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## Research Paper

### Bridging Cultures: Exploring the Role of Persian Proverbs and German Idioms in Language Acquisition and Intercultural Communication

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#### Abstract

This research discusses the pedagogical relevance of German idioms and Persian proverbs in language acquisition and intercultural communication. Idioms and proverbs are extremely useful in language competence and culture awareness development, but they are also very challenging for learners due to their non-literal nature and cultural boundness. This study uses a qualitative design to investigate how the use of idiomatic language in real communicative contexts improves comprehension, memorability, and intercultural competence in German language learners. Data were gathered based on semi-structured interviews with experienced teachers and advanced learners, and content analysis of idiomatic language selected from German and Persian texts. The findings show that the integration of cognitive and sociolinguistic approaches optimizes learners' ability to interpret idiomatic meaning and use them appropriately. Besides, computer-mediated resources and multimedia technology support memorization of idioms and their application in context. The instructional model in the research, by incorporating metaphorical comprehension with cultural contextualization, addresses knowledge gaps in traditional idiom instruction and emphasizes the necessity for contextualized learning environments. By enhancing both cultural sensitivity and language proficiency, this research has valuable pedagogical implications for language teachers and curriculum planners. Follow-up research should investigate the application of technology-assisted idiom learning in various linguistic and cultural contexts to validate the usefulness of the model suggested.

**Keywords:** Cultural competence, Idioms, Intercultural communication, German language learning, Language teaching, Proverbs



## Introduction

Language learning is a complex activity that entails more than the acquisition of vocabulary and grammatical rules. It entails a deep comprehension of cultural sensitivities, idiomatic phrases, and proverbs that reflect the shared manner of thinking of native speakers (Hinkel, 2023; Kovecses, 2022). In the case of learning the German language, idioms and proverbs are essential in ensuring fluency and cultural competence. These metaphorical expressions have deep roots in social norms, cultural tradition, and customary practices and hence are central to spontaneous and natural communication (Byram, 2021; Gibbs, 2022). Idiomatic sayings and proverbs are extremely difficult for language learners, especially when such sayings are not literally translatable into equivalent terms in their native languages. The translation of idiomatic expressions tends to bring about shifts in meaning or cultural connotations, which can hamper comprehension and correct usage (Alharbi, 2023; Liu & Hall, 2023). Increasing cultural interconnectedness in a globalized world highlights the significance of idiomatic expressions in language teaching. By knowing and using idiomatic expressions correctly, learners of a language not only improve their linguistic competence but also develop necessary intercultural competence (Clarke & Simons, 2021; Sercu, 2023). The present study aims to investigate the pedagogical value of idioms and proverbs in the teaching of the German language and investigate their role in closing cultural gaps.

Idiomatic expressions are the source of materials for authentic language use, which depict the distinctive cultural and historical backgrounds of a given society. In the German language, idiomatic phrases and proverbs frequently express metaphorical meanings that are strongly embedded in the historical context of the country, national folklore, and cultural beliefs (Ellis, 2024; Schmidt & Frost, 2023). For example, the idiom "Aller Anfang ist schwer" (Every beginning is hard) demonstrates a cultural focus on tenacity and grit, values which are naturally esteemed in German culture (Gibbs, 2022). These idiomatic phrases give learners insightful understanding of the cultural mentality and enable them to successfully navigate social interactions. Nevertheless, complexities surrounding idiomatic phrases present notable challenges to non-native speakers.

Literature shows that learners tend to struggle with comprehending metaphorical meanings embedded in idioms, particularly if such a phrase is linked to a specific cultural context (Alharbi, 2023; Swan, 2023). For example, the German expression "Das ist nicht mein Bier" (That's not my beer) indicates a feeling of indifference or detachment; however, its literal interpretation may mislead non-familiar learners since it carries a metaphorical meaning that may not be clearly understood (Liu & Hall, 2023). The lack of immediate equivalents in the learners' native languages amplifies this challenge since idiomatic phrases often require contextual knowledge rather than a literal translation (Kovecses, 2022). In educational settings, the teaching of idioms adds another layer of complexity. The language instructor has to balance the difficulty of communicating the literal along with the figurative sense of idiomatically framed phrases, while remaining faithful to the originals (Chen & Shu, 2022). Conventional pedagogical approaches, based frequently on memorization and word-for-word translation, have proven ineffective in fostering insightful comprehension and extended retention (Godwin-Jones, 2023). Thus, there is an increased need for new approaches to education that incorporate cultural consciousness with the teaching of languages.

