CHAPTER THREE

THE PLACE (POSITION) OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS AND MULTI-WORD VERBS OF ENGLISH IN LANGUAGE AND SYLLABUS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we shall examine and show the place (position) of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English in:

• English Language in general (including the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing besides comprehension).
• The existing syllabuses of the English Language departments at the universities in Sudan.

Moreover, we will try to know how the students actually learn such complex expressions at these universities.

Also, we will try to show the importance of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English for the native speaker and the learner.

3.2 The place of Idiomatic Expressions and Multi-word verbs of English in Language including the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing besides comprehension

There is a view according to which everything in natural language is idiomatic; both encoding and decoding, from phonology through word-formation up to syntax and semantics, including sayings, proverbs, literature and each individual culture. This view, as Makkai (1972:25) indicates, would make the study of idioms the ultimate science of all sciences, epistemology in short.

However, in ELT literature idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs are considered as components of vocabulary and since vocabulary is one of the three sub-language skills (namely grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary) these two components are important part of Language and Language learning and teaching.
The following quotations confirm this importance:

- "... idioms are not something 'special' or 'sub-standard' : they are a vital part of the standard language and as such can hardly be avoided."
  
  (Wallace 1982:119)

- "'Phrasal verbs are essential part of everyday communication and the mastery of them promotes effective language use.'"
  
  (Collins COBUELD Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs)

- 'Why is English and especially American English, so heavily idiomatic? The most probable reason is that as we develop new concepts, we need new expressions for them, but instead of creating a brand new word from the sounds of the language, we use some 'already existent words', and put them together in a new sense. This, however, appears to be true of all known languages. There are in fact no known languages that do not have some idioms'.
  

- 'But it is by injections of colloquial idiom that the body of the English Language is constantly being rejuvenated'.
  
  (Ball 1958:8)

- 'Idioms are common in all kinds of English, formal and informal, spoken and written. However, informal spoken language is often very idiomatic'
  
  (Swan 1997:224)

In the following sections we shall demonstrate the importance of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs across language skills.

3.2.1 Listening

Regarding listening, idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English are met in everyday communication including broadcasting media.... When listening to the
news, weather forecast, sports report, announcements etc. on the radio you have to deal with a large number of common English expressions as well as various verbal combinations. Also while you are watching a film, theatre show, television programme etc., you are constantly puzzled by hearing or listening to idiomatic expressions, since they carry meanings which cannot be deduced from a knowledge of the single words composing them e.g. Presidential race too close to call (CNN 8.11.2000).

In general, much of the vocabulary in speech may already be known to the listener but this does not mean that he is familiar with some combinations as multi-word verbs or the idiomatic use of that vocabulary.

To summarise, idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English are encountered by every listener who should decode their meanings hence they are crucial in any listening activity.

3.2.2 Speaking

Concerning the place of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English in speaking skill, we shall quote the following:

'...research into idioms shows that they have important roles in spoken language and in writing, in particular in conveying evaluations and in developing or maintaining interactions'.

(Sinclair et al 1998:iv.)

The lines below can be taken from Collins COBUILD dictionary of Phrasal Verbs to bear out the same status indicated above:

'Phrasal Verbs are an essential part of everyday communication and the mastery of them promote effective language use.'

Also let's quote Swan 1997:244

'Idioms are common in all kinds of English, formal and informal, spoken and written. However, informal spoken language is often very idiomatic'.

The same status is showed in McCarthy et al 1998, page vi:
idioms are a colourful and fascinating aspect of English. They are commonly used in all types of language, informal and formal, spoken and written.

3.2.3 Reading

When anyone reads a passage, one will be faced with many idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs. Knowledge of the meaning of these IEX and MWV will facilitate one's general comprehension of these texts. However, if one failed to grasp the meaning in these extended contexts, this will make the reading ineffective and slow. So IEX and MWV are very important in mastering reading skills.

Examples of reading materials which contain IEX and MWV are found in everyday language use. For instance, let us take up the announcement I came across at a University in which a Professor conveyed that he couldn't attend a lecture scheduled in a particular week and that he deferred it for 15 days. Some of his wordings were as follows: We will meet Tuesday Week i.e. 27.03.2001. Here, the IEX 'Tuesday week' (meaning not the next Tuesday but the one after) is illustrative of an idiomatic expression in a reading material, among uncountable numbers of examples.

