

# An Instructional Model Based on Mobile Microlearning for Teaching English Idioms Through Songs to EFL Learners

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**Abstract**—This study investigates the effectiveness of adopting the ADDIE model in teaching idioms by utilising idioms in songs through using a mobile microlearning strategy in the classroom. It is impossible to infer an idiomatic expression's meaning from the words themselves. Therefore, both understanding and using them pose difficulties for EFL students. But using them effectively in conversation is a good indicator of a high level of English proficiency. The sample consisted of 15 students in one of the Jordanian high schools. The researcher carefully selected these idioms in songs to ensure they did not already know them. Another crucial factor while choosing these songs was the ability to guess either the idioms' literal translation or the symbolic meaning. After the experiment, the researcher administered one post-test to measure how idioms in songs affect the retention rate of these idioms. The experiment results show that using idioms in songs through a mobile microlearning strategy had a better short- and long-term retention rate. Therefore, the results of this study indicate that using idioms in songs with a mobile microlearning strategy while teaching idioms should have much attention from teachers because idioms are potent tools to enhance students' retention of remembering and using these idioms. Also, teachers must give more opportunities for students to interact using these idiomatic expressions to improve their speaking skills.

**Index Terms**—idioms in songs, mobile microlearning strategy, foreign language learners, Arab learners

## I. INTRODUCTION

Because of the global pandemic of the Covid-19 virus, many educational institutions shifted to online courses. One of the biggest online teaching challenges was maintaining students' concentration and interests. Keeping students' attention and focus during study time is just one of many obstacles to successfully implementing online learning. Surprisingly, using the same textbook to complete the assignments is a requirement for traditional and online learning, which shares a similar condition with conventional education. Students must master the same material and keep the subject matter in mind regardless of whether they read an electronic or paper book. Online learning is generally identical to traditional education, with the only difference being that one takes place online and the other in a classroom setting. Surprisingly, online learning time was the same as face-to-face learning, and students' attention decreased due to tiredness and boredom, affecting the learning process improvement and failure to achieve the goals of the lessons.

Another significant online learning difficulty for many students is their inability to maintain their attention for extended periods. Many parents are worried about the health risks of letting their kids spend much time staring at screens. According to Fitria (2022), students can learn new skills and gain new knowledge without committing to a long formal education program.

According to Burton (2022), some students can quickly become side-tracked by the constant notifications from their social media accounts and other non-academic sources in an online learning system. He adds that once students are distracted by these regular notifications, they unconsciously start scrolling through these non-academic and social platforms. As a result, finding a way to present suitable, engaging, and easy-to-understand material or content in e-learning in a context where students are distracted by various factors is challenging. Accordingly, teachers and educators have been trying to figure out how to fix the issue of students' dwindling and reducing the periods of their attention.

To solve this challenge, some European academics and educators have recently highlighted microlearning and made connections between it and online education. Because scholars and educators believe that microlearning helps students retain information more quickly and thoroughly, it has become essential since the introduction of online education.

After ten years of research, Lindner (2007) proposed micro-learning as an innovative method of teaching that prioritises bite-sized learning modules and quick-fire exercises. Microlearning is online learning that concentrates on brief but closely related learning units. Students can study whenever they want, anywhere, with this teaching strategy. Moreover, this modern and practical learning strategy improves information retention, the size of the information keeps learners more focused, and students can repeat the data at different periods to increase their memory. Finally, this micro-learning strategy is an innovative, adaptable, and time-efficient learning strategy.

Although microlearning techniques fit a wide variety of devices, it is essential to note that mobile phones, tablets, and similar devices are the most convenient for implementing this new strategy. If we define mobile learning as any learning that takes place, the learner is not at a fixed location or uses the learning opportunities offered by mobile technologies. Then it is easy to deduce that mobile and microlearning go hand in hand. Mobiles have become very popular among students since mobiles are portable, convenient, and of relatively small size. Also, mobile devices have quickly become essential to students' lives. So, new learning modes occurred with the integration of microlearning and mobile. Interestingly, one of the examples of applying microlearning is using YouTube videos.