## Literature Review

### Linguistic Competence and Cultural Awareness

The language learning and idiomatic literature emphasizes the intricate relationship between linguistic knowledge and cultural understanding. Idioms, as deeply rooted in the social routines

and history of groups, pose especially challenging issues for language learners because the idiomatic expressions rarely have direct counterparts in the home languages of learners (Hinkel, 2023; Kovecses, 2022). As Gibbs (2022) proposes, idioms have metaphorical meanings that differ from culture to culture and are hence crucial for communicative competence and fluency. The German idiom "Die Kirche im Dorf lassen" (Leave the church in the village), for instance, is a matter of caution and moderation, but without adequate context, learners may not notice the cultural applicability (Schmidt & Frost, 2023).

### **Cognitive Approaches to Idiom Processing**

Cognitive theories of idiom understanding emphasize the role of metaphorical thinking and associative learning in idiomatic expression understanding (Ellis, 2024). The students will generally make mental connections between the literal and figurative meanings of the idioms that assist in recollection and learning language (Schmidt & Frost, 2023). For example, the idiom "Den Nagel auf den Kopf treffen" (Hit the nail on the head) is interpreted by connecting the literal act of hammering to the figurative concept of precision (Gibbs, 2022). Such cognitive processes enable students to learn idiomatic phrases and use them in new contexts. Sociolinguistic Perspectives The sociolinguistic framework analyzes the ways in which idioms convey social norms and values, situating them at the center of communicative competence (Byram, 2021). Idioms are typically signals of group identity and shared cultural knowledge, thereby being vital to effective intercultural communication (Sercu, 2023). The proverb "Wer rastet, der rostet" (Who rests grows rusty) is, for instance, an example of the German culture's emphasis on productivity and self-improvement (Clarke & Simons, 2021). Familiarity with such expressions allows students to communicate more naturally with native speakers and participate in culturally particular communication. Difficulty in Idiom Acquisition

Empirical research on idiom acquisition has mostly focused on the difficulties faced by learners of language when they are exposed to new idiomatic expressions. Studies have proven that learners find it challenging to interpret metaphorical content conveyed in idioms, especially where the idioms are ethnically embedded (Alharbi, 2023; Liu & Hall, 2023). To address the challenges, comparative analysis techniques have been suggested by some researchers as a means of assisting learners to learn idioms by highlighting similarities and differences between mother tongue and target language expressions (Swan, 2023). For example, contrasting the German idiom "Jemandem ein X für ein U vormachen" (To deceive someone) and the English idiom "Pull the wool over someone's eyes" can help learners grasp the underlying metaphorical frameworks (Godwin-Jones, 2023).

### **Multimedia Resources and Digital Tools**

Multimedia resources and digital tools have exhibited positive results in idiom memorization and interpretation (Godwin-Jones, 2023). Interactive websites, such as virtual reality simulations and language learning applications, allow students to encounter idiomatic expressions in real communicative situations (Schmitt & Carter, 2024). For instance, gamified learning environments can provide students with opportunities to practice exercises of idioms in context to support both linguistic and cultural understanding (Clarke & Simons, 2021). Furthermore, multimedia resources such as videos and podcasts expose the learners to idiomaticity since they are used in a real context of use, triggering intensive engagement and memorization (Chen & Shu, 2022).

### **Theoretical Background**

This study draws theory from cognitive approaches to learning and applying idioms. Cognitive linguistics presumes that idiomatic expressions are processed through conceptual metaphors and



schemas, which learners construct from their previous knowledge and experience (Ellis, 2024). For example, the idiom "Einen Teufel tun" (Do something devilish) can be processed by connecting the concept of mischief to the picture of a devilish devil (Schmidt & Frost, 2023). These cognitive frameworks enable students to understand the figurative meaning of idioms and apply them appropriately in context.

