

Appendices

Appendix 1. Materials of Experiment 1

Idiom type	Idiom	Control string
1	pop the question	ask the question
1	miss the boat	sail the boat
1	hit the sauce	cook the sauce
1	play the market	go to market
1	get the picture	buy the picture
1	lose your grip	lock his grip
1	swallow your pride	hurt her pride
1	eat his words	say his words
1	hit the jackpot	win the jackpot
1	button your lips	lick your lips
1	rack your brains	smash your brains
1	clear the air	breathe the air
2	carry the torch	light the torch
2	spill the beans	cook the beans
2	pass the buck	shoot the buck
2	pull the plug	insert the plug
2	bury the hatchet	use the hatchet
2	break the ice	melt the ice
2	grease the wheels	spin the wheels
2	paint the town	visit the town
2	hit the sack	carry the sack
2	wear the pants	mend the pants
2	play with fire	light the fire
2	crack the whip	carry the whip
3	kick the bucket	fill the bucket
3	chew the fat	cook the fat
3	raise the roof	paint the roof
3	make the scene	view the scene
3	give the sack	fill the sack
3	get the eye	open the eye
3	cook his goose	feed one's goose
3	shoot the breeze	feel the breeze

3	pack a punch	throw a punch
3	hold her peace	make the peace
3	speak your mind	clear your mind
3	cool his heels	scrape his heels

Note: 1, 2 and 3 stands for normally decomposable idioms, abnormally decomposable idioms and nondecomposable idioms respectively. The words in bold face in the idiom area stands for the words substituted in the idioms and those in bold face in controls refer to the substituting words in **nonidiomatic** control strings. These idioms are taken from Gibbs, **Nayak** & Cutting (1989).

Appendix 2. Rating of compositionality of the 262 idioms in the current study

Part one. Related information

1. Your are _____ years old.
2. Your major is _____. 1). English 2). Non-English
3. Your Chinese name is _____.
4. You're _____. 1). Male 2). Female
5. How many years have you been studying English?
6. Please rate your listening proficiency in English on a scale of 1-10, with 1 and 10 standing for the lowest and highest respectively.
7. Please rate your speaking proficiency in English on a scale of 1-10, with 1 and 10 standing for the lowest and highest respectively.
8. Please rate your reading proficiency in English on a scale of 1-10, with 1 and 10 standing for the lowest and highest respectively.
9. Please rate your writing proficiency in English on a scale of 1-10, with 1 and 10 standing for the lowest and highest respectively.

Part two. Understanding of English idioms

Instructions

Thank you very much for participating in this questionnaire! This questionnaire is meant to understand how much you can infer the meaning of the idiom from the words forming such idioms. Idioms are paired up with its meaning with a —. **1** means it's totally impossible to infer the meaning while **7** means quite possible to do so. **4** means you are unclear about whether it is possible to do so or not. Please bear in mind that some words contribute to the meaning of the idiom in a literal way and some words contribute to the meaning of idioms in a figurative way.

Idiom—Meaning of the idiom	Totally impossible	Completely possible
1. Rule with an iron fist—Rule in a very strict manner	1—2—3—4—5—6—7	
2. Learn by heart— Learn something so well that it can be recalled without any thinking	1—2—3—4—5—6—7	
3. Pass the buck—Shift the responsibility to sb. else	1—2—3—4—5—6—7	
4. Have deep pockets—Have large financial resources	1—2—3—4—5—6—7	

5. Seal the fate—Make it unavoidable that something bad will happen to sb.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
6. Practice what you preach—Do what you advise others to do	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
7. Push the daisies—Be dead and buried	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
8. Push an open door—Have no difficulty in accomplishing a task	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
9. Keep a level head—Keep cool	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
10. Put two and two together—Draw an obvious conclusion	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
11. Sell sb. a pup—Cheat sb.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
12. Bring home the bacon—Earn a salary	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
13. Come the raw prawn—Attempt to deceive sb	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
14. Put the record straight—Give the true version of events	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
15. See something through—Follow sth. until it is completed	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
16. See the light—Understand sth. clearly at last	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
17. Bury the hatchet—End a quarrel or conflict and become friendly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
18. Have cold feet—Lose the courage or confidence	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
19. Settle the score with—Clear up a problem with sb.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
20. Be on cloud nine—Be extremely happy	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
21. Set great store by—Have high hopes for sb. or sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
22. Have a fling—To have a brief, irresponsible sexual relationship with someone	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
23. Sever ties with—End a relationship with	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
24. Take the bull by the horns—Deal bravely with a difficult, dangerous or unpleasant situation	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
25. Shine up to—Try to gain favor by being nice	1—2—3—4—5—6—7

26. Shoot the bull—Spend time chatting about one's accomplishments	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
27. Hit the jackpot—To become highly successful, especially in winning a great deal of money	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
28. Shoot the works—Bet everything	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
29. Rake over the coals—To give someone a severe scolding	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
30. Speak the same language —Have similar ideas, tastes, etc	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
31. Take with a grain of salt —Not believe in the complete truth of	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
32. Paint the town —Go out and enjoy oneself wholeheartedly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
33. Spread oneself too thin —Do so many things that you can do none of them well	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
34. Add insult to injury —Make a bad situation even worse	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
35. Bark the wrong horse —Support sb. or sth. that can't win or succeed	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
36. Be flying high —Be very successful in one's ambitions	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
37. Bark up the wrong tree —Fail to recognize correctly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
38. Appear out of nowhere —Appear suddenly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
39. Hold still for —Tolerate or endure something	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
40. Ask for the moon—Ask for too much	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
41. Begin to see the light—Begin to understand	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
42. Steal the spotlight—Give the best performance in a show, play or some event	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
43. Scratch someone's back—To do a favor for sb. in return for a favor	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
44. Bite the bullet—To put up with or endure sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
45. Take a new turn—Begin a new course or direction	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
46. Beat a retreat— Retreat or withdraw quickly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
47. Stretch the point— Interpret a point flexibly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7

48. Break into tears—Start to cry	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
49. Strike a balance between—Find a satisfactory compromise between two extremes	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
50. Strike a happy medium—To find a compromising position	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
51. Ask for trouble—To do sth. that will cause trouble	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
52. Strike a sour note—Indicate sth. unpleasant	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
53. Beat a dead horse —Continue fighting a battle that has been won	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
54. Swim against the tide — Go against the trend	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
55. Beg to differ— State one's disagreement with sb. in a polite way	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
56. Take a fancy— To be fond of	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
57. Take a hard line with— Be firm with someone	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
58. Take no stock in — Pay no attention to	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
59. Take someone to tasks— Scold or criticize someone	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
60. Build castles in the air— Make plans that can never come true	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
61. Burn the candle at both ends— Make oneself tired by doing too much	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
62. Break the news —Tell someone some important news	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
63. Take the day off — Choose not to go to work for the day	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
64. Turn the heat up on — Use force to persuade sb. to do sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
64. Bring sth. home to — Cause sb. to realize the truth of something	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
66. Take the starch out of —To make someone less proud or stiff	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
67. Bring up the rear— Move along behind others	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
68. Buckle down to — Settle down to sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
69. Touch a sore spot— Refer to a sensitive matter that upsets sb.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7

