

The Crucial Role of Formulaic Expressions in Fluent Communication and Language Acquisition

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Abstract

Formulaic expressions are fixed phrases or expressions that are used repeatedly in language. They are also known as multi-word units. They are often overlooked in traditional language instruction despite their importance for fluent communication and comprehension. This study investigates the nature and scope of formulaic expressions, their contributions to language acquisition and fluency, and ways to integrate them into language instruction. A qualitative research design is employed that combines a review of the relevant literature with an analysis of language data. Previous studies have identified formulaic expressions as a crucial feature of language use, with significant implications for language learning and teaching. This study highlights formulaic expressions' significance in first and second-language learning. Language learners who comprehend and use these expressions also play a significant role. For the time being, those who do have a significant advantage over those who do not. As a result, the research and practice of integrating formulaic expressions into language teaching has increased in importance. Incorporating formulaic expressions into language instruction is recommended to help learners develop language acquisition and fluency. Authentic language use should be incorporated through listening and reading comprehension exercises, and further research is needed to evaluate their impact on language learning outcomes.

Keywords: fixed phrases, multi-word units, language instruction, language fluency, second-language learning, language learners, authentic language use.

1. Introduction

The traditional approach to language curriculum, which divides grammar and vocabulary, does not fully address the existence of multi-word statements that do not fit cleanly into either category. These

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utterances, known as formulaic expressions, lexical chunks, or constructs, are essential for smooth communication and language development. However, their integration into the second language curriculum and classroom practice remains a challenge. Formulaic expressions contribute to language learning and can be integrated into language instruction. According to Naenini, et al. (2019), the use of formulaic expressions facilitates language acquisition by providing learners with ready-made chunks of language that can be used in specific contexts and for specific purposes (Ouyang, et al., 2018).

2. Statement of the Problem

The traditional approach to language instruction, which separates grammar and vocabulary, overlooks the importance of formulaic expressions, a vast collection of multi-word items that occur frequently in language use. These expressions are often idiomatic and cannot be predicted from the meanings of their individual parts, and they are used in specific contexts and for specific functions. Despite their importance for fluency and comprehension, formulaic expressions are often neglected in language instruction, resulting in inadequate communication skills and limited proficiency in the target language.

3. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Investigate the nature and scope of formulaic expressions in language use.
2. Examine the contributions of formulaic expressions to language acquisition and fluency.
3. Explore ways to integrate formulaic expressions into the second language curriculum and classroom practice.

4. Research Questions

The research questions that will guide this study are:

1. What are formulaic expressions, and how are they different from other types of language units?
2. How do formulaic expressions contribute to language acquisition and fluency?

3. What are the challenges in integrating formulaic expressions into the second language curriculum and classroom practice, and how can these challenges be addressed?

5. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will guide this study:

1. Formulaic expressions are ubiquitous in language use, and including them into language teaching is critical for acquiring fluency and communicative competence.
2. The use of formulaic expressions aids language learning by providing learners with ready-made chunks of language that may be utilized in specific settings and for specified goals.
3. The integration of formulaic expressions into the second language curriculum and classroom practice requires a pedagogical shift from a focus on individual words and rules to a focus on communicative competence and functional language use.

6. Review of Literature

Previous research has highlighted formulaic expressions as an important aspect of language use, with important implications for language acquisition and education. They have fixed units, multi-word sequences, or phrases that are repeated in specific circumstances and play a crucial role in everyday language use. These expressions include idioms, phrasal verbs, and collocations. Greetings such as "Hello," "How are you?" and "What's up?"; expressions of gratitude such as "Thank you" and "Thanks a lot"; and parting words such as "Goodbye," "See you later," and "take care." are examples of commonly used language in everyday use.

According to research, formulaic expressions are important in both first and second language acquisition. Young children, for example, sometimes learn language by memorizing whole phrases and applying them in context before fully comprehending the individual words included within those phrases. Similarly, adults learning a new language frequently rely on formulaic expressions to communicate effectively, even before completely mastering the language's grammar and syntax. Furthermore, studies show that language learners who can recognize and employ formulaic expressions have a significant advantage over those who cannot. Formulaic expressions can assist students enhance their fluency, accuracy, and general language comprehension. They can also assist students in sounding more natural and native-like in their speaking.