Idioms are also viewed as cultural symbols conveying a community's social conventions, values, and beliefs from a sociolinguistic perspective (Byram, 2021). Idioms serve as markers of group identity and shared cultural knowledge and hence become vital for successful intercultural communication (Sercu, 2023). For instance, the idiom "Was Hänschen nicht lernt, lernt Hans nimmermehr" (What little Johnny doesn't learn, John will never learn) conveys the German cultural emphasis on early learning and lifelong education (Clarke & Simons, 2021). The understanding of such idioms allows students to communicate more authentically with native speakers and engage in culturally normal conversation.

### **Empirical Background**

**Challenges in Idiom Acquisition** Empirical research on idiom learning has evidenced the difficulties faced by learners when encountering new idiomatic expressions. Studies have confirmed that learners find decoding metaphorical meaning embedded in idioms challenging, especially when the idioms carry cultural shades (Alharbi, 2023; Liu & Hall, 2023). In a bid to mitigate such difficulties, comparative analysis techniques have been suggested by some scholars, which enable learners to understand idioms through the identification of similarities and differences between target and native language expressions (Swan, 2023). **Pedagogical Strategies**

The use of idioms in pedagogical practice has also been studied extensively. Pedagogical methods that involve contextual learning and cultural immersion have more beneficial impacts, as they allow learners to be exposed to idiomatic language in authentic communicative situations (Schmitt & Carter, 2024). Moreover, the application of literature and real-life examples can have a beneficial impact on learners' contextual and appropriate use of idioms (Clarke & Simons, 2021).

### **Gap in the Literature**

Despite advancements in idiom pedagogy methods, there is still a gap in integrative approaches that effectively integrate cultural knowledge and linguistic pedagogy. The majority of studies have focused on metaphorical meaning or literal translation of idioms, without adequately addressing the sociocultural factors influencing idiom understanding and usage (Chen & Shu, 2022; Sercu, 2023). This study aimed to close this gap by proposing an integrated approach that synthesizes cognitive and sociolinguistic perspectives towards enhancing both linguistic and intercultural competence. This study also aimed to contribute to German language teaching by examining the pedagogical potential of idioms and proverbs.

Finally, through the integration of cognitive and sociolinguistic perspectives, the study aimed to provide an integrated approach to the teaching of idiomatic expressions that fosters both linguistic competence and intercultural competence, to support instructors with practical strategies in incorporating idioms into their own instruction so that students' ability for natural and spontaneous use of German improves.

### **The Problem**

Pedagogy and acquisition of idiomatic expressions in the German language continue to be a recurring challenge for both teachers and learners, particularly when idioms are placed within cultural and historical contexts. Even though current studies have addressed metaphorical



processing and cross-cultural comparisons (Zhu & Peng, 2021; Hinkel, 2023), there remains a broad gap in pedagogical practices that include both linguistic and cultural aspects effectively. Besides, despite growing interest in teaching idioms, few have investigated how blending cognitive and sociolinguistic approaches can enhance learners' communicative competence (Sercu, 2023). Thus, this research seeks to address the problem of ineffective idiom teaching by designing a new idiom teaching methodology that enhances both linguistic competence and intercultural competence.

### Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the current research is to develop and pilot an innovative pedagogical approach based on German proverbs and idioms to enhance language acquisition and intercultural communication. The particular objectives are as follows:

- To investigate the role of idiomatic expressions in German language acquisition and their impact on learners' communicative competence.
- To clarify the challenges of teaching and learning German idioms, particularly those related to cultural differences.
- To develop an in-depth framework synthesizing cognitive and sociolinguistic approaches to the successful teaching of idioms.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed methodology through qualitative analysis and thematic evaluation of learner results.
- To recommend pedagogical strategies for integrating idioms and proverbs into language instruction to facilitate intercultural competence.

### Novelty of the Study

This study introduces a new approach to teaching German proverbs and idioms through combining cognitive and sociolinguistic methods for addressing linguistic and cultural problems.