70. Buy sth. for a song— Buy something very cheaply	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
71. Be a flash in the pan —Sudden but brief success.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
71. Buy on credit— Purchase sth. now and pay for it later	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
72. Buy a pig in a poke — Purchase or accept something without having seen or examined it.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
73. Reach a compromise— Achieve a compromise	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
74. Run out of patience— Become annoyed after being patient for a while	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
75. Have a bun in the oven— Be pregnant	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
76. Do your bit — Make a useful contribution to a cause	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
77. Vanish into thin air— Disappear without leaving a trace	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
78. Put the bite on — Blackmail/ extort money from	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
79. Wine and dine— Entertain sb. lavishly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
80. Blow the doors off — Be considerably better or more successful than	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
81. Throw the book at— Charge someone with/convict sb. of	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
82. Soften the blow— Make it easier to cope with a difficult change or upsetting news	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
83. Turn the other cheek — Pay no attention to abuse or insult	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
84. Push the boat out— Lavish in your spending or celebrations	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
85. Rock the boat — Do sth. to disturb an existing situation and upset other people	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
86. Be a wet blanket—A dull or depressing person who spoils other people's enjoyment	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
87. Burst at the seams— To explode with pride or laughter	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
88. Be the cat's whiskers—An excellent person or thing	1—2—3—4—5—6—7

89. Burst into tears— To begin to cry suddenly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
90. Burst into flames— Catch fire suddenly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
91. Beg the question—Assume that sth. is true before having it proved	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
92. Bite the dust— Fail/be killed	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
93. Break the ice— Relieve tension or start a conversation when meeting for the first time	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
94. Call a spade a spade—Call someone by its right name speak frankly about something	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
95. Keep up with the Joneses—Try to maintain the same social and material standards as one's friends or neighbors	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
96. Beat the clock—Finish sth. before the deadline	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
97. Dance to another tune—Change one's behavior or attitude	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
98. Can't carry a melody—Be unable to sing a simple melody	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
99. Face the music —Receive punishment	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
100. Carry a torch for—Be in love with sb. who isn't in love with you	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
101. Fall from grace—experience reduced status or fame	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
102. Carry a lot of weight—Be very influential with sb. or a group of people	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
104. Fall on deaf ears— (ideas) Be ignored by the persons intended for	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
105. Win the day —Win a competition	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
106. Foot the bills—Be responsible for paying the bill.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
107. Cast doubt on—To cause someone or sth. to be doubted	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
108. Have an eye for—Be able to appreciate and make good judgments about a particular thing	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
109. Get the picture—Understand a situation	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
110. Give it a whirl—Give it a try	1—2—3—4—5—6—7

111. Cause eyebrows to raise — To shock people	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
112. Charm the pants off — Use charming behavior to persuade someone to do sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
113. Grease the wheels — Make things go smoothly especially by paying the expenses	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
114. Chicken out of — Withdraw from	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
115. Handle with kid gloves—Handle or deal with sth. gently or skillfully	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
116. Clear the air—Get rid of doubts or hard feelings	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
117. Hit the sack—Go to bed and get some sleep	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
118. Climb on the bandwagon—Join others in supporting someone or something	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
119. Flip one's lid — Suddenly go mad or lose self-control	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
120. Come home to roost—(A problem) to return to cause trouble for sb.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
121. Lay down the law—State the rules firmly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
122. Come off second-best —be second to sb. or sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
123. Lead down a blind alley—Take an action that doesn't lead to positive results	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
124. Come unglued — Lose emotional control	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
125. Learn the ropes—Learn how to do sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
126. Lend an ear—Listen to sb.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
127. Make a clean sweep—Remove all unwanted people or things and get ready to start afresh	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
128. Come to grips with—Understand sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
129. Come to a pretty pass—Reach a regrettable state of affairs	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
130. Come to light—Become known	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
131. Come to a stop—Stop moving or happening	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
132. Set the scene—Create the conditions for a future	1—2—3—4—5—6—7

event	
133. Miss the boat—Be too slow to take advantage of a situation	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
134. Nip in the bud— Suppress or destroy sth. at an early stage	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
135. Nurse a grudge —Keep resenting or disliking sb. over a period of time	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
136. Put a brave face on — Act as if something unpleasant is not as bad as it really is	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
137. Pack a punch — Provide a burst of energy, power or excitement	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
138. Pave the way for—To prepare for sb. /sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
139. Pay lip service—Express approval of or support for sth. without taking any significant action	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
140. Pay through the nose —Pay more than a fair price	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
141. Pay a visit to—Visit sb.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
142. Pay homage to—Show respect for sb.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
143. Play the market—Invest in the stock market ruthlessly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
144. Praise to the skies—Praise enthusiastically	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
145. Pull the plug—Put a stop to/prevent sth. from happening	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
146. Put the screws on—Put strong pressure on sb. so as to frighten sb. into doing sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
147. Run like clockwork — Run very well	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
148. Raise the roof—Make a lot of noise	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
149. Read between the lines— Look for a hidden or implied meaning	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
150. Run off at the mouth — Talk too much	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
151. Run to seed— Become worn out and uncared for	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
152. Rise to the occasion —Meet the challenge of an event	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
153. Rise to the bait—Be attracted by some kind of bait	1—2—3—4—5—6—7

154. Do a number on — Treat sb. badly by deceiving or humiliating	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
155. Scream bloody murder—Complain bitterly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
156. Shoot the breeze—Spend time chatting	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
157. Sit on the fence—Not take sides in a dispute	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
158. Plumb the depths—Inquire into the most obscure or secret aspects of sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
160. Fall prey to —Be hunted and killed by	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
161. Put backbone into—Encourage sb. to behave in a determined way	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
162. Make ends meet—Make sure the spending doesn't exceed the money earned	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
163. Play with fire— Take foolish risks	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
164. Fish in troubled waters—Make a profit out of trouble	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
165. Go through fire and water—Face any possible danger	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
166. Walk the talk—Match one's actions with one's words	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
167. Skate on thin ice—Be in a dangerous situation lacking security and stability	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
168. Fan the flames—Intensify or stir up feelings	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
169. Go down in history—Be recorded in history	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
170. Go up in flames —Be completely destroyed	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
171. Get the green light—Get the permission to do sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
172. Clutch at straws —Try any methods even though they are not likely to succeed	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
173. Come down in the world—Lose one's social position or financial status	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
174. Get one's money's worth—Receive good value	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
175. Gnash one's teeth—Express a strong emotion, usually strong anger	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
176. Go west—Die	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
177. Get the green light—Get the permission to do...	1—2—3—4—5—6—7

178. Turn a deaf ear to—To ignore one's request	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
179. Let the chances slip by—To lose the opportunity to do sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
180. Have clean hands —Be innocent or not guilty	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
181. Keep harping on—Keep complaining about sth.	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
182. Go with the flow—To behave easily and cooperatively in the way other people do	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
183. Rest on one's laurels—Enjoy one's success and not try to achieve more	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
184. Remain glued to each other— Be quite close to each other	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
185. Sit on pins and needles—Be worried or excited about something	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
186. Reach an impasse—To progress to the point where a barrier stops further progress	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
187. Be part and parcel of — Be an essential feature and element	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
188. Make waves— Make trouble or difficulties	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
189. Ring in the new year —to mark the end of the previous year and usher in the start of a new one	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
190. Take root— Become fixed or established	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
191. Rise with the sun—Get up early in the morning	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
192. Nurse a grudge against—Harbor or hold hatred against	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
193. Hold out an olive branch—Offer a token of peace or goodwill	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
194. Be no respect of persons— Treat everyone the same without being influenced by their status or wealth	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
195. Sail right through—Finish sth. quickly and easily	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
196. Save for a rainy day—Reserve sth. for future needs	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
197. Search high and low—Go to look everywhere for	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
198. Vote with one's feet —To express one's	1—2—3—4—5—6—7

dissatisfaction with sth. by leaving

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| 199. Cast pearls before swine—To waste sth. good on someone who doesn't care about it | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 200. Cut the knot—Solve a problem in an uncommon but very efficient way | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 201. Breathe fire—Be fiercely angry | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 202. Turn up one's nose at —Show dislike or contempt for... | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 203. Bind someone hand and foot—Severely restrict someone's freedom to act or make decisions | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 204. Break new ground—Do something that is considered a move forward and beneficial | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 205. Give someone an inch— (sb.) Makes further demands once a compromise has been made | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 206. Kick someone upstairs— Remove someone from an influential position by giving them a seeming promotion | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 207. Burn one's boats— Make oneself devoted to sth. in an unchangeable way | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 208. Scratch someone's back—To do a favor for sb. | |
| 209. Dig one's own grave—Do something foolish which causes one to fail or be ruined | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 210. Run into the sand—Come to nothing | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 211. Pull the rug from under sb.—Suddenly withdraw support for someone | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 212. Feel the pinch—Experience the hardship of having less money | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 213. Turn over a new leaf—Improve one's conduct or performance | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 214. Sit on the fence—Avoid making a decision or choice | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 215. Play second fiddle to—Play a secondary role in someone's presence | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 216. Give sb. the cold shoulder—Be purposefully unfriendly to | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 217. Kick down the ladder —Reject or no longer get along with friends or acquaintances who helped them to rise | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |

