that followed traditional methods. The findings revealed that the experimental group showed improved top-down processing skills, suggesting that the platform facilitated reading assignments and helped participants better grasp the main idea of the text through engagement. Despite its effectiveness, some participants reported challenges, particularly regarding ChatGPT's lengthy and assertive explanations when using the platform to support reading comprehension.

Beyond reading skills, grammar remains an integral component of EFL instruction. Behforouz and Al Ghaithi (2024) investigated the impact of ChatGPT on grammar improvement among 60 Omani EFL learners. The researchers divided the learners into three groups of 20: a control group using traditional in-class learning, an experimental group with in-class learning supplemented by ChatGPT, and a second experimental group engaged in online teaching with ChatGPT. Pretests, posttests, and delayed posttests revealed that, although all groups demonstrated progress, the first experimental group outperformed the others in retaining grammatical knowledge. Similarly, Annamalai and Bervell (2025) explored ChatGPT's effectiveness in grammar acquisition through the Kolb experiential learning model. Their findings showed that ChatGPT fosters interactive learning and student engagement, making grammar comprehension and application more accessible. However, they also raised concerns about AI-generated inaccuracies and contextual misunderstandings, emphasizing the importance of critically evaluating AI-generated content.

These studies illustrate the platform's broad application across various language skills and its potential to enhance EFL instruction. However, while ChatGPT has been integrated into English language teaching, its impact on *idiomatic competence* development remains unclear. To date, no specific study has examined the platform's effectiveness in facilitating idiom acquisition, a crucial aspect of achieving fluency and natural language use. This article seeks to address this gap by exploring how ChatGPT can enhance teachers' instruction in idiom teaching. It presents activities that leverage the platform's interactive features to expose learners to idioms in real-world contexts. In doing so, this article aims to contribute to the growing body of research on AI-assisted language learning and offer pedagogical strategies for integrating ChatGPT into idiom instruction.

PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As with any technology used in educational settings, ChatGPT offers several advantageous affordances, but it also has constraints that could hinder the learning process. One notable advantage of the platform is its ability to generate content tailored to learners' needs and provide immediate feedback, thereby enhancing the learning and teaching experience (Rasul et al., 2023). However, concerns remain regarding both the accuracy of the ChatGPT-generated content and the potential over-reliance on the platform by both teachers and learners.

Su and Yang (2023) proposed the IDEE theoretical framework for integrating generative AI platforms, such as ChatGPT, into the educational landscape (Figure 1). The framework consists of four essential components: identifying desired outcomes, determining the appropriate level of automation, ensuring ethical considerations, and evaluating effectiveness. Together, these components provide teachers with a guide for using AI platforms for personalized learning while acknowledging operational challenges. For instance, teachers must have a clear understanding of the lesson's objectives to ensure that the AI platform's outputs align with these goals. The framework also stresses the importance of deciding when to rely on AI and when human intervention is necessary, advocating for a balanced approach to automation.

Figure 1.
Revised IDEE Theoretical Framework for Using Generative AI in Education.
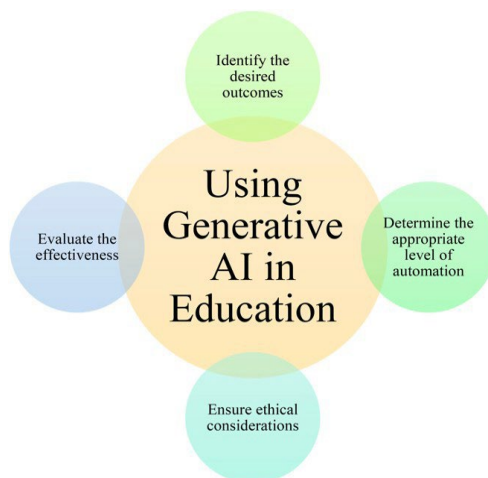
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To use the platform effectively, teachers must regard ChatGPT as a supportive tool rather than a primary source of information. This approach involves critically evaluating the generated content to ensure its cultural appropriateness and alignment with educational objectives. By doing so, teachers can utilize the numerous affordances of ChatGPT while being mindful of its potential drawbacks. Taking a balanced approach to using ChatGPT allows teachers to integrate it into language learning instruction, ultimately enhancing student learning outcomes. When teachers regard ChatGPT as a supportive tool rather than a replacement, they can strategically utilize the platform to design and facilitate a wide variety of learning activities. The platform can generate contextual examples, scaffold understanding, and provide immediate feedback. As Liontas (2015) aptly noted, "a single, invariable one-size-fits-all method for developing idiomatic competence