3.2.4 Writing

It is often said that multi-word verbs tend to be rather 'colloquial' or 'informal' and more appropriate to 'spoken' English than 'written' and that it is even better to avoid them and choose single word equivalents or synonyms instead. Yet, the practice showed the converse - they are frequently used in formal registers: (governmental writings, etc.) The following quotation from Goodale (1993) bears out the above view i.e. shows that they are used in writing:

'...It is a common misconception that phrasal verbs are mostly used in spoken Language. They can be found in many styles of writing, including highly formal government reports'. (Goodale, 1993:iv)

By the same token, idiomatic expressions are not confined only to spoken language but are pervasive in writing.
3.2.5 **Comprehension (understanding)**

Though comprehension is often associated with listening and reading (receptive skills), it could also be extended to combine with speaking and writing (productive skills) since one should understand what he is saying and/or writing.

One of the most familiar difficulties, when encountering idiomatic expressions, is that of 'meaning': to the learner, idioms such as *fill the bill* or *spill the beans* do not mean what they appear to mean. The sense of the whole cannot be arrived at from a prior understanding of the parts. In those examples, a special meaning is attached to the whole expression. In other others, one word may have a common, literal meaning, while the other has specialized sense which may be difficult to grasp e.g. *foot the bill*.

The question of meaning is treated in different references. To begin with 'Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs' one reads:

>'All teachers and students of English recognize the problems of 'understanding' phrasal verbs and using them appropriately'.

Also, one can quote the following general statement regarding meaning:

>'Verbal idioms are very useful commonly used in English, because various verbs can join with different particles and/or prepositions to form unique combination of meaning'.

(Feare 1980:39)

In 'the Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms', the importance of idiomatic expressions in mastering comprehension skills is stated in the following lines:

>'Your language skills will increase rapidly if you can understand idioms and use them confidently and correctly. One of the main problems students have with idioms is that it is often impossible to guess the meaning of an idiom from the words it contains. In addition, idioms often have a stronger meaning than non-idiomatic phrases. For example, *look daggers at some one* has more emphasis than *look angrily at someone*, but they mean the same thing.'
To conclude this section, one can state that idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English are not a separate part of the language, which one can choose either to use or to omit, but they form an essential part of the vocabulary of English. This fact is, however, supported by the responses given by the lecturers of English in Sudan when filling up the questionnaire distributed to them: The questions in this respect are the following: (For full details about the description and analysis of the teachers' questionnaire, see chapter five).

Q. 16 Could I have your comments on the following statements:

(Respondents have to express their views by choosing from the following scale (strongly disagree, disagree, . . . strongly agree)). The given statements are:

a. The possibility of using the same word / language item with different particles or / and prepositions or words that have already established meaning to form / express new meaning make the processes of information retrieval, recalling the lexical items at will, etc., much easier (i.e. language economy and psycholinguistic processing).

b. There is a frequent demand from those possessing the knowledge of EFL that they must have a command of idiomatic expressions in real life situations.

After attempting to get the teachers' opinions on the importance of IEX and MVW across language skills, statements regarding the importance of IEX & MWV and their status in language are shown to students through a questionnaire to which they are required to choose from a 5-points options scale (strongly disagree, disagree, not sure / don't know, agree, strongly agree), (for details regarding the students' questionnaire see chapter five). These statements are:

a. Idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs are common in every language.

b. Without command of IEX & MWV students cannot truly feel comfortable and confident in their efforts to master English thoroughly.

c. Idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs are not something special or substandard they are a vital part of the standard language and as such they can hardly be avoided.

However, the answers of the teachers and the students confirmed the importance of these two vocabulary components in English language.
3.3. THE PLACE OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS AND MULTI-WORD VERBS OF ENGLISH IN SUDAN UNIVERSITIES' SYLLABUSES

In this section an attempt will be made to show the position of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English in the existing syllabuses of the English Language departments at the universities in Sudan. However, before providing these syllabuses examination, it could be useful to equip the reader with a general background of the status of English Language in Sudan, covering different periods in the history of English Language thereof.