## II. USING MICROLEARNING STRATEGY

In 1963, Hector Correa introduced the term microlearning strategy, yet it receives less attention from educators and researchers. Lately, some European educators and scientists (Bruck et al., 2012; Gassler et al., 2004; Hug, 2007) have drawn attention to microlearning and linked it to online learning. Consequently, microlearning has become necessary since the advent of online education can be attributed to the widespread belief that it facilitates quicker and more thorough knowledge retention in students. In other words, it is a relatively new strategy to e-learning that has the potential to significantly improve students' chances of completing course objectives. Also, microlearning refers to organising educational materials into bite-sized chunks presented as e-learning objects Sozmen (2022). When dividing an essential topic into small learning parts, microlearning as a technique manages this short attention span and avoids boredom while learning. Microlearning presents a new way for teaching English at all levels to meet the modern e-learner's needs and overcome boredom and memory retention limitations. Also, microlearning allows users to practice autonomy during learning, increasing their motivation to learn on their mobiles. Badrul et al. (2021) state that microlearning is an innovative technology-enabled strategy. It becomes more common to deliver focused, brief content to learners and control when and what they learn.

Similarly, Palmer and Blake (2018) and Sozmen (2022) claim that microlearning is one of the newest trends in the e-learning sector. They add that microlearning is a small amount of learning that usually only takes a few minutes and is easy to access on a mobile device. The reinforcement comes in a type such as videos and other types of media. Omer (2017) confirms that e-learning deals with multiple learning objectives which cannot achieve and remember. While microlearning addresses one aim at a time, and students take each one slowly and thoroughly understand it, they move on to the next objective. Omer adds that the microlearning strategy is short and takes only 5-8 minutes; sometimes, it is less, making it suitable and ideal for learners with short attention. Other researchers (Fitria, 2022; Khong & Kabilan, 2020; Leong et al., 2020) consider microlearning a powerful tool and a promising area to explore in teaching-based and work-based learning. Furthermore, microlearning has a variety of formats, including online courses, training, seminars, and workshops. People with busy schedules who still want to increase their knowledge can benefit from microlearning, as its presentation of material facilitates its retention and subsequent application in real-world situations.

According to Rafli and Adri (2022), micro-learning is an efficient instruction strategy and refers to a short-term study strategy. Microlearning content can take the form of a text using digestible, bite-sized chunks to help students better grasp the material. It allows instructors to collaborate with students to develop digestible content in various formats, such as text, photos, and video. Images, on the other hand, can serve as a substitute for written words. The final form is a video with some lessons and a quick rundown of the material's step-by-step approach.

According to Hug (2007), microlearning is a mini course comprising a succession of brief learning exercises and learning content to avoid cognitive overload and work within the attention span limitations of the human brain. Because it uses short and well-planned modules or activities, it is also known as bite-sized learning.

## III. MOBILES IN THE EDUCATION SETTINGS

Some educational researchers, teachers, and learners support using mobile integration in educational settings (Ally, 2009; Pollara & Broussard, 2011). According to Pachler et al. (2010), mobile phones, among the various technological tools, are a source of motivation and inspiration for students because of their attachment to mobiles. Also, mobiles are the most convenient and straightforward technology for students to use and the preferable device for them (Stockwell, 2010). Mindog (2016) asserts that mobile apps can aid language learning due to their affordability and accessibility. He adds that mobile phones work best because students are familiar with them. In addition, UNESCO (2023) affirms that there are many positive aspects to using a smartphone for educational purposes, such as the freedom to study when and where it is most convenient for students and the ability to design their study plan and curriculum. Usually, the classroom is just one setting where learning can occur, whereas individuals can use their mobile to use any scholarly sources and create content outside of school. UNESCO (2023) claims that mobiles provide extensive help and aid learning. Meng and Wang (2016) argue that mobile learning can be viewed as a part of e-learning since it contains the same learning content. They add that mobile learning refers to a broad category of educational practices in which students access course materials via mobile devices and wireless networks. Extensive adaptability, rich interactivity, and situated learning also go a long way toward meeting students' demands for personalisation and flexibility.

Gautam (2018) claims that though mobile learning has proven to be an effective method for learning English compared to traditional methods, the problem of retention and recall of the material is not proven to be highly effective.

The use of the microlearning strategy in educational institutions increased in recent years as a response to the challenges of information retention. Using the microlearning strategy results in an increase of 22% in the retained material (Kapp et al., 2015).

#### Mobile micro-learning strategy

Microlearning and the technology of mobile phones are closely related. Mobile learning is like e-learning because both have similar e-learning content. Additionally, from a technological standpoint, mobile learning can be viewed as the educational application of mobile computing. The advantage of microlearning is that it's easy to make it work on multiple devices, and it will look good and easy to read, such as a laptop, mobile phone, or tablet. More specifically, micro-learning emphasises learning content division and a compressed amount of time.