As a result, introducing formulaic phrases into language teaching has become a growing area of research and practice. Language teachers are expected to teach formulaic expressions to help their students improve their language skills. As a result, introducing formulaic phrases into language teaching has become a growing area of research and practice. Language teachers are expected to teach formulaic expressions to help their students improve their language skills. This can involve providing explicit instruction and practice in using formulaic expressions, as well as exposing students to authentic language use through activities such as listening and reading comprehension exercises.

The role of formulaic language in relation to second language teaching and learning is highly considered. Al-Bakry's (2019) paper identifies the importance of formulaic expressions in second language instruction and their effect on language learning. Ellis's (2018) book explores how already existing formulaic expressions interact with other contexts and how they can be used in language learning. In addition, Lakovaara's (unknown date) research suggests that learners should be taught to use and recognize formulaic expressions to improve communicative ability in the second language.

These help expressions in fluent communication and language acquisition. They have been widely studied in linguistics and related fields. One of the earliest studies on formulaic expressions has been done by Sinclair (1991), who introduces the concept of 'idioms of collocation' to describe the phenomenon of multi-word units in language. Sinclair argues that formulaic expressions are an important aspect of language, as they allow speakers to communicate more efficiently and effectively. Moreover, he presents methods for studying them using corpora (large collections of texts). In the same way, Erman and Warren (2000) present the idiom principle, which states that native speakers of a language rely heavily on formulaic expressions in communication, and the open-choice principle, which states that these expressions are often used in combination with more flexible, open-choice language.

Other researchers have focused on the acquisition of formulaic expressions by language learners. For example, Biber and Conrad (2009) conduct a study on the use of formulaic sequences by second language learners and find out that learners who use more formulaic sequences have better writing and speaking skills. Tavakoli and Skehan (2005) analyze the use of formulaic phrases in English as a second language writing in another study, discovering that learners who used more formulaic expressions in their writing produced higher quality writings. Furthermore, Ellis (2003) analyzes the function of formulaic language in second language acquisition, claiming that it is necessary

for gaining fluency and laying the groundwork for more complex language use. Wray (2002) also provides an overview of formulaic language research, including its significance in communication, language acquisition, and language processing.

Researchers in natural language processing have created approaches for finding and interpreting formulaic expressions in text. Manning et al. (2010), for example, create a statistical method for recognizing multi-word expressions in text that has been utilized in a variety of applications, including machine translation and text categorization.

Generally, studies on formulaic expressions have aided our understanding of the nature and applications of language, as well as the advancement of language teaching and natural language processing technologies. Pawley and Syder's (1983) influential article argues that formulaic expressions play a central role in nativelike fluency and proposes a model for how they are acquired. It cannot be emphasized how important it is in language acquisition and teaching. These phrases are an essential part of language use, and their good use can significantly improve learners' conversational abilities and overall language competency.

a. Studies on Formulaic Expressions in Language and Culture

Formulaic expressions are an essential part of language learning, especially for individuals seeking proficiency in a foreign language. They can range from basic phrases and idioms to more complicated constructs and are frequently seen as necessary tools for communicative skills. By providing learners with pre-established frameworks for expression, formulaic expressions can help improve both comprehension and production of language. Moreover, these expressions contribute to the acquisition of natural-sounding language and can help learners better understand cultural norms and values.

These expressions are a ubiquitous feature of language use in all languages and cultures. They not only help learners comprehend and produce language more efficiently, but they also provide insight into cultural nuances and context. Numerous research on the use of formulaic terms in specific languages and cultures have been done. Ellis (2012), for example, investigates the usage of formulaic expressions in the Chinese language, finding that they are widely employed and serve an important role in communication and language development.

Another study by Liu and Zhang (2016) explores the use of formulaic expressions in Chinese news headlines, finding that these expressions play a substantial part in conveying a message quickly and effectively. Meanwhile, Sert (2013) focuses on formulaic expressions in Turkish which are frequently used in this language. He claims that such

expressions play an essential role in language acquisition and communication. Moreover, An et al. (2020) investigate the use of formulaic expressions in Korean. The study finds out that formulaic expressions are commonly used in Korean and that they are crucial for effective communication in the language.

