

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a general introduction to the research which includes (1) background of the research, (2) statement of the problem and research questions, (3) research objectives, (4) research significance, (5) definition of key terms, and (6) organization of writing. These six points are presented sequentially as follows

1.1 Background of the Research

Language and culture are closely intertwined and influence each other in the process of shaping human understanding of the world around them. Language expresses the cultural reality in which it is used and developed. According to Kramsch (1998), language spoken by a particular community or social group refers to common experiences that express facts, ideas, or events that are communicable because it is based on people's shared knowledge about the world and also reflects the attitudes, beliefs, and viewpoints of the people who use the language. Language is not just limited to a set of symbols or grammatical rules but includes mental structures used to understand and construct meaning and is not only a tool for communication, but also a reflection of the thoughts, experiences, and cultural values attached to individuals and groups.

Culture plays a key role in the use of language because it is not only encompasses patterns of social behavior but also influences the way humans understand and give meaning to words and concepts in their language. The expression in a particular language may have a very specific or complex meaning that can only be fully understood easily by those who share the same cultural background knowledge or experiences. People who do not share a common background often encounter difficulties in understanding the meaning of those language expressions whose meaning are related to the cultural context in which they are developed

In English, the expression “keep heads above water” in the sentence: “the swimming instructor taught the children how to keep their heads above water”,

literally means to keep one's head above water, as when swimming. Physically, it refers to a person's attempt to stay on the surface of the water to avoid drowning. Whereas, in the sentence: “despite facing financial difficulties, she managed to keep her head above water by taking on extra freelance work”, the phrase “keep head above water” is used to express one's efforts to overcome financial, emotional, or other difficult situations. This means that someone is trying hard to keep going and not get down in a difficult situation. Based on these examples, it can be observed that the expressions of a language do not always have actual meanings but rather specific meanings that are beyond the literal meaning of the individual words that form them, and are often related to the context and cultural conventions in which they were developed.

In language study, a combination of words that forms a new or specific meaning and may not correspond to the literal meaning of the words combined is called an idiom. According to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, the definition of idiom is a peculiar language expression that has a meaning that cannot be derived from the combined meaning of its elements. Idiom is a typical conventional expression within a language community which usually in a fixed form and the meaning often unpredictable (Liu, 2017). The use of idioms in communication often carries a special nuance and has a specialized meaning that is different from the meaning of each of its constituent words. In other words, the meaning of idioms cannot always be interpreted literally from the meanings of the components involved.

Every language in the world has their own set of idioms that reflect the unique characteristics of the culture and way of thinking of the people who use the language. They are often linked to the cultural practices and traditions of those who use them (Pyun, 2018). Idioms in a given language often cannot be translated directly into another language without losing certain meanings or nuances because they reflect the unique conventions, values, and experiences of the community who share common knowledge about the world around them, including English and Korean. Idioms in Korean are called 관용어 [gwanyong-eo] or 관용구 [gwanyong-gu]. Both in English and Korean, idioms are used to convey specific meanings that

are often related to the cultural context and their use in certain expressions in everyday communication.

English and Korean belong to different language families (Indo-European and Koreanic, respectively). English represents Western culture, while Korean represents East Asian culture. This contrast allows for the exploration of how different cultural backgrounds influence the formation and use of idioms. The two languages may reflect different cognitive patterns and worldviews, which can be revealed through idiomatic expressions. Both languages use the concept of "head" metaphorically in their idiomatic expression, but they may do so in different ways, reflecting cultural and cognitive differences.

Idiom “to use (one's) head” in English have the meaning “to think logically or rationally” while the Korean idiom “머리를 쓰다” [*meori-reul sseu-da*] means to think deeply to solve problems or come up with ideas. These phrases are usually used in informal situations and in the form of imperative to encourage someone to think, analyze, or use their intelligence. In both languages, these idiomatic expressions convey the idea of employing one's mental faculties for thoughtful and intelligent decision-making. Another example is the English idiom “a big head” (often used with the verb “get” or “have”) which implies one to be arrogant or conceited; to assume an exaggeratedly high opinion of oneself. On the other hand, the Korean idiom “머리가 크다” [*meori-ga keu-da*] translated as “have a big head” has an idiom meaning to think or judge like an adult. This phrase implies that as someone gets older, their head gets bigger and their thoughts become deeper. It shows that despite the same expression, the idioms “have a big head” in English and Korean have a different idiomatic meaning.