does not exist. Searching for the 'right' method is as futile as chasing red herrings" (p. 639). With this in mind, we propose the activities presented in the following sections to demonstrate how EFL teachers can use ChatGPT effectively for teaching idioms.

TEACHING IDIOMS IN CONTEXT: BRIDGING MEANING AND USAGE

Context is essential for teaching and learning idiomatic expressions (Liontas, 2003). By embedding idioms in meaningful contexts, teachers empower learners to see how idiomatic expressions naturally fit into sentences. This method encourages learners to decode the meanings of idioms using contextual cues, leading to deeper understanding. In response to educators' tailored prompts, ChatGPT can generate diverse contextual examples aligned with specific themes or lesson objectives. The following activities showcase how ChatGPT can be productively applied to enhance idiomatic learning: *Thematic Idiom Learning with ChatGPT*, *Idiom Learning with Critical Thinking through ChatGPT*, and *Name That Idiom! Using ChatGPT*. These examples are just the tip of the iceberg—ChatGPT opens up an array of opportunities to enrich the learning experience. With simple adjustments, these activities can be customized to fit various educational levels and language proficiencies, providing educators with a flexible, engaging tool for idiom instruction.

Example One
Thematic Idiom Learning with ChatGPT

When teachers incorporate idiom-based images generated by ChatGPT into the activity, these visuals enhance learners' understanding by helping them mentally visualize the idioms' meanings. Teachers are encouraged to follow the steps outlined below when using ChatGPT to facilitate this activity. Depending on the desired depth and the students' proficiency level, certain steps may be omitted to simplify the learning process. However, implementing all eight steps adds depth to the activity, encourages greater interaction with the content, and offers opportunities for further reflection. Above all, this approach fosters critical thinking, cultural awareness, and hands-on practice. The eight steps are as follows:

- **Step 1: Select a Theme**
  Select a theme that interests the learners or aligns with the lesson objective (e.g., emotions, weather, daily activities, etc.).
- **Step 2: Introduce Relevant Vocabulary**
  Introduce relevant vocabulary or concepts related to the theme. This helps learners understand the context in which the idioms are used and prepares them for the upcoming activity. For example, if the theme is emotions, teach or review words related to feelings (e.g., happy, sad, excited).
- **Step 3: Generate Idiomatic Sentences with ChatGPT**
  Use ChatGPT to generate sentences containing idioms relevant to the lesson objective or theme. For example, the prompt could be: "Generate five sentences using idioms related to emotions." ChatGPT will then generate sentences (e.g., "After he heard the news, he was on cloud nine."). Before introducing the sentences to learners, consider prompting ChatGPT to generate images that represent the literal meanings of the sentences (e.g., "Generate an image of a man smiling on a cloud."—see Figure 2).

Figure 2.
A Man Smiling on a Cloud, Representing the Idiom "On Cloud Nine"
(Created Using OpenAI's (2024) DALL-E Tool)

- **Step 4: Display Sentences and Encourage Deduction**
  Display the generated sentences for the class and encourage learners to deduce the meaning of each idiom from its context. You could prompt them with questions like: "What do you think this expression means in this situation?"
- **Step 5: Display Images for Visual Support**
  Display the generated images to the class to support understanding by visually illustrating the literal meaning of the idioms. Discuss how the image connects to the idiomatic expression and ask learners to reflect on the difference between literal and figurative meanings.
- **Step 6: Class Discussion on Idioms**
  Encourage learners to discuss and hypothesize about the idiomatic expressions before revealing the exact meaning. This helps stimulate critical thinking and peer collaboration.
- **Step 7: Encourage Sentence Creation and Dialogue**
  Ask students to create their own sentences using the same idioms or to form short dialogues incorporating the idioms. This active application reinforces their understanding and encourages them to use idioms in context.
- **Step 8: Reflection and Debrief**
  End the activity by having students reflect on how the idioms might be used in other situations or contexts. Discuss how idioms might differ across cultures and languages. This deepens learners' understanding of idiomatic expressions and helps them grasp the cultural and contextual nuances behind their usage.