218. Throw a lifeline to —Provide sb. with a means of escaping from a difficult situation	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
219. Bark at the moon—Make a protest with no effect	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
220. Contemplate one's navel—Concentrate on small issues at the expense of a wider view	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
221. Have a silver tongue—Be eloquent or persuasive	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
222. Hold all the cards—Be in the strongest or most advantageous position	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
223. Have a card up one's sleeve—Keep a plan or sth. valuable secret until it is needed	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
224. Carry the can—Take the responsibility for a mistake or misdeed	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
225. Be all fur coat and no knickers—Have an impressive appearance which in fact contains nothing substantial inside	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
226. Have a foot in both camps — Have an interest or stake in two parties or sides without being bound to either side	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
227. Have one foot in the grave— Be near death because of old age or illness	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
228. Flutter one's eyelashes— Open and close one's eyes rapidly in a shyly flirting manner	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
229. Be in full flood— Have gained momentum	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
230. Go with the flow— Accept a situation	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
231. Flog a dead horse— Waste energy on a lost cause or unchangeable situation	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
232. Make one's flesh creep— Cause someone to feel fear or disgust	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
233. Have other fish to fry—Have other or more important things to take care of	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
234. Feel one's way— Proceed or move on cautiously	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
235. Foul one's nest— Hurt one's own interest	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
236. Get one's wires crossed—Become confused or mistaken about	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
237. Get the ball rolling—Start an undertaking	1—2—3—4—5—6—7

238. Get the inside track—To get the advantage because of special connections	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
239. Get one's ducks in a row—Complete one's preparations to become efficient and well organized	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
240. Get the cold shoulder—Be ignored or rejected	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
241. Give someone a blank check—Give sb. freedom or permission to act as one wishes or thinks necessary	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
242. Go to bed with the chickens—To go to bed very early	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
243. Gild the lily—To attempt to improve sth. that is already fine	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
244. Keep a tight rein on—Watch or control sb. (sth.) tightly	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
245. Keep one's mouth shut—Keep quiet about ...	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
246. Fight fire with fire —Use the weapons of your enemy to fight against him	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
247. Read someone like a book— Understand someone very well	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
248. Ride off in all directions — Try to do everything all at once	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
249. Return the favor — Do a good deed for sb. who has done a good deed for you	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
250. Know one's ABCs — To know the most basic things	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
251. Ride on someone's coat-tail—Depend on another person for good fortune or success	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
252. Meet one's Waterloo— Meet one's final and unsurpassable challenge	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
253. Mend one's fences — Restore good relations with	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
254. Paddle one's own canoe — Be independent and self-sufficient	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
255. Play into someone's hands —Act in such a way so unintentionally as to give sb. an advantage	1—2—3—4—5—6—7
256. Punch above one's weight —Engage in an activity	1—2—3—4—5—6—7

or contest believed to be beyond one's abilities

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 257. Rise from the ashes—Be renewed after
destruction | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 258. Scrape something together—To assemble sth.
quickly from a small supply of components | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 259. Steal a march on—Gain an advantage over
someone by acting before they do | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 260. Feather one's nest —Make money illegally and at
the cost of others' interest | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 261. Ring down the curtain on—Bring sth. to an end | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |
| 262. Play both ends—To plot in a way that makes
both sides fight against each other. | 1—2—3—4—5—6—7 |

Note: The materials in the foregoing questionnaire are randomized.

Appendix 3. Rating of the familiarity of the 262 idioms in the current study

Part one. Related information

1. You are _____ years old.
2. Your major is _____. 1). English 2). Non-English
3. Your Chinese name is _____.
4. You're _____. 1). Male 2). Female
5. How many years have you been studying English?
6. Please rate your ability in English listening on a scale of 1-10, with 1 and 10 standing for the lowest and highest respectively.
7. Please rate your ability in spoken English on a scale of 1-10, with 1 and 10 standing for the lowest and highest respectively.
8. Please rate your reading ability in English on a scale of 1-10, with 1 and 10 standing for the lowest and highest respectively.
9. Please rate your writing ability in English on a scale of 1-10, with 1 and 10 standing for the lowest and highest respectively.

Part two. Familiarity with the meaning of the idioms

Instructions

Thank you very much for participating in this questionnaire! This questionnaire is meant to see how FAMILIAR you are with the meaning of the idioms listed. **1** means you know nothing about the meaning of the idiom at all while **7** means that you know its meaning perfectly well. **4** means you are unclear about what it means. There is no right or wrong answer. Please make your judgment based on your own understanding.

Note:

The familiarity questionnaire of the 262 idioms took place before the compositionality rating. It is presented here after the compositionality rating with the detailed information left out for brevity's sake as the same set of idioms were involved in the two ratings.

Appendix 4. Materials of Experiment 2

Order	Idiom type	Idiom	Control string
1	1	rise with the sun	rise with the tide
2	1	return the favor	return the call
3	1	burn the candle at both ends	break the candle at both ends
4	1	ring in the new year	early in the new year
5	1	hold all the cards	hold all the fish
6	1	hold out an olive branch	bring back an olive branch
7	1	bind someone hand and foot	strap someone hand and foot
8	1	go west	park west
9	1	praise to the skies	praise to the Lord
10	1	put a brave face on	put a sour face on
11	1	call a spade a spade	call a spade a card
12	1	fall from grace	fall from favor
13	1	take root	strike root
14	1	get the picture	hold the picture
15	1	search high and low	look high and low
16	1	get the green light	get the best light
17	2	carry a lot of weight	carry a lot of stuff
18	2	beat the clock	beat the devil
19	2	kick down the ladder	slip down the ladder
20	2	stretch the point	miss the point
21	2	turn over a new leaf	turn over a new page
22	2	sit on the fence	hang on the fence
23	2	burn one's boats	drag one's boats
24	2	clear the air	clear the land
25	2	vote with one's feet	vote with one's party
26	2	give someone a blank check	give someone a blank stare
27	2	scratch someone's back	scratch someone's chin
28	2	bring something home to	bring something out to
29	2	be no respecter of persons	be no respecter of wealth
30	2	dance to another tune	dance to another beat
31	2	give someone an inch	give someone a coat
32	2	play into someone's hands	pass into one's hands

Note: 1 and 2 stand for decomposable idioms and nondecomposable idioms separately. The words in bold face in the idiom area stands for the words substituted

in the idioms and those in bold face in controls refer to the substituting words in **nonidiomatic** control strings.

Appendix 5 Materials of Experiment 3

Instructions: You are going to read a series of sentences. Each includes a phrase which is both underlined and highlighted in bold face. They are followed by two choices. Please read the sentences and decide as quickly as possible which of the two choices represents the meaning of the phrase in the sentence you read. If you think F is a better choice, press F. If you think J is a better choice, press J. Always put your left index finger on F and your right index finger on J. If you understand what you are to do, please press Q to get started.