Unlike traditional practices involving memorization or word-by-word translation, the study emphasizes contextual knowledge and intercultural communication. By inserting idioms into authentic communicative contexts, learners attain both linguistic accuracy and cultural sensitivity. In addition, the research applies digital resources and comparative analysis to facilitate greater comprehension and long-term retention of idiomatic expressions (Godwin-Jones, 2023; Swan, 2023). This integrated methodology is a significant departure from the conventional approach and addresses gaps in idiom pedagogy.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

To achieve the purposes of the current study, the following research questions and hypotheses were addressed:

**RQ1.** What are the most significant challenges faced by learners when acquiring idiomatic expressions in German?

**RQ2.** How does the proposed teaching methodology impact learners' ability to comprehend and use idioms accurately and contextually?

**RQ3.** To what extent does the integration of idiomatic expressions enhance intercultural competence in German language learners?

**H01:** There is no significant difference in learners' comprehension of idioms before and after implementing the proposed teaching methodology.

**H02:** The integration of idiomatic expressions does not significantly improve intercultural competence among German language learners.

**H03:** The use of digital tools and contextual learning does not significantly enhance the retention and application of idioms.



### Significance of the Study

This study is of important relevance to both language pedagogy and intercultural communication, addressing key lacunae in the acquisition and instruction of idiomatic expressions. Idioms are not quirks of language; they are essential components of natural and spontaneous speech that express cultural values, historical contexts, and social norms (Hinkel, 2023; Kovecses, 2022). By highlighting the problems of idiom learning and teaching, this study provides pedagogical recommendations for teachers to foster students' communicative ability. Situating idioms in cultural contexts enables learners to grasp their figurative meanings and cultivates a refined sensitivity to native-like expression, bridging the gap between linguistic knowledge and cultural fluency (Schmitt & Carter, 2024; Chen & Shu, 2022).

The present study has important implications for language pedagogy in terms of proposing new approaches in teaching idiomatic language. Traditional approaches are often inclined towards memorization or literal translation, which overlook the cultural identity and contextual appropriateness of idioms (Godwin-Jones, 2023; Alharbi, 2023). Conversely, this study advocates for a unifying position based on cognitive and sociolinguistic theory that enables learners to decipher metaphorical meaning in addition to comprehending the cultural nuances of idioms (Ellis, 2024; Sercu, 2023). For instance, the meaning of the German idiom "Das ist Schnee von gestern" (That is snow from yesterday) relies on its equivalence with the English idiom "That's water under the bridge," as well as on its cultural connotations of dismissal and irrelevance (Swan, 2023). Such insights offer teachers tools to more effectively teach idioms, enabling learners to apply them appropriately in different communicative contexts. Development in Digital-Assisted Language Learning Aside from informing traditional pedagogical practice, this study contributes to the growing body of research in computer-assisted language learning (Godwin-Jones, 2023).

The use of technology tools such as interactive programs, virtual reality simulations, and multimedia resources has been demonstrated to have excellent potential in enabling idiom acquisition (Schmitt & Carter, 2024). For example, gamified learning platforms can provide learners with the opportunity to practice idioms in context, reinforcing their learning through practice and interaction (Clarke & Simons, 2021). Similarly, video-based content allows learners to see idiomatic expressions being utilized in real contexts, supporting better understanding and memory (Chen & Shu, 2022). Through the exploration of technology's role in idiom learning, this study emphasizes the potential of utilizing digital technologies for developing interactive and culturally rich learning environments.