3.3.1 General Background: English Language in Sudan

In the history of modern Sudan the teaching of English plays a fascinating and important role both in its politics and social implications. During the colonial period it was an *instrument of official policy* with conflicting intentions and consequences in the different areas of Sudan. The political debate concerning its teaching and use continues, very often without the benefit of some historical knowledge of the many issues which have been discussed and contested in the past. However, this section presents a short background to the present study especially the empirical part of it, and it might be of interest to those engaged in the teaching of English Language in Sudan.

The present day Sudan may be divided very roughly into two regions, the North and the South (the present detailed political/administrative division is into 26 States). From the 7th century onwards a process of *Arabization* began in the Northern Sudan. Tribes from 'Arabia' crossed to Egypt and later moved south along the Nile valley. The Arabs progressed both peacefully, through conversion and intermarriage with indigenous groups, and with bloodshed when they came into conflict with existing kingdoms. The results were similar: the widespread adoption throughout the area of the *Arabic Language* and the *Islamic religion*. Islam and its natural concomitant 'Arabic' together created a vast area striking in its homogeneity of culture. A vital aspect of Islam is the study of the *koran* for which literacy is a prerequisite, and religious schools were established in many places for this purpose.
At the beginning of the nineteen century Egypt was ruled by Khedive Mohammed Ali who decided that the Sudan should formally become part of Egypt and in 1819 sent troops into parts of the country to establish his authority. As result, Arabic replaced Turkish as the Language of government correspondence in Sudan.

In 1881 the rise of the Mahadi began to be felt (he establishes the Mahdist State 1881-1898). Only a year later the British decided to take over complete control of Egypt. Although they occupied Egypt the British were reluctant to become involved in Sudan. However, by 1884 the Egyptian position in Sudan had deteriorated to the extent that the Egyptian garrisons either had to be evacuated or they faced annihilation by the Mahdi. General Charles Gordon was chosen to undertake the task of evacuation - a task which he failed to achieve. His subsequent theatrical death at the hand of the Mahdi's forces made him a hero of the British press and public opinion. Gordon's death was used as a rallying cry to create popular support for a new British military venture into Sudan. Therefore, Kitchener led a force of British and Egyptian troops into the Sudan. Then the administration of British rule began and with it the English language found a foothold in a land otherwise dominated by Arabic and Islam.

In 1899, Kitchener established an appeal for funds for a college to honour Gordon. Passing by different stages it finally became a university (now University of Khartoum). The following year Sir James Currie was appointed as Director of Education and Warden of the new College. His first report in 1901 articulated the educational needs at that time. Among these needs is the creation of a small administrative class who will ultimately fill many minor posts. It was proposed that this group only would be required to learn English. As far as the Gordon College was concerned it was decided that the medium of instruction for the secondary level should be English.

3y 1940 the Department of Education's annual report claimed that positive attitudes towards English remained despite the upsurge of nationalist feelings during the country's modern history.
In 1956, Sudan achieved independence. The first twenty years following independence saw considerable changes in the educational scene in Sudan. The early 1960s saw the creation at last of an institute capable of training teachers for secondary schools - an institute funded by UNESCO. In 1964 a team from Britain reported on its syllabi considering *English courses* for all students as well as those specializing in English. However, the committee recommended the use of Arabic in the secondary school (as a medium of instruction) as well as the *use of Arabic in that institute itself*. For English role in the future it was thought that English will continue to be the chief link with the rest of the world and to be necessary in many branches of higher education.

The eventual changeover from English to Arabic as medium of instruction at secondary school level took place in 1965. Yet English at that time is the medium of instruction at the tertiary level. However it was hoped at that time that the tertiary level itself may make Arabic its medium of instruction in the future.

In 1969 (known as May Revolution) there was great cry for changes in education. Among these changes it was planned that special attention will be directed towards the teaching of *foreign languages* particularly *English and French*.

At the beginning of the eighties (1980s) Arabic was still, naturally the prime concern of both politicians and educationalists: Propagation of Arabic and the Arabicization of the Military College's syllabuses.

In 1990's, there took place the beginning of the expansion of tertiary level education institutions (known as Higher Education Revolution). The opening of more than 26 universities spread over the 26 states of Sudan. The majority of these universities started by faculties of education, which have English as major or minor specialization or joint major.

