The Effect of Context on Inferencing the Meaning of Idioms in English by Iranian EFL Learners

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Research in the field of foreign/second language teaching has shown that foreign/second speakers, just like L1 speakers, apply some strategies while processing the idioms despite the lack of sufficient input in the classroom settings as well as the lack of language contact. This study aimed to investigate the role of context on inferencing the meaning of idioms by MA students of English. To insure the homogeneity, based on an Oxford Proficiency Test (OPT), 60 MA students were recruited form among a sample of 120 MA students. Then, they took the pretest and a posttest. The pretest contained thirty idioms out of the context. Based on the pretest, a posttest was given containing fifteen idioms in the context, and then the delayed posttest and one questionnaire was administered to check the learner's positive or negative attitude. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics, paired-sample t-test, and content analysis were utilized. The findings revealed that learners gained better result on the posttest. This may mean, the results indicated a positive correlation between the role of context and the inferencing of idioms. It also shows that cultural context can facilitate learner’s comprehension of the English figurative idiom.

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