The findings of this research are of importance to curriculum designers, language educators, and learners who aim for higher levels of language proficiency and intercultural literacy. For curriculum designers, the study highlights the importance of incorporating idiomatic language into language curricula in a systematic manner, so that students encounter such language in authentic cultural and communicative contexts (Byram, 2021; Liu & Hall, 2023). For language instructors, the study provides pedagogical recommendations for putting the use of idioms into practice in lesson planning, such as using literature, proverbs, and real-world scenarios to illustrate their use (Clarke & Simons, 2021). For learners, the study emphasizes the importance of acquiring intercultural competence alongside linguistic capacity, as idiomatic language is a bridge between cultures and languages (Sercu, 2023). Connecting Linguistic Knowledge and Cultural Fluency

One of the strongest points of this study is its focus on bridging linguistic knowledge and cultural fluency. Idioms are rooted in the collective consciousness of native speakers, embodying common beliefs, values, and experiences (Kovecses, 2022; Gibbs, 2022). By presenting idioms in their cultural contexts, instructors can empower learners to develop a deeper understanding of



and appreciation of the target culture and its unique worldview. For example, the German idiom "Wer den Pfennig nicht ehrt, ist des Talers nicht wert" (Who does not honor the penny is not worthy of the dollar) illustrates the cultural emphasis on frugality and fiscal responsibility, giving learners understanding of German social values (Schmidt & Frost, 2023). This cultural element is necessary in order to gain actual communication and understanding in intercultural communication. Improving Communicative Competence Last but not least, this study seeks to enhance learners' communicative competence by enabling them to use idioms appropriately and appropriately in various contexts. Communicative competence encompasses not only grammatical accuracy and lexical range but also the ability to handle cultural nuances and pragmatic conventions (Hinkel, 2023; Byram, 2021). By means of an integrated pedagogy that brings together cognitive, sociolinguistic, and technological orientations, teachers can play a significant role in developing the ability of students to generate natural and fluent communication. This helps the students to engage more freely and authentically in intercultural communication in academic, professional, and social life (Liu & Hall, 2023; Swan, 2023).

## Methodology

### Research Design

This research takes on a qualitative research design, exploring the contribution of idiomatic expressions to German language learning and intercultural communication. The qualitative design permits rich analysis of idiom understanding and use, picking up on the intricate dynamics of linguistic ability and cultural knowledge (Ellis, 2024; Schmidt & Frost, 2023). The study employs content analysis to investigate proverbs and idioms in German and Persian languages with regard to their cultural and metaphorical meaning. Moreover, semi-structured interviews of language teachers and skilled learners are conducted to enlighten us about pragmatic issues and practices of idiom learning.

The rationale for using a qualitative approach is that it can explore subtle issues around idiomatic expressions and their uses in context. By gathering qualitative data from diverse sources, the study will find out how idioms facilitate language competence and cultural literacy and hence offer pedagogical implications for real-world applications.

### Corpus of the Study

The corpus used in this study has idiomatic expressions and proverbs of both German and Persian languages, selected with the purpose of representing a wide range of cultural and linguistic settings. The principal sources of data are dictionaries of idioms, literature, and natural communicative contexts of media, literature, and speech. The German idioms were borrowed from respected linguistic databases and modern sources, while the Persian proverbs were gathered from ancient sources and modern use in daily communication (Swan, 2023; Godwin-Jones, 2023).

To supplement textual evidence, interviews were conducted with highly advanced German language learners and veteran language teaching practitioners. They were requested to elaborate on idiom comprehension challenges, instruction of idiomatic phrases, and students' comments on metaphorical language usage. Supplementing the textual and interview evidence makes it possible for the entire extent of how idioms function in language learning and intercultural communication to be considered.

### Instruments

The study employed some tools for data collection to acquire extensive qualitative data, including content analysis, semi-structured interviews, and visualization tools. The analysis of cultural and

metaphorical nature in idiomatic expressions utilized textual data based on idiom dictionaries and writings (Hinkel, 2023; Clarke & Simons, 2021).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted among language instructors and higher-level German learners to accrue experiential data for idiom interpretation and pedagogy. Interview questions were devised to elicit detailed responses focusing on the areas of difficulty and success in studying idiomatic phrasing.

Computer programs utilized to analyze qualitative data were employed to categorize and describe the information gathered. The application of technology enhanced the analysis, capable of detecting patterns and grouping by themes (Godwin-Jones, 2023).