To conclude this section, we shall recapitulate and emphasize some of the main points related directly to English Language status in Sudan:
• One of the objectives of the education system of the condominium (Egypt & Britain rule) is the creation of a class of English speaking clerks and translators who could act as intermediaries for the British officials. The use of English was limited to small section of the educated elite.

• The popularity of English among the school boys, who were given the opportunity of learning it, is testified by many observers of that time. The main motivation was to be able to join the government where a good knowledge of English was essential for promotion. There were social rewards, for with a fluent knowledge of English went prestige.

• In offices all over the Sudan English was used (that it had a 2nd language status) but it was generally restricted to the sphere of work.' At home and in the social context Arabic was used if no English person was present.

• The impression of the Sudanese generation who passed through the Gordon College and who later served in the administration or university is of a group of men whose standard of English was extremely high, almost like near-native speaker quality. The past was idealized as a time when standards were high.

• The idea usually adopted in the past (the period from condominium through British Colonialization) has been that English was a second language. Its status is now being changed to that of a foreign language. (Sudan Constitution 1998 page:1) Part I under the State and the Directive Principles: Language: 'Arabic is the official language in the Republic of the Sudan, and the State shall allow the development of other local and international languages'.

• The changeover from English, as medium of instruction in both school and tertiary level, to Arabic, has had its advantages and disadvantages: For instance, arabicization makes English as a subject which should be learnt or studied on its own not only as a means - positive side of arabicization.

• The expansion of tertiary level education provides the opportunities for learning English formally for a vast number of students in their states of domicile.

After this brief historical background, trying to assess English language status through different periods, the following section will attempt to describe and analyse the existing English language syllabuses in Sudan universities.
3.3.2. The place of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English in the existing syllabuses of English Language Departments at the Universities in Sudan

In this section, an attempt will be made to survey the English Languages syllabuses in the Sudan universities' English departments so as to know the position (place) of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs in these syllabuses. It goes without saying that space and time, as well as other practical constraints, will not allow us to present and examine all these documents. However, in what follows some of these syllabuses are discussed.

3.3.2.1 Universities in Sudan

If we look at the present educational map in Sudan, we find more than 26 universities though until very recently (1990) there were only 6 tertiary level academic institutions, namely:

• University of Khartoum
• Islamic University of Omdurman
• University of Cairo-Khartoum Branch (Now Elneelain University)
• Polytechnic (now Sudan University for Science and Technology)
• University of Juba.
• University of Gezira.

However, this remarkable expansion of tertiary level institutions (spread over the 26 Sudan states) began by establishing *faculties of education in which English is an important specialization* either as a major, joint major or minor subject.

3.3.2.2 English Syllabuses in Sudan universities

From the Sudanese universities, the researcher will make an attempt to analyse and discuss the English language syllabuses of the following institutions (including one university as an example of the newly-established universities, namely Gadarif University). These universities are carefully selected for their representative quality (country-wide intake) and their importance in the educational system in Sudan.

These universities are:
3.3.2.2.1 University of Khartoum

General Background

In 1989, Kitchener established an appeal for funds for a college to honour Gordon (mention has been made to them in section 3.3.1) passing by different stages it finally became a university: University of Khartoum. However, the impression of the Sudanese generation who passed through the Gordon College and who later served in the administration or the University is of a group of men whose standard of English was extremely high, of near native speaker quality.

The following points could be mentioned regarding the University development and status:

- Until very recently the university of Khartoum was the Sudan’s only university. (Originally, it was one of the colleges of London University.)
- Among its old and well-established faculties are the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education. The former has a department of English and a department of Linguistics while the latter has an English language department.
- In examining the English syllabuses, let us start by the Faculty of Arts: Department of English: (See Appendix l.a)
  In sum, the syllabus document shows the following:
  - The majority of B.A. courses are literature-oriented: 13 out of 30 courses are literature courses.
  - There is no direct or indirect mention of *idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs* in the above syllabus either as contents of a course or a separate course having the same title or similar one.
- Faculty of Education: English Language Department
It is known previously as the Higher Teacher Training Institute (HTTI) 1963 then became one of the faculties of the University of Khartoum in 1974.