List A

1. The naughty child nearly drove me mad by **beating the clock** without stop.
F. knocking J. cracking
2. Aging and death **are no respecter of persons.** Everyone will become old and die in the end.
F. enough J. equal
3. To keep the beggar warm, Jack kindly **gave him a coat** in addition to buying him some food.
F. dipped J. helped
4. After sharp decline in sales, the e-commerce giant **held out an olive branch** and gave in to customers' requests.
F. conceded J. conquered
5. Realizing that they had been cheated, the voters began to **dance to another tune** and support another party.
F. chair J. change
6. His troops **burned the boats** after crossing the river so that none would fall into the hands of the enemy.
F. declared J. destroyed
7. The man usually grows new plants by **taking roots** cut from some old ones.
F. transplanting J. transporting
8. The old man **looked high and low** to see whether it's the best time to plant new crops.
F. checked J. cleared
9. Her husband **gave her a blank check** and she had the freedom to do whatever she thought right.
F. limited J. permitted
10. The students **voted with their feet** and went to a nearby high school which offers better education.

- F. left J. saved
11. In that country, women seem to be **holding all the cards**, deciding whom to marry and when to give birth to kids.
- F. seeking J. controlling
12. Tony washes dishes once in a while, but it's **stretching the point** in calling him a family-man.
- F. exaggerating J. accelerating
13. If a new program is to be introduced, **getting the green light** from the related department is a must.
- F. permeation J. permission
14. No sign of peace has appeared as neither side is willing to **give the other an inch**.
- F. compromise J. condense
15. The mother finds it hard for the one-year old boy to **call a spade a spade**. Instead, he calls it [seid].
- F. name J. need
16. People on the stage **danced to another beat** when the drumming quickened.
- F. informed J. performed
17. He **brought out some food to** those people who were living on the streets.
- F. aided J. landed
18. For several times, the curious child tried **burning the candle at both ends**, but failed.
- F. lighting J. seeking
19. The little girl **held the picture** of her mom tightly for many hours after she went out of sight.
- F. slipped J. grasped
20. The poor old man **went west** after lying in bed for several years.
- F. lied J. died
21. The man often thinks he he's been wronged and is always **putting on a sour face**.
- F. dissatisfied J. dismissed
22. Weather **is no respecter of wealth**. Poor and rich people experience the same seasons.
- F. cheats equally J. treats equally
23. The little boy felt a sharp **fall from favor** after his younger brother was born.
- F. dislike J. dismissal
24. Being afraid of dogs, Mike has been **sitting on the fence** for about 20 minutes before rescued.
- F. sick J. still
25. The confused man seemed to have difficulty responding and **gave Bill a blank**

stare.

F. glanced J. gathered

26. The **fall from grace** of the famous actress resulted from her sex scandal with a married man.

F. dissatisfaction J. **disreputation**

27. The young man wanted to be true to his own ideas and refused to **vote with his party.**

F. swallow J. follow

28. Her offering of **praise to the skies** is beyond the understanding of her friends.

F. admiration J. cooperation

29. There's some misunderstanding between them. This talk seems a good chance to **clear the air.**

F. clash J. clarify

30. The politician was just **putting a brave face on** security in that area. Conflicts emerged every day.

F. pretending J. protecting

31. Mary loved the man so much that he really hoped to **turn over a new leaf** in life.

F. choose J. change

32. The shy boy had to stand up and sing a song for others when the ball was **passed into his hands.**

F. handed J. banded

33. Short as the old man was, he could **carry a lot of weight** and walk with ease.

F. remain J. sustain

34. After paying \$5,000, the man hasn't **got the picture** that the painter promised him.

F. objected J. obtained

35. Carol couldn't help laughing when her 2-year old brother **called a spade a card.**

F. mistook J. misled

36. She had no chance to run away as she was **bound hand and foot** by the two kidnappers.

F. tied J. lied

37. Friends are to help each other. You **scratch my back.** I'll scratch yours.

F. suppose J. support

38. One of our favorite ways to **ring in the new year** is to watch the Spring Gala hosted by CCTV.

F. welcome J. become

39. Jiang Gan stole the fake letter, **playing into the hands** of Zhou Yu who wanted to pave the way for reunification.

F. unintentionally J. undoubtedly

40. I didn't find the book as I just **looked left and right** but didn't search high and low about the shelf.
F. hooked J. looked
41. The sunflowers which have **got the best light** are growing luxuriantly.
F. sunlight J. rainstorm
42. Richard couldn't climb up the wall as his partner **kicked down the ladder** after reaching the top.
F. received J. removed
43. The considerate husband asked his wife, "Shall I **bring home to** the kids some food?"
F. fetch J. favor
44. The priest said to the sad people, "Let's be joyful and give our **praise to the Lord!**"
F. stealing J. extolling
45. Please stop **striking the root** of the tree as such action will destroy it forever.
F. beating J. bearing
46. There is no point in helping that man. He never **returns the favor.**
F. rewards J. receives
47. She **scratched her chin** time and again. It was so uncomfortable.
F. mopped J. rubbed
48. In an hour, the tide will **rise with the sun.** Let's stay away from the beach.
F. inhabit J. increase

List B

Instructions: You are going to read a series of sentences. Each includes a phrase which is both underlined and highlighted in bold face. They are followed by two choices. Please read the sentences and decide as quickly as possible which of the two choices represents the meaning of the phrase in the sentence you read. If you think F is a better choice, press F. If you think J is a better choice, press J. Always put your left index finger on F and your right index finger on J. If you understand what you are to do, please press Q to get started.

1. The little girl was so angry because she thought that her mother had **missed the point** she wanted to express.
- F. misunderstood J. misspelled
2. The Reading-For-All program was **praised to the skies** by many people.
- F. stimulated J. appreciated

3. **Giving him an inch** of the cake will help him soon find out its chief ingredients.
F. stamp J. sample
4. After getting married, she neglected appearance and her **fall from grace** surprised her husband.
F. unattractiveness J. carelessness
5. They had to **drag the boats** to the shore when the old engines broke down in the sea.
F. press J. pull
6. The reports **bring home to** people the importance of environmental protection.
F. endear J. enlighten
7. Christians are to **be no respecter of persons**. Why do they honor people instead of Jesus Christ?
F. non-worshipping J. non-nourishing
8. The newly-married woman felt as if she was **bound hand and foot** and had no freedom at all.
F. restricted J. reduced
9. He hopes he can **beat the devil** of being envious of people who're better than him.
F. concern J. conquer
10. He finds fault with his wife and she **returns the favor**. Hence, they often quarrel.
F. revenges J. recovers
11. She realized she was behind schedule and **beating the clock** was impossible.
F. in short J. in advance
12. Billy's spreading rumors about the man who once helped him generously is a sign of **kicking down the ladder**.
F. ungratefulness J. carelessness
13. **Parking west** in the open garage for years exposed his car to excessive sunshine.
F. sitting J. putting
14. During the break, I was checking my palms when a pingpang ball was **played into my hands**.
F. dropped J. drowned
15. To make sure that he'd be devoted to the doctoral program, he **burned the boats** by quitting his well-paid job.
F. determined J. defeated
16. Suddenly country music was replaced by Jazz and the young men began to **dance to another tune**.
F. leave J. leap
17. Charlie's father **held all the fish** he had caught tightly in case they slipped away.
F. clutched J. crashed