Based on the above examples, it can be observed that in English and Korean there are potential similarities and dissimilarities in their idioms. In linguistics, the study of comparing at least two different languages to find their similarities and dissimilarities is known as contrastive linguistics. According to Ke (2019), contrastive linguistics (or contrastive analysis) is the synchronic linguistics study

of two different languages (or more) to find their dissimilarities and similarities, especially the former, and apply the results to related fields of language study and practice. Contrastive analysis involves identifying the similarities and differences in grammatical structure, vocabulary, phonology, and other aspects of language including language meaning, as well as the ways in which those comparisons can impact communication and comprehension. A much-used approach in contrastive linguistics analysis is to take a perceived similarity, or dissimilarity, between the languages to be compared as the point of departure, be it at the level of lexis, syntax or semantics meaning (Ebeling & Ebeling, 2020).

Semantics, as a branch of linguistics, focuses on the study of meaning in language, including the meaning of individual words and the meaning of sentences as a whole. It deals with the understanding of how meaning is conveyed, understood and used in communication. In semantics studies, there are many theories and approaches, one of which is cognitive semantics. Cognitive semantics is an approach within cognitive linguistics that focuses on the role of human cognition in shaping language structure, meaning, and usage. It focuses on investigating the relationship between human experience, embodied cognition, and language in the process of meaning-making (Evans & Green, 2009). This theory emphasizes that human experience and understanding about the world are represented in language and influenced by cognitive processes such as perception, memory, and conception. In cognitive semantics, language is considered as a reflection of the human mind that is complex and inseparable from the social, cultural, and individual experiences.

In this research, the researcher focuses on analyzing the types and meanings of idioms in English and Korean and to examine their similarities and differences. The idioms used in this research are limited to idioms related to body part “head” in English and “*meori*” in Korean. In the context of cognitive semantics, the meaning of “head” is much broader and includes various cognitive concepts and associations. The closely associated concepts with the “head” are authority, control and intelligence. The head, as the control center for the human body, is often

regarded as a symbol of authority and power. The concept of “head” is also often associated with intellect, thinking and consciousness since the brain located inside the head serves as the center of information processing and cognitive control. Therefore, in many cultures, the “head” is often considered a symbol of intelligence and knowledge. Moreover, the concept of “head” can also be related to emotions, personality and mental state. Thus, research on the meaning of idioms related to “head” is necessary with the aim of enhancing knowledge and understanding for those who are learning English and Korean. A better understanding of these idioms may prevent misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication.

Many researchers have conducted comparison research to investigate the similarities and differences between two or more languages in various aspects including idioms. In this context, idioms related to body parts present an interesting subject of research. This is because the function of the human body is essentially the same for all humans, and thus serves as a universal reference point across many cultures (Borim, 2015). The following are some previous researches that examined the comparison of idioms in two or more languages, specifically idioms related to body parts.

The first research was conducted by Leksono & Jantem (2020) from Naresuan University's Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Cultural Sciences with their research entitled *A Comparative Analysis on Idioms of Human Body Parts in Indonesian and Thai Languages*. The objective of this research is to explore the similarities and differences in the meanings of idioms in Indonesian and Thai referred to parts of the human body. This research collected idiomatic data from Thai idiom collection books and Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia. Based on the result, the researchers categorized the findings of idiomatic expressions into three categories: 15 idioms with the same literal and figurative meanings, 20 idioms with different actual meanings but similar literal meanings, and 10 idioms with different literal meanings but similar actual meanings. Idioms are used to express human actions, thoughts, and characters. This research underscores the significance of grasping idiomatic language, highlighting that despite apparent similarities,

comprehending idiomatic expressions can present challenges for both Indonesians and Thais.