Because of their flexibility and individuality, mobile devices are perfect for implementing microlearning, as argued by Winterford (2016). He claimed that breaking one's education into more manageable, smaller segments is very effective for academic study. In contrast, mobile learning focuses more on the ability to learn anywhere and at any time. Users learn more quickly and retain the information for extended periods when presented on a mobile device because they can complete a lesson in chunks while waiting for a meal or commuting. As a result, Mobile micro-learning makes the most of the benefits that mobile learning and micro-learning offer, specifically the ability to receive micro-content through mobile terminals to study whenever and wherever is most convenient for the learner.

According to Habitzel et al. (2006), mobile learning can improve the innovative and helpful educational approach known as micro-learning. He adds that students can continue lessons on their mobile devices and finish tasks anytime because they always carry their mobiles and feel comfortable with their phones. Because mobiles are flexible and unique, they are ideal to use in microlearning by pairing mobiles with education; the result is the best knowledge retention because breaking up information makes it easier to remember.

According to Omer (2017), the short duration of microlearning makes it possible to access it on any mobile device, including smartphones, iPads, laptops, and tablets. Additionally, she adds that a microlearning module is not always required to take the shape of a conventional eLearning course. Yet, it may be a podcast, quiz, scenario, quick video, or any other independent learning unit. Similarly, Tan (2017) asserts that microlearning's main characteristics are that the size and subject of the teaching materials are small, used by many students and practical with solid teacher-student interactions and lesson contents. By doing so, learners' interest levels increase and reduce lesson monotony.

#### IV. USING MOBILE MICROLEARNING IN TEACHING ENGLISH IDIOMS

Mobile micro-learning refers to a relatively new strategy that combines elements of both micro-learning and mobile learning, where the focus of micro-learning is on learning through frequent and brief experiences. Specifically, it allows students to study with their mobiles anywhere and wherever they go. Yet, students are not always in a suitable learning environment free of distraction, so teaching materials for students engaging in mobile micro-learning should be concise and valuable. A student majoring in English should be able to read, write, and speak the language fluently and demonstrate competence in oral and aural communication.

English is the most spoken language in the modern world by people of various cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds. According to Mukattash (1983), teaching English in Arab countries has its challenges, and it is essential to note that Arab students of English face two challenges: first, they often make fundamental errors in linguistics, such as syntax, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, morphology, and pronunciation. Second, they often struggle to use English in academic and everyday contexts effectively.

One of the severe challenges for Jordanian EFL learners is becoming fluent in idioms. Even if they are fluent in English, they may have trouble with idioms commonly used and understood by native speakers. Idioms are one of a kind because the meaning they convey is distinct from the senses of their parts. Even if a student knows the purpose of each component, that does not mean it is reasonable to expect them to use the idiom correctly. This ambiguity makes this part of the English language's lexicon particularly difficult for non-native speakers to grasp.

Using idioms, proverbs, and phrases in everyday conversation is integral to English. Idiomatic expressions are essential to developing the English language because they are frequently used in everyday speech at work and at home. These expressions are common in both spoken and written English. Native English speakers frequently use them in conversation, and students often encounter them in popular media. Acquiring a firm grasp of the distinctions between idioms and their uses is crucial if foreign language learners want to reach their full potential as English speakers. Students should learn the meaning and context of each phrase since they do not always make literal sense.

Surprisingly, the method teachers of English as a foreign language used to teach these idioms in English is often unclear to students. If teachers give students sufficient practice, they may develop greater confidence in their linguistic abilities. Another possible explanation is that students are not exposed to idioms in the classroom because teachers are not using an effective strategy to teach them how to use them appropriately. Suppose students of English as a foreign language want to be able to communicate effectively in English. In that case, they must be exposed to idioms early to help them learn the language more efficiently. Most importantly, they should pick up on expressions and techniques that make dealing with difficulties easier.

Alhaysoni (2017) and Pimenova (2011) assert that Arab learners may also face difficulties due to the absence of equivalent idiomatic expressions in Arabic. They add that idioms with exact equivalents in the student's mother

language are the easiest to learn. In contrast, the most difficult are idioms that do not match in students' first language, and the meaning unable to infer by taking the idiom's components in isolation. In addition, students frequently attempt to use idiomatic expressions from their language, which usually results in inaccuracies as idioms lack grammatical rules.