18. **Carrying too much stuff** and walking for a long way made the camel exhausted.
F. Overloading J. Overeating
19. The frank man is always **calling a spade a spade** and sticking to the truth.
F. outgrown J. outspoken
20. The woman tried to **put on a brave face** when she saw a snake moving towards her sleeping baby.
F. advantageous J. courageous
21. The mother didn't understand the situation at first, but she slowly **got the picture**.
F. understood J. underfed
22. Doing several jobs at the same time, the woman's **burning the candle at both ends**.
F. brightened J. exhausted
23. She was so lucky in **getting the green light** all the way and made it to her office in the last minute.
F. transportation J. transaction
24. The villagers **rise with the sun** in the morning and go to bed early in the evening.
F. pick up J. get up
25. Granny **scratched my back**. It's so itching and made me laugh for quite a while.
F. rubbed J. rushed
26. The farmers **went west** in the hope of finding new job opportunities.
F. heated J. headed
27. The young man was surprised and confused when the alarm clock **rang in the new year** loudly.
F. shaped J. sounded
28. In some families, the dried-up skin of some fruits is used to **clear the air** and bring fragrance.
F. purify J. pollute
29. Tom's words **carry a lot of weight** with the naughty boy. He acts on Tom's advice.
F. inhabit J. influence
30. The thief was **strapped hand and foot** after being caught on the spot by the owner.
F. tied J. dyed
31. Being uncertain which candidate is the best choice, many voters are still **sitting on the fence**.
F. dictating J. hesitating
32. The boy **broke the candle at both ends** and had much fun playing with them.
F. halved J. harvested

33. After being absent for a long time, the pigeon reappeared and **held out an olive branch** with its mouth.
F. cleared J. carried
34. Mary found a rare species of snail after **turning over a new leaf** under the big tree.
F. receiving J. reversing
35. The child had much fun **slipping down the ladder** with his friends in the garden.
F. sliding J. saving
36. **Giving her a blank check**, the billionaire asked her to write down the amount of money she wanted.
F. generously J. humorously
37. The disabled man has learned to do many things, getting dressed, having a meal and even **voting with his feet**.
F. deceiving J. deciding
38. Being no good at card games and afraid of losing, the young man has been **holding all the cards** for a long time.
F. grasping J. gratifying
39. After drinking so much on New Year's Eve, he really didn't want to get up **early in the new year**.
F. timing J. tiding
40. With a powerful machine, they **cleared the land** which was filled with rubbish.
F. appealed J. cleaned
41. Being afraid of monkeys, the little boy had to **hang on the fence** until his mom came.
F. cling J. sing
42. The teacher asked the students to **turn over a new page** and went on reading.
F. seize J. open
43. After the storm, the bird **brought back an olive branch** from a faraway island.
F. carried J. crashed
44. After the child went missing, the worried relatives started to **search high and low** for him.
F. cook J. look
45. After many trials, Lily found it impossible to **stretch the point** into a line on the old computer.
F. pull J. put
46. Precious seaweeds **rose with the tide** and fishermen hurried to harvest them.
F. emerged J. equipped
47. The concept of Health Comes First is **taking root** in the mind of many people.

F. failed

J. fixed

48. Your best friend called one hour ago. Please **return the call** as soon as you have time.

F. punish

J. phone

Appendix 6. Rating of L1-L2 congruence of idioms in Experiments 4 and 5

Instructions:

This questionnaire is meant to know how you understand the similarities between English idioms and their Chinese counterparts in terms of the use of concepts or lexical expressions. Please rate on a scale of 5 on the similarities involved. 1 and 5 stand for not similar at all to highly similar respectively.

1. come off second best

英语用成语 come off second best 表示“be second to somebody or something” 这个成语用到了概念“come off” 以及 “second-best”。中文成语 “屈居第二” 所用的概念为 “屈居” 以及 “第二”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English	come off second best	“come off”	1	2	3	4	5
Idioms		“second-best”					
Chinese	屈居第二	“屈居”、 “第二”	Not similar at all				Highly similar
idioms							

2. praise to the skies

英语用成语 praise to the skies 表示 “Praise enthusiastically or praise somebody or something highly”。这个成语涉及了概念 “praise”、 “to the skies”。中文成语 “吹捧上天” 中所用的概念为 “赞美到天上”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English	praise to the skies	“praise”					
Idioms		“to the skies”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese	吹捧上天	赞美到天上	Not similar at all				Highly similar
idioms							

3. ring in the new year

英语用成语 “ring in the new year” 表示 “to mark the end of the previous year and usher in the start of a new one”。这个成语涉及了概念 “ring bells”、“welcome the new year”。汉语成语“辞旧迎新” 涉及概念“辞去过去的一年”以及“迎来新的一年”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	ring in the new year	“ring bells” and “welcome the new year” through celebrations”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	辞旧迎新	“辞去旧的一年”、“迎来新的一年”	Not similar at all				Highly similar

4. take root

英语用 take root 这个成语表示 “become fixed or established”。这个成语在表达这个意思是涉及了概念 “develop and spread roots so as to begin thriving”。中文成语“根深蒂固”中所用的概念为“深入泥土的根”以及“牢固的蒂”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	take root	“develop and spread roots so as to begin thriving”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	根深蒂固	“根深”、“蒂固”	Not similar at all				Highly similar

5. search high and low

英语用 search high and low 这个成语表示 “to look absolutely everywhere for sb. or sth.”。这个成语在表达这个意思涉及了概念 “look high and low”。中文成语“上下求索”中所用的概念为“上下寻找”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English	search high	“look high and low	1	2	3	4	5
Idioms	and low						
Chinese	上下求索	“上下寻找”	Not				Highly
idioms			similar				similar
			at all				

6. breathe fire

英语用 breathe fire 这个成语表示 “be extremely angry”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念 “exhale a fine mist of fuel over an open flame to form a fireball”。中文成语 “火冒三丈” 中所用的概念为 “冒出来的火焰达三丈高”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	breathe fire	“exhale a mist of fuel over an open flame to form a fireball	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms		“冒出来的火焰达三丈高”	Not similar at all	Highly similar			

7. rule with an iron fist

英语用 rule with an iron fist 这个成语表示 “to rule in a very stern manner”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念 “rule with a fist as tough as iron”。中文成语 “铁腕统治” 中所用的概念为 “用铁一般的手腕管理”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

			使用的概念	相似程度				
English	rule with an iron fist	Idioms	“rule with a fist as tough as iron”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese	铁腕统治		“用铁一般的手腕管理”	Not similar at all				Highly similar
idioms								

8. fan the flames

英语用 fan the flames 这个成语表示 “to make an unpleasant mood or situation worse”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念 “fan the flames to make them burn more brightly”。中文成语 “煽风点火” 中所用的概念为 “煽动风使点燃

的火烧旺”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	fan the flames	“fan the flames to make them burn more brightly”	1	2	3	4	5
			Not similar at all		Highly similar		
Chinese idioms	煽风点火	“煽动风使点燃的火烧旺”					

9. add insult to injury

英语用 add insult to injury 这个成语表示 “to make dangerous or unpleasant mood or situation worse”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念 “add mental insult to physical injury”。中文成语 “雪上加霜” 中所用的概念为 “在雪上添加霜”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

			使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	add insult to injury		“add mental insult to physical injury”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	雪上加霜		“在雪上添加霜”	Not similar at all				Highly similar

10. bark up the wrong tree

英语用 bark up the wrong tree 这个成语表示 “fail to recognize correctly”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念 “bark towards the wrong tree”。中文成语 “错认颜标” 中所用的概念为 “将颜标认成颜真卿的后代”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	bark up the wrong tree	“bark towards the wrong tree”	1	2	3	4	5
			Not similar at all		Highly similar		
Chinese idioms	错认颜标	“将颜标认成颜真卿的后代”					

11. set the scene

英语用 set the scene 这个成语表示 “create the conditions for a future event”。这

个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“prepare a place for an event”。中文成语“未雨绸缪”中所用的概念为“趁着天没下雨，修缮房屋门窗”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	set the scene	“prepare a place for an event”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	未雨绸缪	“趁着天没下雨，修缮房屋门窗”	Not similar at all				Highly similar