Formulaic expressions can be more significant for spoken language than written, as they often reflect the more colloquial aspects of language use. They can, however, be valuable in written language, especially in academic writing, where precise terms and structures are anticipated. While formulaic expressions can be useful for language learners, overusing them can lead to a lack of originality and flexibility in language use. Learners may struggle to adjust to novel situations and may lack the abilities needed to express themselves in distinctive ways. A study by Wray and Perkins (2000) investigates the use of formulaic expressions in English. They discover that these expressions are an essential aspect of both spoken and written English and that they are used more frequently in spoken than written English.

To help learners acquire and use formulaic expressions effectively, language teachers can incorporate a range of strategies. One approach is to expose learners to authentic language use through listening and reading activities, allowing them to absorb common expressions and structures in context. Another strategy is to provide learners with explicit instruction and practice, which can help them internalize these expressions and apply them to new situations. Finally, teachers can encourage learners to experiment with these expressions and create their own, promoting creativity and flexibility in language use.

b. Investigating the Nature and Scope of Formulaic Expressions in Language Use

It is critical to understand the concept of formulaic expressions in language use since it is a key part of the language that affects communication and language development. According to Wray (2002), formulaic expressions account for a major amount of our daily language use, and knowing these expressions is essential for second language learners to become proficient in that language. Furthermore, these expressions have an important function in promoting communication in a variety of contexts, including social contact, conversation, and literary works (Erman and Warren, 2000). Formulaic expressions differ from other types of language in that they are fixed and often occur as a unit, without significant variation in form or meaning. These expressions are also typically learned and used as a single unit, without explicit knowledge of their individual components or grammar rules. Other types of language use, on the other hand, involve more creativity and variation, with words and grammatical structures organized in various ways to express meaning.

Additionally, they are particularly beneficial when a speaker wants to express a specific topic quickly and effectively. For example, in a job interview, the candidate may use formulaic expressions such as "I'm a team player," "I'm a quick learner," and "I'm passionate about this field," to demonstrate their qualifications and suitability for the position. Formulaic expressions can also help establish rapport and build relationships in social interactions, such as when greeting someone or expressing gratitude.

Also, they can vary across different languages and cultures, with some expressions being specific to certain languages or cultural contexts. For example, Japanese has a wide variety of formulaic expressions known as 'set phrases', which are commonly used in specific situations such as greetings, apologies, and expressions of gratitude (Makino and Tsutsui, 2007). Similarly, different cultures may have unique formulaic expressions that are not easily translated into other languages.

c. Examining the Contributions of Formulaic Expressions to Language Acquisition and Fluency

Formulaic expressions are a vital part of language proficiency, yet their integration into language teaching curricula and classroom practice can vary. Consider whether these expressions are given enough emphasis, how they can be effectively taught and reinforced, how to help learners understand appropriate contexts for use, how to incorporate them into language assessments, and how technology can support teaching and learning. Teachers may need to evaluate their curriculum and lesson plans to ensure that these phrases are included and stressed effectively, and they can use a range of approaches, like as repetition and context-based practice, to help students recall and use them correctly. Additionally, technology, including tools like language learning apps and online flashcards, can support the acquisition and reinforcement of formulaic expressions.

While formulaic expressions are important for both spoken and written language, they may be more critical for spoken language as they allow for more natural and fluent conversation. In spoken language, they can facilitate communication by helping speakers produce language more quickly and efficiently. In contrast, written language allows for more time to think and plan the message, making formulaic expressions less necessary (Sert, 2013). However, relying too heavily on formulaic expressions can limit learners' creativity and ability to communicate efficiently in unpredictable situations. To address this potential drawback, language teachers can incorporate a variety of teaching strategies such as providing ample opportunities for learners to practice using formulaic expressions in authentic contexts, encouraging learners to personalize and adapt expressions to fit different situations, and exposing learners to a diverse range of

expressions through reading and listening activities. Ultimately, the effective acquisition and use of formulaic expressions is a key component of achieving proficiency and fluency in a new language.