### **Model of the Study**

This study's theory combined cognitive and sociolinguistic idiom acquisition theory with an emphasis on both metaphorical and cultural contextualization. The theoretical framework is based on cognitive linguistics, and the conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2023) posits that idioms are constructed from metaphorical mappings between concrete experiences and abstract concepts. The model integrates sociolinguistic theories that view idioms as instantiations of social norms and cultural practices (Byram, 2021).

The double emphasis of the model enables learners to process idioms through both cognitive processes—such as associative memory and metaphor identification—and sociolinguistic awareness, such as cultural meaning and pragmatic use (Schmidt & Frost, 2023). Through the combination of these perspectives, the model enables a holistic understanding of idiomatic expressions so that learners can comprehend, memorize, and use idioms appropriately and effectively.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The process of data collection was implemented in two major stages: collection of textual data and collection of interview data. In the first stage, idiomatic expressions and proverbs were collected from multiple sources, ranging from idiom dictionaries to literature materials, online databases, and real communicative contexts such as media and literature. This was a stage used to collect both German and Persian idioms in order to perform comparative analysis (Swan, 2023; Godwin-Jones, 2023).

Semi-structured interviews with German language instructors and post-secondary learners of German were administered in the second stage. Participants were selected on a level basis from most competent to least and in accordance with the years they taught. In an attempt to tap information concerning idiom acquisition experiences, instructing idiom approaches, and problems encountered while acquiring them, every interview was around 30-45 minutes in duration. A voice recording was conducted for ensuring correctness. Transcripts were then coded and analyzed using thematic analysis in an attempt to unveil recurring patterns and themes (Clarke & Simons, 2021).

Member checking was employed to guarantee the validity of the data since participants were able to view the transcriptions and approve of the accuracy of their response. Data collected were coded and analyzed for the purpose of making informed conclusions regarding the use of idioms in language acquisition and intercultural communication.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis in this study was also conducted using thematic analysis to identify idiom use and understanding patterns and themes. Qualitative data that were collected during the interviews were transcribed word for word and coded using qualitative data analysis software (Godwin-



Jones, 2023). Coding commenced with the identification of salient themes and regular patterns, which were subsequently merged into broader thematic categories. The analysis was conducted using a systematic approach based on data reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation (Clarke & Simons, 2021). Content analysis was utilized in the study of metaphorical structure and cultural background embedded in idiomatic phrases. Comparative analysis was utilized to elicit differences and similarities between German and Persian idioms by considering both linguistic features and cultural implications (Swan, 2023).

Finally, triangulation was employed to enhance the validity of the results through cross-validation of information from various sources, e.g., interview transcripts and content analysis findings. Member checking was also conducted to verify the accuracy and credibility of the interpretations. By this method, the research was able to provide meaningful understanding of the challenges and strategies regarding idiom learning and intercultural competence in learning idiomatic language.

## Results

### Statistical Results of the First Research Question

The first research question examined the most significant challenges faced by learners when acquiring idiomatic expressions in German. The analysis of qualitative data from semi-structured interviews revealed several recurring themes related to comprehension difficulties, cultural mismatches, and the lack of contextual exposure.

A thematic analysis of the responses indicated that learners predominantly struggle with understanding idioms that lack direct equivalents in their native language. Moreover, participants reported confusion when attempting to interpret idioms with strong cultural associations that differ from their own backgrounds (Alharbi, 2023; Liu & Hall, 2023). Digital tools and multimedia resources were reported to be moderately effective in improving comprehension but often lacked cultural contextualization (Godwin-Jones, 2023).

**Table 1**

*Summary of the Identified Major Challenges*

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Lack of Direct Equivalents</b>	45	60%
<b>Cultural Mismatches</b>	30	40%
<b>Inadequate Contextual Exposure</b>	28	37%
<b>Limited Use of Digital Resources</b>	15	20%

The findings suggest that the most critical issue is the absence of direct equivalents between German idioms and learners' native languages, which often results in misinterpretation. Furthermore, cultural mismatches and insufficient contextual exposure also significantly impact learners' ability to comprehend idiomatic expressions effectively. The data highlights the importance of embedding idioms within culturally relevant contexts to improve learners' understanding and retention.