12. pay lip service

英语用 pay lip service 这个成语表示“express approval of or support for sth. without taking any significant action”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“pay for the service with one's lips”。中文成语“空头支票”中所用的概念为“开一张空头支票”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	pay lip service	“pay for the service with one's lips”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	空头支票	“开一张空头支票”	Not similar at all				Highly similar

13. keep a tight rein on

英语用 keep a tight rein on 这个成语表示“watch or control sb. (sth.) tightly”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“rein over something tightly as if reining an animal”。中文成语“擒纵自如”中所用的概念为“擒和放都牢牢把握局面”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	keep a tight rein on	“rein over something tightly as if reining an animal”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	擒纵自如	“擒和放都牢牢把握局面”	Not similar at all				Highly similar

14. fall from grace

英语用 fall from grace 这个成语表示“experience reduced status or fame”。这个

成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“fall down in terms of grace”。中文成语“名誉扫地”中所用的概念为“名誉掉落到地上”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

使用的概念			相似程度				
English Idioms	fall from grace	“fall down in terms of grace”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	名誉扫地	“名誉掉落到地上”	Not similar at all				Highly similar

15. cast doubt on

英语用 cast doubt on 这个成语表示“cause something to be doubtful”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“throw doubt upon”。中文成语“正冠李下”中所用的概念为“在李树下整理衣冠，引起怀疑”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

使用的概念			相似程度				
English Idioms	cast doubt on	cause something to be doubtful	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	正冠李下	在李树下整理衣冠，引起怀疑	Not similar at all				Highly similar

16. put a brave face on

英语用 put a brave face on 这个成语表示“try to manage well in a difficult situation/ act as if something unpleasant is not as bad as it really is”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“make somebody look brave”。中文成语“强颜欢笑”中所用的概念为“心里不畅快，但脸上勉强装出高兴的样子”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

使用的概念			相似程度				
English Idioms	put a brave face on	“make somebody look brave”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	强颜欢笑	“心里不畅快，但脸上勉强装出高兴的样子”	Not similar at all				Highly similar

17. be no respecter of persons

英语用 be no respecter of persons 这个成语表示“pay no attention to status or

wealth”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“to treat all people in the same way”。中文成语“一视同仁”中所用的概念为“对人同样看待，不分厚薄”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	be no respecter of persons	to treat all people in the same way	1	2	3	4	5
			Not similar at all		Highly similar		
Chinese idioms	一视同仁	对人同样看待，不分厚薄					

18. run into the sand

英语用 run into the sand 这个成语表示“come to nothing”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“fall into the sand”。中文成语“折戟沉沙”中所用的概念为“断戟沉没在泥沙里，成了废铁，形容失败十分惨重”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	run into the sand	“fall into the sand”	1	2	3	4	5
			Not similar at all		Highly similar		
Chinese idioms	折戟沉沙	“断戟沉没在泥沙里，成了废铁”					

19. clutch at straws

英语用 clutch at straws 这个成语表示“Try any methods even though they are not likely to succeed”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“clutch at or hold on to straws”。中文成语“救命稻草”中所用的概念为“抓住救命的稻草”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	clutch at straws	“clutch at or hold on to straws”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	救命稻草	“抓住救命的稻草”	Not similar at all				Highly similar

20. go up in flames

英语用这个成语表示“be completely destroyed”。这个成语在表达这个意思时

使用了概念 “to be destroyed by fire”。中文成语 “付之一炬” 中所用的概念为 “用一把火烧掉”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

使用的概念			相似程度				
English Idioms	go up in flames	“to be destroyed by fire”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	付之一炬	“用一把火烧掉”	Not similar at all			Highly similar	

21. clear the air

英语用这个成语表示 “get rid of doubts or hard feelings”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念 “make the air clear”。中文成语 “云开雾释” 中所用的概念为 “像云一样消失”、“像雾一样散开”。

使用的概念			相似程度				
English Idioms	go up in flames	“make the air clear”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	云开雾释	“像云一样消失”、“像雾一样散开”	Not similar at all			Highly similar	

22. come down in the world

英语用这个成语表示 “lose one's social position or financial status”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念 “lose the status or position one had in the past”。中文成语 “家道中落” 中所用的概念为 “家业衰败，境况没有从前富裕或有地位”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

使用的概念			相似程度				
English Idioms	come down in the world	“lose the status or position one had in the past”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	家道中落	“家业衰败，境况没有从前富裕或有地位”	Not similar at all			Highly similar	

23. give it a whirl

英语用 give it a whirl 这个成语表示 “give it a try”。这个成语在表达这个意思

时使用了“try to see how the plane work by turning its propeller”。中文成语“跃跃欲试”中所用的概念为“很积极，急切想要试一试”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

			使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	give it a whirl		“try to see how the plane work by turning its propeller”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	跃跃欲试		“很积极、急切想要试一试”	Not similar at all				Highly similar

24. beat a retreat

英语用 beat a retreat 这个成语表示“retreat or withdraw quickly”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“sounding drums to recall troops behind the lines”。中文成语“鸣金收兵”用概念“用敲锣等方式发出信号，撤兵回营”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

			使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	beat a retreat		“sounding drums to recall troops behind the lines”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	鸣金收兵		“用敲锣等方式发出信号，撤兵回营”	Not similar at all				Highly similar

25. bite the bullet

英语用 bite the bullet 这个成语表示“behave bravely when facing pain or a difficult situation”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“biting a bullet while having an operation to live with the pain”。中文成语“咬牙坚持”中所用的概念为“咬着牙齿坚持”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

			使用的概念	相似程度				
English Idioms	bite the bullet		“biting a bullet while having an operation to live with the pain”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	咬牙坚持		“咬着牙齿坚持”	Not similar at all				Highly similar

26. turn the heat up on

英语用 turn the heat up on 这个成语表示 “use force to persuade sb. to do sth.”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“to increase heat on sb.”。中文成语“以力服人”中所用的概念为“以力量使人服从”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

使用的概念			相似程度				
English Idioms	turn the heat up on sb. ”	“to increase heat on sb. ”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	以力服人	“以力量使人服从”	Not similar at all			Highly similar	

27. bring something home to

英语用 bring something home to 这个成语表示 “cause someone to realize something”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念 “to make somebody go home with something”。中文成语“深入人心”中所用的概念为“进入到某人心里”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

使用的概念			相似程度				
English Idioms	bring something home to	“to make somebody go home with something”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	深入人心	“进入到某人心里”	Not similar at all			Highly similar	

28. be a wet blanket

英语用 be a wet blanket 这个成语表示 “extinguishing a lively or optimistic mood with one’s gloominess or negativity”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念 “use a wet blanket to smother the fire”。中文成语“大煞风景”中所用的概念为“破坏美好的景致”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

使用的概念			相似程度				
English Idioms	be a wet blanket	“use a wet blanket to smother the fire”	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese idioms	大煞风景	“破坏美好的景致”	Not similar at all			Highly similar	

29. carry a torch for

英语用 carry a torch for 这个成语表示 “love someone secretly”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“carry a torch for someone”。中文成语“落花有意”中所用的概念为“掉落的花有意追随流水”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

			使用的概念	相似程度				
English	carry	a	“carry a torch	1	2	3	4	5
Idioms	torch for		for someone”					
Chinese	落花有意		“掉落的花	Not				Highly
idioms			有意追随流水”	similar				similar
				at all				

30. play into someone's hands

英语用 play into someone's hands 这个成语表示 “act in such a way so unintentionally as to give sb. an advantage”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念 “play sth. unintentionally into the hands of another one”。中文成语“正中下怀”中所用的概念为“正好符合自己的心愿”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

			使用的概念	相似程度				
English	play	into	“play sth.	1	2	3	4	5
Idioms	someone's		unintentionally into the					
	hands		hands of another one”	Not				Highly
				similar				similar
Chinese	正中下怀		“正好符合	at all				
idioms			自己的心愿”					