The second previous research was conducted by (Zulnaldi & Januarini, 2020) from the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, University of North Sumatra. The research entitled *The Form and Meaning of Idioms Related to Human Body in Japan and Minangkabau Language* explores the idioms in Japanese and Minangkabau that are related to the human body parts, such as the head, face, and hands. It aims to analyze the form of idioms both in Japanese and Minangkabau by using the semantic approach with idiomatic theory. This research uses a descriptive method of analyzing qualitative data. The results of this research show that idioms related to body parts in Japanese are commonly used for expressing psychological feelings pleasure and personal feelings. The idioms "atama ga agaranai" and "gadang kapalo" are related to the form and meaning. The meaning of idioms in Japanese is not the actual meaning, while in Minangkabau, the meaning shows figurative meaning and many vocabularies in the form of poetry or "pepatah petitih" which proverbs have meaning and form resembling idioms. Whereas in Japanese do not have rhymes, petitih, and so on.

The third research was conducted by Adelina & Suprayogi (2020) from Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia with their research entitled *Contrastive Analysis of English and Indonesian Idioms about the Human Body*. This research examines the English and Indonesian idioms that are equivalent, especially idioms related to the human body. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. The data in this research are English idioms that have equivalents in Indonesian idioms and vice versa taken from idiom dictionaries that discuss idioms in both languages. The data were analyzed based on the framework of idiom classification by Fernando (1996) and the type of contrastive analysis by Lado (1957). Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that most of the English and Indonesian idiom equivalents are pure idioms. At the level of contrastive analysis, the idioms are categorized into three. First, idioms in Indonesian and English have similar meanings and have similar forms and similar forms of expression. Second, idioms in Indonesian and English

have different meanings but have similar forms of expression. Third, idioms in Indonesian and English have the same meaning but different forms of expression. The cause of the similarity between the two idioms in English and Indonesian is the cultural factor of the two languages, in terms of perceiving the body.

The fourth research entitled *Comparison of Idioms with Human Body Parts in Vietnamese and Indonesian* was compiled by Hieu et al., (2022) from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam and Muhammadiyah University of Malang, Malang, Indonesia. This research aims to describe (1) the similarities and differences in the forms of idioms with human body parts elements in Vietnamese and Indonesian and (2) the similarities and differences in the meanings of idioms with human body parts elements in Vietnamese and Indonesian. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a contrastive analysis method. The results of this study show that (1) in terms of form there are, (a) idioms that are the same in form and meaning, (b) idioms that are the same in form but different in meaning, and (c) idioms that are different in form but the same in meaning in Vietnamese and Indonesian; (2) in terms of meaning there are similarities and differences in (a) full meaning and partial meaning, (b) context meaning, and (c) value meaning. The results of this study can be utilized as teaching materials for BIPA learning, especially for Vietnamese learners.

The last previous research is entitled *A Comparative Study of the Emotional Metaphors of Chinese-Korean Idioms for Body Parts* conducted by Zhang (2023) from the Department of International Education, Shandong University, China. This research explores the similarities and differences between Chinese and Korean body parts idioms using documentary and inductive methods. From the perspective of metaphor, based on Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory and Kovecses' emotional metaphor theory, this paper compared idioms about body parts in Chinese and Korean associated with the four emotions of "joy, anger, sadness, and fear" and found that there are similarities and significant differences between Chinese and Korean body part idioms, which are manifested in metaphor types, high cognitive parts, and mapping patterns. These similarities and differences are

due to the similarities and differences in body structures, ways of thinking, and cognitive mechanisms between the two countries.