Furthermore, these expressions are considered significant for language learners as they can aid learners to communicate more effectively and fluently. Studies have shown that formulaic expressions can account for a momentous proportion of natural language use, with some estimates suggesting that as much as 50-70% of speech consists of formulaic sequences (Wray, 2002; Schmitt, 2010). Therefore, learning formulaic expressions can be indispensable for language learners to understand and participate in authentic language use.

Formulaic expressions contribute to language acquisition of a more natural-sounding language and fluency by providing learners with chunks of language that can be used in a variety of contexts. Learning these expressions can benefit learners to grow their vocabulary, develop their grammar and pronunciation skills, and can provide a foundation for more complex language use. Additionally, they can aid in comprehension, as learners can recognize and understand common expressions without having to decode individual words or structures (Pawley and Syder, 1983).

However, they may be more important for spoken language, as they are commonly used in conversation and can support learners to memorize and reproduce chunks of language that are frequently used in everyday communication. Therefore, learners are able to communicate more fluently and naturally. Formulaic expressions contribute significantly to language acquisition and fluency. Learners who use formulaic expressions can communicate more effectively and with greater confidence, which ultimately leads to increased fluency (Wray and Perkins, 2000). Nevertheless, they are also used in written language, such as in academic writing or business correspondence.

One potential drawback of relying too heavily on formulaic expressions is limiting learners' ability to produce original language and reducing their motivation to learn. They may become too reliant on them and fail to develop their language skills fully and produce original language and reducing their motivation to learn. Additionally, learners may use formulaic expressions inappropriately, leading to communication breakdowns or misunderstandings (An et al., 2020). If learners rely solely on memorizing and using formulaic expressions, they may struggle to create new language or use expressions in unfamiliar contexts. Furthermore, if learners believe they are not making progress in their language acquisition, they may grow bored or discouraged. Thus, learners must balance the use of formulaic

statements with other language learning strategies such as grammar and vocabulary acquisition.

7. Methodology

This study will use a qualitative and quantitative research design that combines a review of relevant literature with linguistic data analysis. The literature review will survey the existing research on formulaic expressions, their characteristics, and their role in language acquisition and fluency. The analysis of language data will involve the identification and categorization of formulaic expressions in a corpus of spoken and written language samples. The study will also include surveys with language learners and teachers to gain insights into the challenges and opportunities of integrating formulaic expressions into language instruction.

7.1 Data Collection

The information for this study is gathered via a Google Forms survey. Two different surveys are created. The first one is introduced to teachers. The second survey is introduced to the EFL learners of formulaic expressions.

7.2 Participants

160 Saudis in total have contributed to this study. 100 EFL students and 60 EFL teachers make up the corpus. They are from the universities of Jeddah, King Abdulaziz, Al-Qassim, and Taibah.

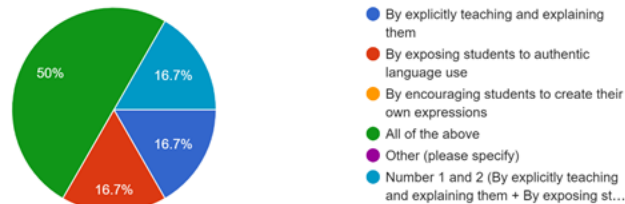
7.3 Data Analysis

For this study's analysis, Google Sheets and Microsoft Excel are both used. This is done so that while Google Sheets is ideal for filtering comments and percentage extraction, Excel is suitable for data calculation and illustration. First, the data is entered into Google Sheets, where each participant's responses are organized into separate sheets. The percentages of each participant's stated ratings for each question are then obtained. The percentages are then placed into Excel tables for each question.

The below description of the data shows the results of the teachers' participation in the survey which is specified for them.