31. feather one's nest

英语用 feather one's nest 这个成语表示 “make money illegally and at the cost of others' interest”。这个成语在表达这个意思时使用了概念“make one's nest more beautiful with gathered feather”。中文成语“中饱私囊”中所用的概念为“将自己的腰包装得满满的”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English	feather	“make one’s own nest	1	2	3	4	5
Idioms	one's nest	more beautiful with gathered feather”	Not				Highly
Chinese	中饱私囊		similar				similar
idioms		“将自己的腰包装得满满的”	at all				

32. scratch someone’s back

英语用 scratch some favor³²表示 “to do a favor for sb. in return for a favor”。这个成语在表达这个意思时，使用了概念“to make the punishment less harsh to bear by agreeing to scratch lightly the back of the offender”。中文成语“投桃报李”中所用的概念为“你给了我桃子，我回报给你李子”。请问这两个成语所用的概念在多大程度上相似？

		使用的概念	相似程度				
English	scratch	“to make the	1	2	3	4	5
Idioms	someone's back	punishment less harsh to bear by agreeing to scratch lightly the back of the offender”	Not				Highly
			similar				similar
			at all				
Chinese	投桃报李	“你给了我桃子，我回报给你李子”					
idioms							

Appendix 7. Materials of Experiment 4

Idiom type	Idioms
1	come off second best
1	praise to the skies
1	ring in the new year
1	take root
1	search high and low
1	breathe fire
1	rule with an iron fist
1	fan the flames
2	add insult to injury
2	bark up the wrong tree
2	set the scene
2	pay lip service
2	keep a tight rein on
2	fall from grace
2	cast doubts on
2	put a brave face on
3	be no respecter of persons
3	run into the sand
3	clutch at straws
3	go up in flames
3	clear the air
3	come down in the world
3	give it a whirl
3	beat a retreat
4	bite the bullet
4	turn the heat up on
4	bring something home to
4	be a wet blanket
4	carry a torch for
4	play into someone's hands
4	feather one's nest
4	scratch someone's back

Note: 1, 2, 3 and 4 stand for decomposable congruent idioms, decomposable incongruent idioms, nondecomposable congruent idioms and nondecomposable incongruent idioms respectively.

Appendix 8. Materials of Experiment 5

List A

Instructions: You are going to read a series of sentences which are made up of 4 blocks which appear one after another. Each sentence includes a phrase which is both underlined and presented in bold face. They are followed by two choices. Please read the blocks one by one and press U to bring up the next block. If you see a blank screen after pressing U, please press U again. After seeing all the choices, decide as quickly as possible which of the two choices is closer to the meaning of the phrase in the sentence you read. If you think F is a better choice, press F. If you think J is a better choice, press J. If you understand what you are to do, please press Q to get started.

1. The child was amazed to see the coin turn around for several minutes after his young brother **gave it a whirl** in a careful way.
F. turned J. tuned
2. Little James can't understand the phrase "**cast doubt on**" because he thinks you can't toss invisible things.
F. throw J. grow
3. The psychologist doesn't like to **be a wet blanket** but it's his job to remind the girl of the lying nature of her boyfriend.
F. dismissing J. disgusting
4. Please stop **striking the root** of the tree as such an action will destroy it forever.
F. bearing J. beating
5. Though external forces **turned the heat up on** the leader of the country, he never gave in. Instead, he stuck to the dream of liberating the country.
F. threatened J. thrived
6. In some families, the dried-up skin of some fruits is used to **clear the air** and bring fragrance.
F. pollute J. purify
7. The shy boy had to stand up and sing a song for others when the ball was **passed into his hands** according to the rule of the game.
F. banded J. handed
8. The concept of Health Comes First is **taking root** in the mind of many people in that country.
F. fixed J. failed
9. The child is being scolded by his father as he again rushes out and forgets to **keep a tight lid on** the juice bottle after he has poured out his share.

- F. scrape J. screw
10. Aging and death **are no respecter of persons.** Everyone will become old and die in the end.
- F. enough J. equal
11. The priest said to the sad people, “Let’s be joyful and **give our praise to the Lord!**”
- F. extol J. steal
12. One of our favorite ways to **ring in the new year** is to watch the Spring Gala hosted by CCTV.
- F. welcome J. become
13. She’s late for the important show. **Adding insult to injury**, she forgot some important lines during her performance.
- F. Worsening J. Lessening
14. The man walking in the middle of the crowd and **carrying a torch for** the whole team is a volunteer who has been with them for 2 months.
- F. hugging J. holding
15. The woman tried to be **putting on a brave face** when she saw a snake moving towards her sleeping baby.
- F. advantageous J. courageous
16. Though dissatisfied with the prices offered, the buyers who need a place to live in have to **bite the bullet** and make a purchase.
- F. accept J. reject
17. Noticing the boredom of the film director with previous candidates, the young actress **clutched at straws** and acted with maturity unfit for her age.
- F. tried J. dried
18. Though his father **kept a tight rein on** the horse he was sitting on, he was still very much afraid that it might go wild and he would fall down.
- F. fattened J. tightened
19. During the break, I was checking my palm and trying to ease the pain when a pingpong ball was **played into my hands.**
- F. drowned J. dropped
20. The Reading-For-All program was **praised to the skies** by many people in that country.
- F. appreciated J. stimulated
21. The little boy felt a sharp **fall from favor** when his younger brother was born.
- F. dismissal J. dislike
22. Granny **scratched my back.** It’s so itching and made me laugh for quite a while.
- F. rushed J. rubbed

23. The lamp with the power of 1,000 watt was so powerful that it **cast light on** and made the whole tent bright.
F. brightened J. darkened
24. The man often thinks he's wronged and is **putting on a sour face** as if he's the most unfortunate man.
F. dismissed J. dissatisfied
25. The man and his family have been **ruling with an iron fist** over the country for years and it's hard for the country to be changed.
F. dominating J. fascinating
26. Her hands seemed so odd when she tried to **clutch at things** and lay hold on them. Actually, it was a leftover from infant polio.
F. hold J. scold
27. Weather **is no respecter of wealth**. Poor and rich people experience the same seasons.
F. treats equally J. cheats equally
28. Though she's 35, she wants to marry a man she really loves. She doesn't want to **settle for second best** and marry someone she doesn't love.
F. comprehend J. compromise
29. After drinking so much on New Year's Eve, he really didn't want to get up **early in the new year**.
F. tiding J. timing
30. Our personal information has been leaked because a lot of websites just **pay lip service to** privacy and leak it for profit or due to lack of protection.
F. support J. report
31. After lighting the fire with some dried branches, the young man tried to **fan the flames** with some leaves to make the fire burn brightly.
F. stew J. stir
32. After getting married, she neglected appearance and her **fall from grace** surprised her husband.
F. unattractiveness J. carelessness
33. Jack couldn't understand why his father owned and **carried a gun for** self-protection where he wasn't legally allowed to have a gun.
F. hoped J. held
34. The brave young man kept fighting the enemy though his fellowman was **beating a retreat** for the soldiers to move back from the frontier.
F. dreaming J. drumming
35. He didn't save his work on his desktop computer. His efforts for a whole night **ran into the sand** when the lab was cut off for power.