Based on the five previous researches mentioned above, shows that there are similarities and differences between the present research and the previous researches. The first similarity is on the research topic, which is to compare idioms related to body parts in two different languages. Another similarity is on the research design, all of them use descriptive qualitative research design. Meanwhile, the difference is that no research compares idioms in English and Korean and there is no previous research that focuses on analyzing idioms related to the head, especially in English and Korean. The data of head-related idioms in this research are taken from dictionary books of idioms in English and Korean and websites that provide information about idioms in each language.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of this research above, the word “head” in English and “*meori*” in Korean is often used as the constituent of the idioms in both languages. The word “head” itself has multiple meanings; most of them did not imply the meaning of head physically but more in concept. Non-native speakers and people who are learning both languages are sometimes challenged to guess and understand the actual meaning of the idioms. Thus, based on this problem, the researcher concludes three questions as the main focuses of this research, they are:

1. What types of idioms are related to “head” in English and Korean?
2. How are the meanings of idioms related to “head” constructed in English and Korean?
3. How are the similarities and differences of the idioms related to “head” in English and Korean?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are primarily concern with the research problem and the formulation of the research question above, the researcher is intended:

1. To identify the types of idioms related to “head” in English and Korean.
2. To describe the construction of meanings in idioms related to “head” in English and Korean.
3. To describe the similarities and differences of the idioms related to “head” in English and Korean.

1.4 Research Significance

The result of this research has considerable theoretical and practical significance in enhancing the understanding of idioms related to “head” in English and Korean. Theoretically, this research is expected to give a beneficial contribution to the study of contrastive linguistics, especially in the analysis of the types and meanings of idioms related to “head” in English and “*meori*” in Korean. and broaden the understanding of the similarities and differences in idiomatic expressions between the two languages. By analysing the types and meanings of idioms related to “head” in the two languages, this research is expected to contribute in enriching theoretical knowledge and perspectives in linguistic studies related to the way the concept of the head is reflected in idiomatic expressions as well as explore more deeply how linguistic culture influences the use of idioms related to “head” in English and “*meori*” in Korean.

Practically, this research is expected to provide a significant contribution in the context of language learning, helping learners of English and Korean to better understand the use of head-related idioms, which is often a challenging aspect of foreign language learning. This research is expected to help readers to understand the types and meanings of the idioms related to “head” in English and “*meori*” in Korean and their similarities and differences. The researcher hopes that this research can be an empirical source for future researchers and readers and can be further developed by those who are interested in the research of contrastive linguistics, specifically the contrastive analysis of idioms.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

To anticipate any misunderstanding among readers, this section provides a clear conceptual definition of the key terms used in the research.

1. Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive linguistics (or contrastive analysis) is the synchronic linguistics study of two different languages (or more) to find their dissimilarities and similarities, especially the former, and apply the results to related fields of language study and practice (Ke, 2019). In this research, contrastive analysis is used to examine and compare idiomatic expressions related to “head” in English and Korean, focusing on the linguistic structure, semantic nuances, and cultural implications.

2. Cognitive Semantics

Cognitive semantics is a theoretical framework within cognitive linguistics that focuses on the role of human cognition in shaping language structure, meaning, and usage. It focuses on investigating the relationship between human experience, embodied cognition, and language in the process of meaning-making (Evans & Green, 2009). In the context of this research, cognitive semantics provides a theoretical foundation for analyzing the meaning of idiomatic expressions related to “head” in English and Korean.

3. Idiom

Idiom is a typical conventional expression within a language community which usually in a fixed form and the meaning often unpredictable (Liu, 2017). They often carry cultural connotations and are used figuratively to convey a particular message or idea. In the context of this research, idioms related to “head” refer to expressions in English and Korean languages that feature the word “head” and have metaphorical meanings.

4. Head

In the context of this research, “head” refers to the anatomical part of the body situated at the topmost position, containing the brain and serving as the primary organ for sensory perception, cognition, and motor control. Beyond its literal anatomical meaning, “head” also serves as a versatile linguistic element in idiomatic expressions, representing concepts such as the top or beginning of something, leadership, intelligence, authority, emotion, direction and others. This research examines idiomatic expressions

containing the word "head" in English and Korean, exploring the meaning of "head" depicted in idiomatic expressions in both languages