The English Language Department awards B.Ed, degree after completing 4 years course. If we turn to the English Syllabus (see Appendix 1.b) the following points could be detected:

- The course is Language, Linguistics & Methodology oriented: (2/3 of the courses while 1/3 are literature).
- There is no mention of IEX & MWV in the above syllabus.
- However, in the course description document(s), regarding the course entitled listening and speaking: point 2, we read under objectives:
  'To understand and be able to talk about social and everyday topics of conversation using the appropriate idioms'.
  Also under Descriptions: We read the following:
  'Emphasis will be on idiomatic language of greetings, introduction, suggesting, apologizing and other social functions'.

In the courses description, the course entitled: 'Comprehension, Summary and Analysis' states as one of its objectives the following:

'To harness the students with newly learned language items, words and structures and idioms for active use…'.

Again, there is no mention of materials, methods etc. for achieving the above objectives related to idioms.

3.3.2.2.2. Elneclain University

General Background

It was opened previously by the Egyptians as a participation (dedicated to the Sudanese) at the Sudan independence (1956) and it was known as University of Cairo-Khartoum Branch.
In 1992 it became Elneelain University, and consequently a Sudanization of its staff, syllabuses etc. took place. The status of English in the old University was marginal since French is given priority by Egyptians.

However, the present English Language Department (ELD) started functioning effectively (1992)... providing courses for specialized students and others from different departments (general English courses.)

- The English Language Department Syllabus: (See Appendix 1 .c)

Examining the above document we deduce that:

There is no mention, explicit or implicit, direct" or indirect, of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs, hence no course existing with the same title or similar one.

3.3.2.2.3 The Islamic University of Omdurman

General Background

The name suggests its Islamic orientation: teaching of Islamic religion and its studies besides the medium of quoran (Arabic) for all its students as compulsory courses. English was never used as medium of instruction in that university but taught mainly as subject.

The faculty of arts is one of the oldest faculties of this university. Also, the recent years (1995) witnessed the establishment of the Faculty of Education. However the two faculties have among their specialization English.

In what follows an attempt will be made to examine the English language syllabuses at the two departments:

- Faculty of Arts (English syllabus): see Appendix 1 .d.

A quick look at the above syllabus reveals that the two components IEX & MWV do not appear in this document.
However, regarding the first course cited in the syllabus, which entitled *Reading comprehension and vocabulary in context*, it is not clear whether these components make a part of the course or not, since there is no specification of that course contents.

Faculty of Education: English Language Syllabus (see Appendix I.e).

The reader, after looking at the above-mentioned syllabus, could observe that idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs do not appear as part of any courses or as separate courses having the same title or under any other heading.

3.3.2.2.4 Sudan University for Science and Technology

**General Background**

It was known previously as the 'Polytechnic'. Among its faculties there is the faculty of Education.

English Language Syllabus, Faculty of Education (see Appendix 1.f).

- The above syllabus is literature-oriented (more than 20 of the 47 courses have the bias of literature.)
- In the general map of the course there is no mention of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs but the documents which state the contents of the courses reveal the following about the course entitled "semantics" : under the sub-heading lexical semantics: *Idioms*. They are mentioned as one of the sub-components. However, there is neither indication of how to teach or treat these idioms nor specification of the material to be used.

3.3.2.2.5. University of Gadarif

**General Background**

This university is selected and discussed here, as an example of the newly-established universities (1995). As many other new universities, in Sudan, it began its role by opening a faculty of education. In the beginning, its English Language department benefited from the existing syllabus of the English Department, Faculty of Education, University of Khartoum. Now the department has its own syllabus which is a
well-elaborated and comprehensive, devised by a native speaker, with a considerable experience in teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Sudan Universities.

Faculty of Education, English Language syllabus (See Appendix 1.g).

Again, in the above document, idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs are neither mentioned nor treated as contents of any course or as separate course.

3.3.2.3 SUMMARY

In sum, in the previous pages, we have tried to provide the reader with a general outlook of the syllabuses used in English Language departments, in some of Sudan universities attempting to show the position of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs in these syllabuses. However, our survey of these documents reveals that these two components, i.e. idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs, are not given attention, hence, they do not appear as contents of any courses or as separate courses under the title idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs or any other one. It is also worth mentioning that from our experience as students passing by the same course (B.Ed. Degree) or as teachers in some of Sudan universities that idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs are not given the attention and position they deserve.