By combining contextualized sentences and visuals generated by ChatGPT, a dual-coding effect is created, allowing learners to process idiomatic expressions both linguistically and visually. This approach taps into multiple cognitive channels, as the textual information provides linguistic context while the images offer visual representations of the idioms. As learners form mental images to accompany the phrases, they engage both verbal and visual memory systems, reinforcing the meaning and usage of each idiom. This dual-channel processing not only helps learners better understand the idioms but also strengthens their retention by creating more vivid, memorable associations with the expressions. As a result, learners are more likely to recall idioms in future contexts, enhancing both comprehension and long-term retention.

Example Two
Idiom Learning with Critical Thinking through ChatGPT

Through the activity outlined below, teachers can use ChatGPT to generate sentences with missing words or phrases, prompting learners to fill in the blanks with the appropriate idioms. This promotes active recall, contextual understanding, and meaning reinforcement. It also requires learners to think analytically about idiom use in real-life contexts, strengthening their grasp of proper usage and nuances. By transforming passive learning into an interactive process, the activity fosters engagement and improves comprehension and retention of idiomatic expressions.

- **Step 1: Generate Fill-in-the-Blank Sentences**
  Ask ChatGPT to generate sentences with blanks for idioms, ensuring the sentences offer sufficient contextual clues for learners to identify the correct idioms. Formulate a prompt aligned with lesson objectives (e.g., "Generate fill-in-the-blank sentences where the blanks can be filled with 'under the weather' and 'hit the nail on the head'").
- **Step 2: Modify Sentences for Clarity and Appropriateness**
  Request ChatGPT to modify the sentences to fit the lesson's focus, learners' knowledge level, and to avoid ambiguity. Ensure each sentence includes clear contextual clues and places the blank to emphasize the idiom's key phrase (e.g., "Create a fill-in-the-blank sentence for the idiom 'under the weather' suitable for middle school learners."). Distribute the generated sentences to learners via handouts, slides, or digital platforms.
- **Step 3: Engage Learners in Filling the Blanks**
  Encourage learners to fill in the blanks with the appropriate idioms. Provide a list of idioms to choose from or allow learners to brainstorm their responses.
- **Step 4: Provide Instant Feedback**
  Use ChatGPT to provide instant feedback by asking it to explain the correct use of the idioms in the sentences (e.g., "Explain why the idiom 'spill the beans' is correct in this sentence.").
- **Step 5: Review and Discuss Results**
  After learners have filled in the blanks, review their answers as a class. Ask ChatGPT to explain why certain idioms are appropriate for the given context (e.g., "Explain why 'under the weather' works in this sentence."). This discussion helps reinforce understanding and clarifies any misunderstandings.
- **Step 6: Encourage Peer Collaboration**
  Pair learners to work together on the activity. Encourage them to discuss their choices and reasons for selecting particular idioms. Ask ChatGPT to provide additional examples or alternative idioms when needed (e.g., "Provide a different idiom that could fit in this sentence and explain why.").
- **Step 7: Extend with Contextual Practice**
  Ask learners to create their own sentences using the idioms in different contexts. Request that ChatGPT generates new examples or asks questions to prompt learners to consider different uses of the idioms (e.g., "Generate a new sentence with 'hit the nail on the head' in a workplace setting.").
- **Step 8: Evaluate and Reflect on Progress**
  At the end of the activity, ask learners to reflect on their understanding of the idioms. Use ChatGPT to help facilitate the reflection by generating questions about their learning process (e.g., "What was challenging about using idioms in context? How can you improve your use of idioms in future activities?").

This activity prioritizes the development of critical thinking by requiring learners to interpret contextual clues and select appropriate idiomatic expressions. Through realistic scenarios, learners acquire idioms in meaningful context while remaining actively engaged. Teachers can use ChatGPT to design fill-in-the-blank exercises attuned to learners' proficiency levels, providing both challenge and accessibility. When implemented with pedagogical intent, the activity deepens understanding, reinforces meaning, and encourages reflection. It ultimately supports lasting improvements in comprehension and retention of idiomatic expressions.