Chart 1

How do you currently incorporate formulaic expressions into language instruction?
60 responses

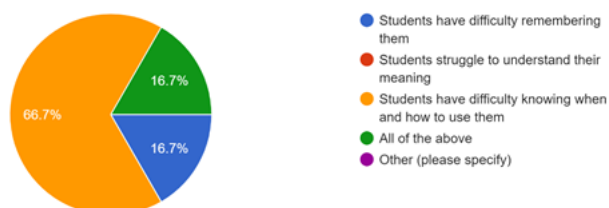


According to the above chart which shows the teachers' answers to the question of 'How do you currently incorporate formulaic expressions into language instruction?', 50% of the participants choose 'all of the above' answers of 'by explicitly teaching and explaining them', 'by exposing students to authentic language use', and 'by encouraging students to create their own expressions'. In regards to the other 50%, the participants choose the answer 'by explicitly teaching and explaining them' with 16.7%, and an equal percentage of 16.7% of the participants choose 'by exposing students to authentic language use'. Furthermore, an equal percentage of teachers prefer to merge two strategies 'by explicitly teaching and explaining them' and 'by exposing students to authentic language use' rather than using only one strategy.

Chart 2

What challenges have you faced in teaching formulaic expressions to your students?

60 responses



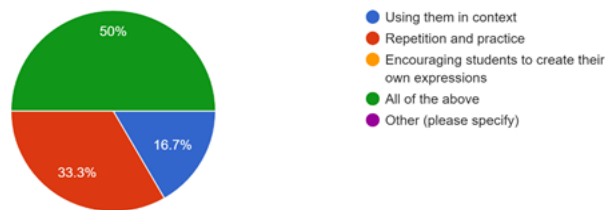
As seen in chart 2, In response to the question 'What challenges have you faced in teaching formulaic phrases to your students?', 66.7% of participants indicated 'students have difficulty knowing when and how to use them,' while 16.7% indicated 'students have difficulty remembering them,' as seen in the chart above. Furthermore, 16.7% of the participants picked 'all of the above,' indicating that 'students struggle to recall them, "students struggle to understand their

relevance,' and 'students struggle to know when and how to use them'.

Chart 3

What strategies have you found most effective for teaching and reinforcing formulaic expressions?

60 responses



The chart above describes the importance of using many strategies in teaching formulaic expressions. It is shown that 50% of the participants choose the response of 'all of the above' to answer 'What strategies have you found most effective for teaching and reinforcing formulaic expressions?'. They indicate that the following strategies 'using them in context', 'repetition and practice', and 'encouraging students to create their own expressions' are effective in teaching them. Furthermore, 33.3% of the participants prefer to use only one strategy of 'repetition and practice', while 16.7% of them like to use 'using them in context'.

Chart 4

How do you balance the use of formulaic expressions with other language learning strategies in your instruction?

60 responses



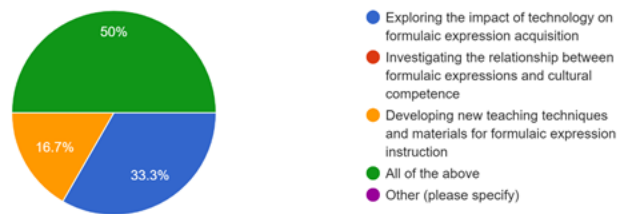
We can see from the chart the responses to the inquiry 'How do you balance the use of formulaic expressions with other language learning strategies in your instruction?'. Most of the participants with a percentage of 66.7% answer 'I use formulaic expressions in conjunction with other strategies'. Moreover, for the rest of the remaining participants with an equal percentage of 16.7%, one

chooses 'I prioritize the use of formulaic expressions over other strategies' while the other equal percentage chooses 'I try to avoid using formulaic expressions altogether'.

Chart 5

What opportunities do you see for further research and development of formulaic expression instruction?

60 responses



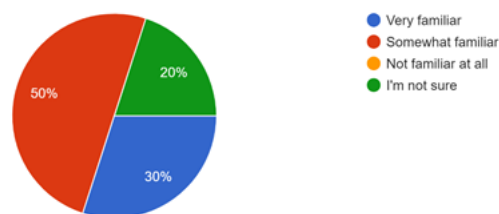
From the above chart which shows 'What opportunities do you see for further research and development of formulaic expression instruction?', the majority of the participants with the percentage of 50% choose 'all of the above' which means to choose all the strategies of 'exploring the impact of technology on formulaic expression acquisition', 'investigating the relationship between formulaic expressions and cultural competence', and 'developing new teaching techniques and materials for formulaic expression instruction'. With respect to the strategy of 'exploring the impact of technology on formulaic expression acquisition', it is found that 33.3% prefer to use it, while 16.7 would like to use 'developing new teaching techniques and materials for formulaic expression instruction', respectively.