3.4 HOW DO THE STUDENTS ACTUALLY LEARN IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS AND MULTI-WORD VRBS IN SUDANESE UNIVERSITIES?

The answer to this question depends mainly on the status of these two vocabulary components in the syllabuses and as we have seen from the foregoing discussion (see3.3.2.2) that they were not given the attention and place they deserve. Therefore, the teaching and learning of these lexical units were not catered for explicitly and intentionally in Sudan universities. However, their teaching and learning did not take place systematically except in rare instances where phrasal verbs were treated in some courses especially in grammar courses and this happen often through translation, list of these verbs (in alphabetical order without consideration of semantic (meaning) grouping - depending only on the form of the word) and inadequate use of dictionaries (often using bi-lingual ones). The use of dictionaries as teaching and learning aid is limited since the
learners think that they know these expressions and verbal combinations because they are made of easy words / constituents: e.g. put, up and with; look, up and to and so on. So they do not look up those words in dictionaries. A final crucial point to mention, here, about the teaching and learning of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verb is that whenever they were treated they were taught and tried to be learnt out of context i.e. in isolation.

3.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS & MULTI-WORD VERBS OF ENGLISH FOR THE NATIVE SPEAKER AND THE LEARNER

In this section I am trying to show the importance of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs of English for the native speaker and the learner. Since these two vocabulary components prove difficult and problematic for native speakers they will be more difficult for learners. In what follows a demonstration of their importance for both of them is provided.

3.5.1 The Importance of Idiomatic Expressions and Multi-Word Verbs of English for the Native Speaker

For one who is a native-born speaker of English, idiomatic usage is likely to cause little trouble. Most of the idiomatic expressions, one uses and hears are familiar, deep rooted, widely employed and readily understandable. English people unconsciously make use of these idiomatic expressions without knowing their origins or knowing that the meanings attached to them are sometimes arbitrary. A rational explanation of some of these meanings is impossible, but most can be explained.

In general, idiomatic expressions reflect the main activities and interests of the English speaking people who seem especially fond of allusive language, using the language appropriate to one activity to describe another. By the same token, Multi-Word Verbs of English are used by native speakers, instead of using single-word equivalents, in their everyday life.
3.5.2  The Importance of Idiomatic Expressions and Multi-Word Verbs of English for the Learner

Idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs are special form of collocation which will be encountered by every learner. Native speakers of English can definitely tell how fluent you are: if a person always uses a bookish, stitled expressions and never uses idiomatic English, he might develop the reputation of being a dry, unimaginative speaker, or one who is trying to be too serious and too official. The use of idioms is, therefore, extremely important. It can strike a chord of solidarity with the listener. The more idioms you use, in the right context, the more at ease native speakers will feel with you and the more they will think to themselves "this is a nice and friendly person—look at how well he expresses himself.

There is a belief that the foreign student should be satisfied when he can express himself in English fluently and grammatically and that there is no need for him to waste time on language 'frills' such as idioms. This belief rests partly on the nature of idiomatic expressions and partly on the mistaken idea that idiomatic expressions are not exportable and the effort of learning them is not commensurate with the results achieved. In support of this view let's quote Swan (1997 ed) page:244; who more or less, minimized the importance of idiomatic expressions for the learner.

'Idioms are common in all kinds of English, formal and informal, spoken and written. However, informal spoken language is often very idiomatic. Students should not worry because they do not know all the collocations and other idiomatic expressions that are commonly used by English speakers. If they use non-idiomatic ways expressing ideas they will normally be understood, and English speakers do not expect foreigners to speak perfectly, idiomatically or correctly. It is therefore not necessary for students to make a special effort to learn and use idioms. They will learn the most common idiomatic expressions naturally along with the rest of their English. If they try consciously to fill their speech and writing with idioms the effect will probably be very strange.'