**Example Three**
***Name That Idiom!* Using ChatGPT**

Idiomatic expressions often defy literal interpretation, making them challenging for language learners to master. To address this, Liontas (2015) proposed the visually driven, fast-paced activity "Name That Idiom!", where learners are presented with images depicting the literal meanings of idioms in a timed sequence. Learners must then infer and identify the idiomatic meaning based on the visual cues, with the first correct response earning the point. This decoding process helps bridge the gap between the figurative and literal meanings of idioms, reinforcing learners' ability to understand and use idiomatic expressions in context. The visual element provides a concrete reference, aiding memory retention since the brain processes images more easily than abstract concepts. ChatGPT can enrich this activity by generating engaging, contextually appropriate images or image descriptions for a wide range of idioms, offering flexibility and variety in how idioms are introduced and practiced. The use of visuals allows learners to make stronger cognitive connections, enhancing their ability to grasp idioms' meanings and increasing retention. (A dozen more such activities can be found in Liontas, 2015, and digitally transformed for productive ChatGPT use.) To carry out this activity, teachers should follow the six steps outlined below:

• **Step 1: Generate Idiom Visuals**
  Ask ChatGPT to generate visuals that represent specific idioms literally (e.g., "Generate an image that visually represents the idiom 'spill the beans'"; see Figure 3).

Figure 3.
A Bag of Beans Tipping Over, Representing the Idiom "Spill The Beans"
(Created Using OpenAI's (2024) DALL-E Tool)
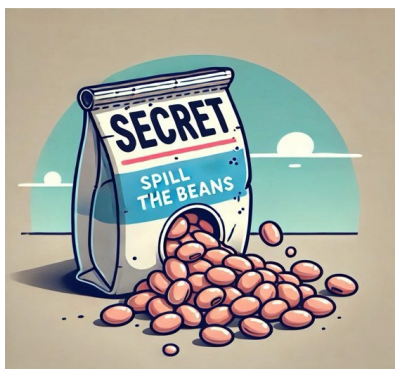
• **Step 2: Organize Visuals and Set Challenge**
  Organize the generated images into PowerPoint slides and set a timer for the slides to create a time-based challenge.

- **Step 3: Provide Contextual Explanations**
  After completing the activity, return to ChatGPT for contextual explanations of the idioms (e.g., "Explain the idiom 'spill the beans' in an example sentence or dialogue.").
- **Step 4: Group Discussion and Peer Feedback**
  After the activity, have learners discuss the idioms in small groups. Ask them to share how they arrived at their answers and what contextual clues helped them. Peer feedback will help solidify their understanding and foster collaborative learning.
- **Step 5: Create New Sentences Using the Idioms**
  Ask learners to create their own sentences using the idioms they have just learned. Encourage them to use the idioms in different contexts (e.g., formal, informal, workplace, casual). This step reinforces their comprehension and helps transfer the idioms into real-life use.
- **Step 6: Cultural Exploration of Idioms**
  Discuss how idioms might vary across cultures or languages. Ask learners if they know similar expressions in their native language and compare those to the English idioms. This adds a cultural layer to the activity and promotes intercultural awareness.

Visual representations of idioms are crucial in reinforcing learners' understanding and retention of idiomatic expressions. ChatGPT generates visual cues tailored to learners' abilities and objectives, which improves the overall learning experience. In addition, ChatGPT provides clear explanations of idioms and suggests exercises that foster an interactive and engaging environment. These steps contribute to a deeper understanding of idioms and maximize learner involvement. As a result, the activity becomes much richer and more comprehensive.