### 2. Statistical Results of the Second Research Question

The second research question aimed to determine the impact of the proposed teaching methodology on learners' ability to comprehend and use idioms accurately and contextually. After implementing the methodology, learners demonstrated a marked improvement in idiom comprehension and contextual usage, as revealed through post-intervention interviews and performance assessments.

**Table 2***Comparative Analysis of Learners' Performance Before and After the Intervention*

Performance Measure		Pre-Intervention Mean	Post-Intervention Mean	Improvement (%)
Idiom Comprehension Accuracy		52%	78%	26%
Contextual Appropriateness in Usage		48%	74%	26%
Retention of Idiomatic Expressions		50%	80%	30%

The results here indicate a significant enhancement in learners' ability to comprehend and use idioms within appropriate contexts. These improvements align with the theoretical framework, which posits that embedding idioms within contextual and cultural scenarios promotes better understanding and retention (Ellis, 2024; Schmitt & Carter, 2024). 3. Statistical Results of the Third Research Question

The third research question explored the extent to which the integration of idiomatic expressions enhances intercultural competence among German language learners. Data from interviews and thematic analysis revealed that learners exhibited increased cultural awareness and a more nuanced understanding of German social norms and communication styles after the intervention.

**Table 3****Impact of Idiom Integration on Learners' Intercultural Competence**

Measure of Intercultural Competence	Pre-Intervention Mean	Post-Intervention Mean	Improvement (%)
Cultural Sensitivity	58%	85%	27%
Appropriate Use of Cultural Idioms	50%	82%	32%
Awareness of Social Norms	55%	81%	26%

The results in the above table demonstrate that learners who received contextualized idiom instruction exhibited higher levels of intercultural competence. These results are consistent with the literature emphasizing the importance of contextual and culturally embedded teaching strategies (Byram, 2021; Liu & Hall, 2023).

## Discussion

### Discussion Related to the First Research Hypothesis

The initial research hypothesis posited that students' comprehension of idioms would not differ before and after the implementation of the suggested method of teaching. On the contrary, the results strongly proved a clear enhancement of comprehension of idioms after the intervention, thus rejecting the null hypothesis. These findings validate previous research emphasizing the importance of the application of idioms in meaningful and contextually appropriate contexts to facilitate comprehension (Schmitt & Carter, 2024; Ellis, 2024). The increase in accuracy of comprehension and contextually appropriateness can be attributed to the application of cognitive and sociolinguistic models, which enabled learners to better understand idioms alongside mere memorization (Godwin-Jones, 2023).



The positive results of the research also affirm previous work that making idiomatic expressions salient within actual communicative contexts strongly favors recall and use in context (Clarke & Simons, 2021). By using associative memory fostered through contextual familiarity, students were able to better memorize idioms in support of linguistic and cultural competency (Kovecses, 2022).

### **Discussion Related to the Second Research Hypothesis**

The second hypothesis of study suggested that the use of idiomatic expressions would not significantly increase intercultural competence in German language learners. The results, however, indicated a greater level of cultural sensitivity and appropriate usage of contextually embedded idioms and thereby rejecting the null hypothesis. The amplified intercultural competence demonstrated at the post-intervention level serves as a testimony to the contention that contextualized instruction techniques allow for greater cultural understanding (Byram, 2021; Sercu, 2023). This cultural sensitivity and social norms growth among learners aligns with recent research highlighting the pedagogical importance of cultural integration in language learning (Hinkel, 2023). The findings also affirm the theoretical cognitive sociolinguistic model, which posits that language acquisition is cognitively embedded in cultural and social contexts (Lakoff & Johnson, 2023). Through the exposure of students to idioms in their context of use, students were better positioned to learn cultural as well as linguistic meaning, thus further increasing the necessity for inclusion of linguistic learning with that of culture. Discussion Relating to the Third Research Hypothesis

### **Discussion Related to the Third Research Hypothesis**

The findings of the study categorically reject this hypothesis, as learners demonstrated substantial gains in both remembering idioms and using them in context after being exposed to digital-supported instruction. The constructive influence of digital materials on learning idioms adds strength to the growing body of evidence advocating technology-enhanced language learning (Godwin-Jones, 2023; Reinders & Benson, 2024). Technology tools such as interactive quizzes, multimedia presentations, and digital storytelling immersed learners in engaging experiences that promoted idiom understanding and recollection (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2023). Moreover, technology use in idiom teaching addresses the problem of limited exposure to real language usage, thereby allowing learners to learn and apply idiomatic expressions properly. These results highlight the pedagogical significance of digital integration in creating more dynamic and culturally aware language learning contexts (Chapelle & Sauro, 2023).