(Swan 1980: (1997 ed):244)
However, other writers emphasized the importance of Idiomatic Expressions for the foreign learners:

'The foreign student wants to know which idiomatic expression and/or multi-word verb to use in a given situation. Faced by a certain situation how does the foreign learner express himself in idiomatic English? There is no certain defense against faux pas - that of using a perfectly good idiomatic expression (or it seems) to quite the wrong person'.

(Ball:1958)

Also, in support of the importance of idiomatic expressions for the learner, let's quote the following:

'Since the general tendencies of present-day English are towards more idiomatic usage, it is important that this book on idioms should show the learner how the language is developing. Idioms are not a separate part of the language, which one can choose either to use or to omit, but they form an essential part of the vocabulary of English'.

(Sedil and McMordie 1909: 5th ed. 1988:11)

On page 422 of Oxford Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs, there is a clear indication of the importance of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs for the native speaker and the foreign learner.

'Knowledge of a wide range of idiomatic expressions, and the ability to use them appropriately in speech and writing, are among the distinguishing features of a native-like command of English, part of the great range consists of the two-word combinations, usually known as 'phrasal verbs' e.g. step up (supplies), lay on (transport) and take up (the story). Phrasal verbs are commonly used by native speakers but constitute a well-known stumbling block for foreign learners, who because of the associated problems of structure and meaning may fall back on a more formal one-word equivalent—increase, provide, continue'.

(Cowie & Mackin 1993:422)
In general idiomatic expressions and multi-word verbs are important for the native speaker and the learner alike since they serve as distinctive features of the former command of the language and indications of mastery of the language for the latter.

3.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the present chapter, an attempt has been made to show and examine the position / status and the importance of IEX / MWV covering the following sub-headings:

- The position of IEX / MWV of English in Language in general and across the language skills.
- The place of IEX / MWV in the English language syllabuses used in Sudan universities.
- How the students actually learn these multi-word lexical items in Sudan universities.
- The importance of IEX / MWV for the native speaker and the learner.

In respect of the first issue, we have demonstrated that:

a) IEX / MWV are not a separate part of the language, which one can choose either to use or to omit, but they form an essential part of the vocabulary of English.

b) They are common in every language and without command of IEX / MWV students cannot truly feel comfortable and confident in their effort to master English thoroughly.

c) IEX / MWV are not something special or sub-standard they are a vital part of the standard language and as such they can hardly be avoided.

Regarding the second issue, we have showed that the position of these multi-word lexical items, in the existing syllabuses at the departments of English in Sudan universities, is marginal. The examining of the syllabuses documents revealed that these two vocabulary components are not given the attention and concern they deserved, hence, they do not appear as contents of any course or as a separate course.
As for the third issue (the question *How do the students actually learn these multi-word lexical items in Sudanese universities*), the answer to this question depends mainly on the status of these two vocabulary components in the syllabuses and as we have seen from the foregoing discussion that they were not given the attention and place they deserve. Therefore, the teaching and learning of these lexical units were not catered for explicitly and intentionally in Sudan universities. However, their teaching and learning did not take place systematically except in rare instances where phrasal verbs were treated in some courses especially in grammar courses and this happen often through translation, memorization of list of these verbs (in alphabetical order without consideration of semantic (meaning) grouping — depending only on the form of the word) and inadequate use of dictionaries (often using bi-lingual ones). The use of dictionaries as teaching and learning aid is limited since the learners think that they know these expressions and verbal combinations because they are made of easy words / constituents: e.g. *put, up and with; look, up and to* and so on. So they do not look up those words in dictionaries. A final crucial point to mention, here, about the teaching and learning of idiomatic expressions and multi-word verb is that whenever were treated they were taught and tried to be learnt out of context i.e., in isolation.

Concerning the last issue in this chapter, (the importance of IEX / MWV of English for the native speaker and the learner), the discussion leads us to conclude that IEX and MWV are extremely important for the native speaker since the knowledge and use of these multi-word lexical items serve as distinctive features of his command of the language. These two vocabulary components are also important for the learner since their knowledge and use are indications of his mastery of the language.

In sum, in this chapter the researcher has tried to show the position (status) of idiomatic expressions and multi word verbs of English in language and in the existing English language syllabuses in Sudan. Moreover, an attempt has been made to indicate how these two components are taught and learnt in universities in Sudan, and demonstrate the importance of these complex expressions for the native speaker and the learner alike.