These three activities alone demonstrate the powerful affordances ChatGPT offers for idiom learning. ChatGPT generates contextually relevant fill-in-the-blank exercises, creates engaging visual representations, and provides tailored explanations. It supports the development of critical thinking, comprehension, and retention of idiomatic expressions. ChatGPT adapts to learners' proficiency levels and gives immediate feedback. This balance ensures that activities remain both challenging and accessible. In sum, ChatGPT works alongside teachers as a digital assistant. It enhances the language learning experience through interaction, reflection, and engagement. As a result, learners develop a stronger, more meaningful understanding of idioms.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The main goal of this article was to suggest ways for using ChatGPT as a digital assistant to facilitate idiom teaching. Contextual examples were introduced to demonstrate how ChatGPT can serve as a supportive resource for educators. The article also reviewed the literature on ChatGPT's application in various educational settings and outlined strategies for utilizing the platform in idiom acquisition. Finally, three specific activities were presented to help EFL teachers enhance idiomatic competence among their learners.

It bears repeating that ChatGPT can significantly enhance idiom instruction through image generation, immediate feedback, and interactive activities tailored to learners' proficiency levels. However, teachers must consider the platform's inherent limitations, including occasional inaccuracies, mismatched content, and potential biases. Consequently, we counsel educators to adopt a balanced approach to idiom instruction, using ChatGPT as a supplemental tool with oversight to ensure accuracy and relevance.

In the context of using ChatGPT to teach idioms, several limitations must be considered. A primary concern is the potential for the platform to generate inaccurate or incorrect information, which raises questions about its reliability in educational settings (Ji et al., 2023). This underscores the importance of AI literacy, as educators must critically assess the accuracy and effectiveness of AI-generated content. Additionally, ChatGPT's reliance on preexisting data may not always capture the most current idiomatic expressions, especially those reflecting regional variations. As language continues to evolve, the meanings and usages of idioms can change over time, further complicating the application of AI in teaching these expressions (Crompton & Burke, 2024).

In addition to examining ChatGPT's efficacy in facilitating idiom acquisition, future research could explore several other important dimensions. One key area involves investigating the platform's ability to handle cultural sensitivity and contextual variations, as idioms often carry distinct regional and cultural meanings. Understanding whether ChatGPT can generate culturally appropriate idiomatic expressions and account for variations across different English-speaking regions would be valuable. Another avenue for exploration is the impact of ChatGPT on learner engagement and motivation. While the platform can generate contextual examples and feedback, it remains uncertain how it influences students' enthusiasm and long-term interest in idiomatic language learning. Moreover, both researchers and language practitioners could assess how ChatGPT interacts with traditional classroom instruction and explore its effectiveness as a supplement to teacher-led teaching or a standalone tool.

A further consideration is the accuracy of ChatGPT's content; with occasional errors in idiomatic expressions or explanations, studying the frequency and implications of such mistakes on learning outcomes could inform best practices for language educators. Long-term retention is also a critical aspect to explore, as researchers could investigate how well idioms acquired through ChatGPT are retained over time compared to traditional teaching methods. Additionally, the platform's effectiveness may differ based on learners' proficiency levels, with more advanced learners potentially benefiting more than beginners. Finally, the degree to which ChatGPT personalizes its content to suit individual learners' needs and learning styles warrants investigation, as personalized instruction could be key to maximizing its educational impact. By addressing these limitations, future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how ChatGPT can be harnessed in idiom instruction and language learning more broadly.

In closing, as we transition our teaching practices more and more into a digital world, there is need for teachers to deepen their understanding of AI and digital literacy. By mastering ChatGPT and similar AI platforms, teachers can create customized lessons and quizzes along with questions and visual aids that meet their students' specific needs. Understanding the boundaries of the platform remains essential. Unsurprisingly, teachers will need to serve as cultural interpreters and evaluators to make sure that ChatGPT-generated content is congruent with their learners' cultural standards. Language professionals who maintain a clear and purposeful direction can effectively utilize AI affordances while also understanding its limitations. Ultimately, *Bridging the Gap in Idiomatic Competence: ChatGPT as a Digital Assistant in EFL Instruction* becomes more than just a title—it is a call to action. It urges educators, both content specialists and language practitioners, to harness the potential of AI in teaching idiomatic expressions while maintaining the human element that makes learning truly impactful. It should be clear that ChatGPT serves as a supportive tool, not a replacement for teachers. Its role in idiomatic learning can only be fully realized when it is actively integrated into human-led instruction, rather than relying on machine-driven teaching. After all, *the proof of the pudding is in the eating!* Bon appétit!"

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