In the following part of the discussion, the researchers are presenting the results of the learners' answers to the survey.

Chart 1

How familiar are you with formulaic expressions in the target language?

100 responses

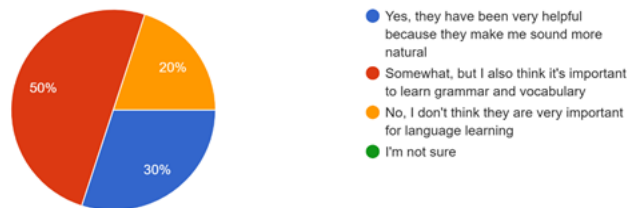


From Chart 1 above, which shows 'How familiar are you with formulaic expressions in the target language?', most of the participants (50%) indicate that they are 'somewhat familiar' of formulaic expressions, while a reasonable percentage of 30% shows that the learners are 'very familiar', but 20% of them say 'I'm not sure'.

Chart 2

Have you found formulaic expressions helpful for improving your language proficiency and fluency? Why or why not?

100 responses

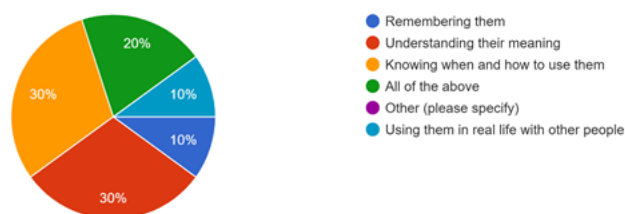


With respect to Chart 2 which is about 'Have you found formulaic expressions helpful for improving your language proficiency and fluency? Why or why not?', 50% chooses 'Somewhat, but I also think it's important to learn grammar and vocabulary', and 30% says 'Yes, they have been very helpful because they make me sound more natural agree', but 20% of the participants reply 'No, I don't think they are very important for language learning'.

Chart 3

What challenges have you faced in learning and using formulaic expressions?

100 responses

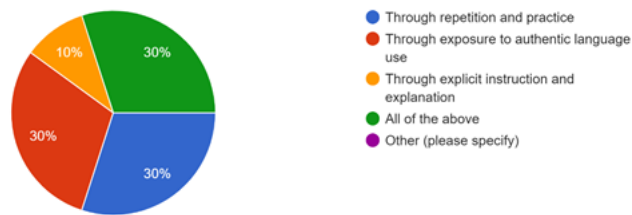


Furthermore, 30% of the participants in Chart 3, 'What challenges have you faced in learning and using formulaic expressions?', believe 'understanding their meaning' is one of the challenges they need in learning formulaic expressions. Another 30% of the participants think that 'knowing when and how to use them' is a crucial factor for them. However, 20% indicates that 'all of the above' affects learning these

formulaic expressions. Lastly, an equal 10% of the participants think that 'remembering them' is one of the challenges for them, while the other 10% specify with a different answer rather than the other participants saying 'using them in real life with other people'.

Chart 4

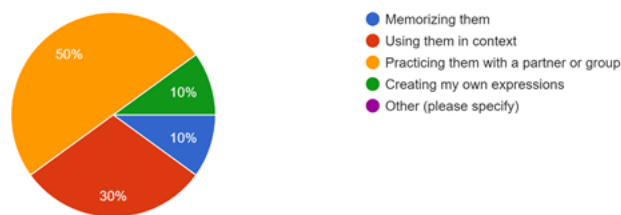
How do you think formulaic expressions can be effectively integrated into language instruction?
100 responses



For answering the question of 'How do you think formulaic expressions can be effectively integrated into language instruction?', Chart 4 shows that 30% of the participants believe that 'through repetition and practice' will be effective integration into language instruction, another 30% trusts that 'through exposure to authentic language use', a third group of 30% of the participants demonstrates that 'all of the above' which means using the methods of 'through repetition and practice', 'through exposure to authentic language use', and 'through explicit instruction and explanation'.