- F. ruined J. ruled
36. Tired as she was, the mother bird **left the nest** to look for food for the newly-born birds because she didn't want them to die.
- F. departed J. degraded
37. She **scratched her chin** time and again. It was so uncomfortable.
- F. mopped J. rubbed
38. Compared with male birds, female ones are more likely to **feather the nest** and decorate it with stuff they find in the forest.
- F. simplify J. beautify
39. I didn't find the book as I just looked left and right but didn't **search high and low** about the shelf.
- F. look J. hook
40. The young boy cried because he was completely frightened by the toy dragon that could **breathe fire** from time to time.
- F. exhale J. exhaust
41. To tell you the truth, you will be **barking up the wrong tree** if you intend to find enough nutrition in fried chicken.
- F. mistaken J. undertaken
42. The young man couldn't accept the fact that in the speech contest he **came off second best** to a man he thought low in hope.
- F. cost J. lost
43. If he hadn't reacted quickly and turned the car soon enough, the whole family would have **fallen into the sand** which would soon bury them.
- F. cropped J. dropped
44. When the astronauts finished space travel and **came down in the world** from the space, they received a warm welcome from the excited audience.
- F. landed J. handed
45. Most of the vegetables in the southern part of the state **went up in price** due to the fact that the rainy season has been too long in this year.
- F. expensive J. intensive
46. His knowledge of the market and solid training helped to **set the scene** for his success in business.
- F. contribute J. contract
47. The reports **bring home to** people the importance of environmental protection.
- F. endear J. enlighten
48. His promising career in acting almost **went up in flames** when he was badly injured in an accident, but he managed to recover and became even more famous.
- F. defined J. destroyed

List B

Instructions: You are going to read a series of sentences which are made up of 4 blocks which appear one after another. Each sentence includes a phrase which is both underlined and presented in bold face. They are followed by two choices. Please read the blocks one by one and press U to bring up the next block. If you see a blank screen after pressing U, please press U again. After seeing all the choices, decide as quickly as possible which of the two choices is closer to the meaning of the phrase in the sentence you read. If you think F is a better choice, press F. If you think J is a better choice, press J. If you understand what you are to do, please press Q to get started.

1. With a powerful machine, they **cleared the land** which was filled with rubbish.
F. cleaned J. appealed
2. The protesters started to attack the police after the unjust report **fanned the flames** and their anger was completely roused.
F. intensified J. beautified
3. Don't stew the beef with low energy all the time. **Turn the heat up to** medium and keep boiling it for 10 minutes until the soup almost dries up.
F. involve J. increase
4. Jiang Gan stole the fake letter, **playing into the hands** of Zhou Yu who wanted to pave the way for reunification.
F. unintentionally J. undoubtedly
5. The villager **clutched at straws** unknown to her and chewed with great taste as if they were the most delicious things in the world for him.
F. grasped J. groped
6. According to the report by the media, the **fall from grace** of the famous actress resulted from her sex scandal with a married man.
F. dissatisfaction J. **disreputation**
7. The baby has been **biting the candy** for nearly 5 minutes. She's so fond of the taste that she didn't want it to go away quickly.
F. teasing J. tasting
8. Don't just **pay lip service to** and extol what your parents have done for you. Do something useful to make their life better and more comfortable.
F. praise J. pray
9. Her offering of **praise to the skies** is beyond the understanding of her friends.
F. cooperation J. admiration
10. She couldn't bear smoking. When smokers left the conference room, she tried to **fan the smoke** out of the window after they left.

F. dislike

J. dispel

11. There's some misunderstanding between you two. This talk seems a good chance to **clear the air**. Make full use of it.

F. clarify

J. clash

12. After the child went missing, the police started to **search high and low** until they found him.

F. investigate

J. involve

13. No words could describe how heartbroken she was when she saw many of the world-famous masterpieces in the museum **go up in flames** and turn to ashes.

F. burn

J. bake

14. It seemed that the dog had barked the wrong palm as it was tricked by the lifelike picture of his owner hung on it.

F. showered

J. shouted

15. The boy did much housework after coming back home. For example, he **set the table** before meals and walked dogs.

F. changed

J. arranged

16. The breathing machine **breathed life** into the old man who was terribly ill and lost consciousness just now.

F. revived

J. returned

17. John works on the coconut for 10 minutes but in vain. Jack cracks it in one minute. It seems as if he **fixes with an iron fist** as little Bill sees it.

F. solves

J. seizes

18. The young child is fond of playing musical instruments. He has much fun **beating** **a drum**. He can do it for hours without feeling tired.

F. sticking

J. knocking

19. The man suffering from depression for years ended his own life by **biting the**
bullet when none of his family members was with him.

F. switching

J. swallowing

20. The young man was surprised and confused when the alarm clock **rang in the new year** loudly.

F. sounded

J. shaped

21. Friends are to help each other. You **scratch my back**. I'll scratch yours.

F. suppose

J. support

22. She thought the temperature wasn't high enough to make the food ready in five minutes. She **was turning the heat up on** the microwave when it exploded.

F. admired

J. adjusted

23. Christians are to **be no respecter of persons**. Why do they honor people instead of Jesus Christ?

- F. non-worshipping J. non-nourishing
24. Her love for making handicrafts started when she **gave it a shot** in primary school.
From then on, she has been such a big fan of it.
F. arrived J. attempted
25. She was shocked to find that for nearly two years, she had been **paying for service** that she didn't use at all due to a bug in her mobile phone.
F. charged J. changed
26. The shy young man has been **carrying a torch for** his classmate for nearly three years, but he dares not make a confession to her in person.
F. loving J. luring
27. One day, the kind and quiet old man living on the 8th floor **came down in the morning** and found himself surrounded by a large group of reporters.
F. descended J. deceived
28. What you should do is not to **breathe fire** or be mad at him but to calm down and think about how to fix the terrible situation.
F. explore J. explode
29. The mayor of the city was arrested as he **feathered his nest** by asking for monetary rewards from contractors of public projects.
F. promised J. profited
30. Mary was hesitant whether she should take part in the match, but her father encouraged her to **give it a whirl** and gain some experience.
F. try J. tie
31. The young couple was advised to **keep a tight rein on** their expenses as they had few savings and starting a new family involved a lot of spending.
F. conceal J. control
32. From its beginning in remote mountains, the stream passes through various landscapes until it reaches the desert and **runs into the sand**.
F. disappears J. dislikes
33. Unlike women of her age, she **rules with an iron fist** over her figure. She has kept her weight to lower than 50 kilos for 20 years.
F. condemns J. controls
34. The politician was just **putting a brave face on** security in that area. Conflicts emerged every day.
F. protecting J. pretending
35. Compared to their noble life in the past, the family has **come down in the world**.
But high-standard education is maintained for the children.
F. impoverished J. immigrated
36. She was tortured by the kidnappers. Her husband **added insult to injury** by saying that she was to blame for the whole thing.

- F. increased J. improved
37. Lots of tests have **cast doubt on** the possibility of diagnosing cancer with a single drop of blood.
- F. respected J. suspected
38. What the old man has **is a wet blanket**. It hasn't dried up completely yet. Please try to find something warm for him.
- F. coding J. covering
39. The old man **looked high and low** to see whether it's the best time to plant new crops.
- F. checked J. cleared
40. She looked at her own best when she was dressed in a casual style. She **came off second best** when she wore a business suit.
- F. inferior J. inferring
41. After working for days, they finally **set the scene** for the comedy that would be staged there the next evening.
- F. prepared J. profited
42. The kindhearted Jack **brought out some food** to those people who were living on the streets.
- F. landed J. aided
43. It's against his nature to **beat a retreat** in the face of great difficulties. He will try his best to overcome them and move forward.
- F. withhold J. withdraw
44. The considerate husband asked his wife, "Shall I **bring home to** the kids some food?"
- F. fetch J. favor
45. She ruined her favorite earring in a hurry. Her mother **added insult to damage** by lecturing her of doing it on purpose.
- F. magnified J. managed
46. They didn't find the lost child on the big tree after searching about it for hours. Has the dog **barked up the wrong tree**?
- F. sounded J. pounded
47. The man usually grows new plants by **taking roots** cut from some old ones.
- F. transporting J. transplanting
48. The past winter **was a wet winter**. The earth in many areas gave way suddenly. The bodies of the climbers have never been found.
- F. humorous J. humid