#### V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Idioms are an essential concept in language classes because of their wealth of meaning and the fact that they are employed frequently. Because of their importance as lexical components, they are often given special attention in EFL classrooms. Students often have difficulty with these concepts because of their symbolic nature. They are crucial but challenging to learn. Therefore, they need to be presented and prioritised in the classroom. The traditional approach to teaching idioms at the school was teachers providing a list of them in a textbook and expecting pupils to memorise them for use on tests. Students forget all these idioms the day after the exam. The researcher proposes a new way of teaching idioms to give further insight into solving this problem.

#### VI. METHODOLOGY

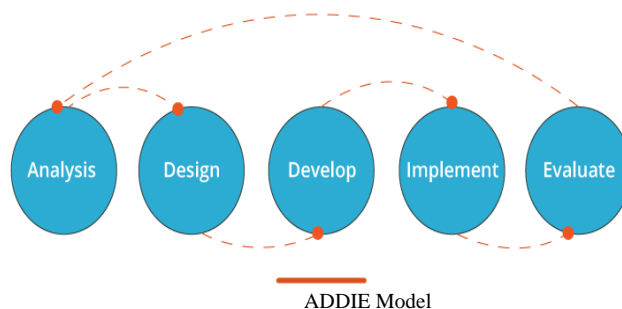
The study sample consisted of 15 female Jordanian students studying English language and literature in their last semester before graduation. The participants' age ranges from 21-22 years old, and they acquire some of the idioms through their academic years at the university. In the experiment, the researcher selected three idioms in every learning cycle and regularly used idiom expressions in songs since students come across these idioms regularly in watching English films, songs, and conversations. These idioms in songs were the following:

1- Justin Timberlake – cry me a river <https://youtu.be/DksSPZTZESQ>

2- Lady Gaga- Poker Face <https://youtu.be/bESGLojNYSo>

3- Sam Hunt – Water Under the Bridge [https://youtu.be/7UQ\\_8Fuivj0](https://youtu.be/7UQ_8Fuivj0)

The researcher adopted the ADDIE instructional design to create a model for learning English idioms effectively. This model consists of five steps, namely, analysis (A), design (D), development (D), implementation (I), and evaluation (E). The following is a design of this model.



#### **Step one: Analysis (A): The researcher analyses the participant's characters, educational materials, and media.**

- The participants (14) are all in their last semester studying English language and literature. All of them are Jordanian female students from the same age range between 21-22 years old, and they acquire some of the idioms through their academic years at the university.

- The material is from the oral skills course, and students must practice idioms chosen according to different topics and students' preferences.

- Mobile and headsets.

#### **Step two: Design(D): In this step, the researcher defines educational objectives, idioms and songs, lesson strategy, educational activities, and evaluation method.**

- This model aims to teach the students a new strategy for using idioms correctly. In each class, the students will learn a group of three idioms. Also, students must practice using these idioms when speaking to native or non-native speakers.

- To achieve the objectives, the researcher used a mobile microlearning strategy by using their mobiles and headsets.

- Students will listen to every song separately using their mobiles, followed by questions.

- The experiment will last one month, with three lectures weekly.

- The process takes from 8-9 minutes. So, every song's average time is the same.

#### **Step three: Development (D): In this step, the researcher developed teaching plans and activities and arranged the idioms and the song,**

- The researcher prepares idioms in song and groups them into many groups. Each group consists of three idiom expressions in the songs. Since the class is 45 minutes, the researcher selected only three pieces of music.

- The researcher put the plans for how to apply the strategy as follows:

- The researcher will create a WhatsApp group to share the songs at the beginning of the session.
  - The researcher will explain the strategy and how they process the procedure.
  - Students must practice these idioms in songs in the lecture hall using their headsets to avoid distractions.
  - After each song, students must give an example of a different situation to use the idiom, followed by a teacher and whole class discussion.
- The researcher tries to avoid any shortages that could appear during the process.
  - An Expert in educational technology reviewed the content of the model. The researcher modified all the notes.