Chart 5

What strategies have you found most helpful for learning and using formulaic expressions?
100 responses



Finally, to answer the question 'What strategies have you found most helpful for learning and using formulaic expressions?', Chart 5 shows that the majority of the participants of 50% prefer to use the strategy of 'practicing them with a partner or group', while 30% say that 'using them in context' would be an effective technique in learning formulaic

expressions. However, two more groups of equal percentage of 10% indicate that 'memorizing them' and the other specifies 'creating my own expressions' as good strategies for learning these expressions.

8. Results and Discussion

Formulaic expressions are a fundamental aspect of language that influences communication and language acquisition. They account for a large amount of daily language use and are essential for second language learners to become proficient in that language. They are distinct from other types of language in that they are fixed and frequently exist as a unit with little fluctuation in form or meaning. They are also very beneficial in instances where a speaker wants to express a certain point quickly and effectively, such as job interviews or social engagements.

These expressions add to language acquisition and fluency by providing learners with language chunks that may be employed in a variety of settings, improving comprehension, and laying the groundwork for more complicated language use. However, leaning too much on formulaic expressions has the potential to limit learners' ability to develop unique language and reduce their willingness to study.

To sum up and based on the results and verification of the hypotheses, one can come to the end that formulaic expressions are a common aspect of language use and are crucial for achieving fluency and communicative competence. Learners benefit from using ready-made language chunks that are applicable to specific situations, aiding in language acquisition. Incorporating these expressions into language instruction requires a shift from teaching individual words and rules to teaching functional language use and communicative competence.

Previous studies mentioned earlier in this paper come to agree with this study and have also found that formulaic phrases play an important role in language acquisition and fluency. They discovered that formulaic expressions are an important part of the language that affects communication and are required for second language learners to become proficient in a language. These expressions are set in form and meaning, and they usually exist as a unit with little fluctuation in form or meaning. Formulaic expressions are especially beneficial when a speaker needs to quickly and efficiently convey a certain topic. According to research, incorporating formulaic expressions into language instruction promotes language acquisition and fluency by providing learners with ready-made language chunks that can be used in a variety of contexts, improving comprehension, and laying the groundwork for more complex language use. Excessive dependence

on formulaic expressions, on the other hand, has the potential to limit learners' ability to produce original language and lower their enthusiasm to study. As a result, language education should transition away from teaching specific words and rules and toward teaching functional language use and communicative ability while incorporating formulaic phrases.

9. Conclusion

Formulaic expressions are an important aspect of language use that contribute significantly to language acquisition and fluency. According to this study, language learners who can detect and employ formulaic expressions have a considerable advantage over those who cannot. Incorporating formulaic expressions into language training necessitates a pedagogical shift away from individual words and norms and toward communicative competence and functional language use. Incorporating formulaic expressions into language teaching is an increasingly important area of research and practice. It can involve providing explicit instruction and practice in using formulaic expressions and exposing students to authentic language use through activities such as listening and reading comprehension exercises. More study is needed to investigate effective methods of incorporating formulaic expressions into language training, evaluate their impact on language learning outcomes, and answer the question: What are some strategies for improving workplace communication skills?

Here are some recommendations based on the results and conclusion.

1. Language teachers should incorporate formulaic expressions into their teaching approaches to assist students in learning and using language more effectively and quickly.
2. Instead of teaching individual words and norms, teachers should emphasize functional language use and communicative skills.
3. To increase their language fluency and accuracy, language learners should actively seek out and practice employing formulaic expressions in various circumstances.
4. Listening and reading comprehension exercises should combine authentic language use into language instruction.
5. More study is needed to investigate effective strategies of adding formulaic expressions into language training, as well as to assess their impact on language learning outcomes.
6. Employers and workplace training programs should also include formulaic learning.

7. Finally, learners should be encouraged to build their own distinctive language use while also employing formulaic expressions to improve their language ability.

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