**Step four: Implementation (I): In this step, the researcher applies the strategy:**

- The researcher shares with the students practising one example of one of the idioms in songs to familiarise them with the whole process.
- During the practice, the researcher tries to find any obstacles or shortages to avoid them during implementation.
- The instructor writes the idiom in the first learning cycle on the whiteboard. Then the instructor tells the students to play the song, trying to guess the idiom's meaning.
- After listening to the idiom in the song, the researcher discusses with the students when, where, and how to use it.
- After discussing the meaning and when to use the idiom, students finish the first learning cycle.
- In the second learning cycle, students should play the second song to guess the meaning and use the idiom. As in the previous idiom, a discussion followed this step.
- When students learn the three selected songs as a first group (cycle one), they can move to the second group (cycle two), followed by other cycles.

**Step five: Evaluation (E): the researcher evaluated the student and the strategy to determine if the researcher achieved the objectives.**

- In the final learning cycle, students played the last song for the previous idiom, followed by the discussion.
- To have full feedback, students, individually and in pairs, create the dialogues for the three idioms.

## VII. DISCUSSION

The mobile microlearning strategy fits the ADDIE model because it provides students with easy-to-use, appropriate, and interactive learning tools that they use immediately and independently on their mobiles. Also, this model displays one complete learning cycle with several learning outcomes and student interactions. Therefore, using this model often provides many learning outcomes and enhances students speaking, listening, writing, and reading abilities, supports class instruction and enhances English language learning effectiveness. According to the students, the preparation step before the exam was beneficial because it provided them with adequate information on the processes of the model steps. They added that practising an example with them was helpful because it cleared up any ambiguous issues.

Interestingly, the discussion following the song was active and enhanced the interaction between the students and the teacher. The multiple microlearning cycles give them the feeling of successfully practising idioms correctly while preparing conversations for these idioms in a short time. Most of them added that they used to memorise idioms for completing the exam only, and practising using idioms was neglected and passive. Mobile microlearning creates a unique learning channel for each student, which meets the specific requirements of each student's foundations and helps them improve their learning effectiveness and efficiency. They assert that their progress is more evident compared to their previous experience in idioms. Students felt confident using their mobiles instead of accessing computers or laptops because mobile microlearning is self-paced, allowing them to return at any time, review their performance, and continue where they stopped. They assert they can control and return to their microlessons and quickly complete their lessons. One of the challenges teachers may face in preparing mobile microlearning is designing the content to allow students to acquire multiple types of knowledge quickly and connect to the whole system of the language. In addition, teachers must consider students' characteristics and interests to select activities to meet the needs of various learners. Another challenge teachers face in preparing mobile microlearning: some subjects require many details and comprehensive explanations.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Most foreign language learners suffer from using idioms in their speaking skills and comprehending the meaning of these idioms while using English, watching films, or listening to music. Logically, foreign language learners aim to acquire the English language and communicate with native speakers of English naturally and fluently. In English, idioms are essential in developing English because they are employed frequently in daily conversation. There is no everyday English without its idioms, proverbs, and expressions. The English language often uses them, both in writing and conversation. Students should not take idioms at face value but rather learn the meaning and context of each idiom. Students' ability to express themselves in novel and exciting ways is one of the many reasons idioms are so valuable.

The use of mobile microlearning has proven to be a very effective learning method, which is very helpful for improving students' self-learning ability and encouraging English learning fun. Today's society is already an era of

online learning, and the voice of personalised learning is getting higher and higher. As an emerging learning model, mobile microlearning has shown enormous potential.

The goal of creating mobile microlearning was to fill the gap between conventional teaching and learning and the increasingly popular mobile platform, where students spend a long time getting the information and easily miss it. In microlearning, the knowledge is divided into chunks and learned using mobiles, which are implanted quickly in students' memories. Since mobile learning is ongoing, education doesn't have to happen at a particular time or place. Also, students can communicate with their classmates and teachers as well. Most participants suffer from using idioms in their speaking skills and in comprehending the meaning of these idioms while watching English films or listening to songs. The researcher aims to help them understand and use these idioms while speaking. In this experiment, the researcher used the mobile microlearning strategy to teach songs idioms to solve the problem of acquiring these idioms. The participants in the experiment assert that this strategy is very effective and improves the development of these idioms. They added that this strategy motivates them to use mobile microlearning effectiveness of this strategy.

Microlearning via mobile devices is an efficient and engaging teaching method, especially for boosting students' capacity for independent study and making English lessons more enjoyable. Online education is commonplace today, and calls for more individualised instruction are growing louder. There is great promise in the developing learning model of mobile microlearning. With the deepening of practice and the continuous improvement of understanding, mobile microlearning will play a more significant role in future university teaching activities. However, higher education is still investigating the microlearning strategy.

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