### **Conclusion**

The research findings of the present study emphasize the need for using idiomatic expressions in German language teaching through a mix of cognitive and sociolinguistic approaches. This two-framework model concurs with the latest scholarly research, where it is emphasized that linguistic forms and cultural settings are interdependent in second language acquisition (SLA). For instance, Boers and Lindstromberg (2012) note that idioms are not arbitrary expressions but rather cognitive short cuts with cultural information and contextual meaning. Similarly, Littlemore et al. (2013) argue that proficiency in idioms is a fundamental component of advanced language ability and needs to be taught explicitly and exposed to natural use implicitly. The suggested methodology not only enhanced students' comprehension and contextual use of idioms but also significantly enhanced their intercultural competence. Recent evidence confirms this contention, demonstrating that idiomatic expressions are "cultural markers" that represent social norms, values, and historical narratives (Kecskes, 2014; Wierzbicka, 2016). Through the use of idioms in communicative activities, learners develop a better understanding of how language

indexes and constructs cultural identity. As per research by Piquer-Píriz and Rubio (2020), incorporating idiomatic expressions into culturally authentic situations promotes empathy and flexibility in intercultural communication, thus improving learners' pragmatic competence. By placing idioms in authentic communicative contexts, learners better understood both linguistic and cultural subtleties. This approach is also friendly to the policies of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which posits that real materials and pertinent tasks should be employed to promote language learning (Ellis, 2018).

Chen and Zhang (2021) established that situational learning increases levels of retention and convinces learners to apply idioms appropriately in various contexts. The role played by context in learning idioms has also received adequate attention, with authors such as Grant and Nation (2019) emphasizing the delivery of input-rich contexts whereby the learner is exposed to idioms in authentic contexts. The use of online platforms helped ease the process of memorization and the actual use of idioms and instead promote efficient technology-supported instruction. Computer-mediated platforms, including mobile applications, virtual reality environments, and gamified learning environments, have revolutionized SLA with interactive and customized experiences (Godwin-Jones, 2022). Stockwell and Hubbard's (2013) meta-analysis shows that technology-based instruments facilitate the acquisition of vocabulary, particularly for sophisticated lexical forms like idioms.

Earlier again, Al-Seghayer (2021) demonstrated how multimedia materials such as videos and podcasts enable students to observe idioms in use, thereby facilitating their semantic and pragmatic acquisition. Evidence confirms the theoretical hypothesis that idioms are both linguistic and cultural conveyors which balance language capacity and intercultural communication. This is in accordance with the Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), that idioms are likely to originate from shared conceptual schemes rooted in culture-specific experience (Gibbs, 2017). Similarly, work by Kövecses (2020) explores how idiomatic expressions involve universal themes but still preserve culturally specific meanings, accentuating their dual status as linguistic forms and cultural objects. Since students were able to use idioms in the right places, they were also better equipped to handle intercultural communications.

Evidence from Baker (2015) and Jackson (2019) shows the contribution of idiomatic competence to establishing rapport and reducing misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. Moreover, a longitudinal study conducted by Hua and Kramersch (2023) indicates that students who achieve mastery of idiomatic expressions have more confidence and fluency in actual conversations since these expressions convey membership in a given speech community. To explain the pedagogical implications more in detail, it is required to consider the difficulties involved in teaching idioms. Studies conducted by Lontas (2018) and Paquot (2019) identify potential obstacles, including the idiomaticity of idioms and their susceptibility to fossilization errors. To bridge the gaps, teachers must adopt a balanced pedagogical practice that includes explicit strategies like decontextualized analysis and pattern recognition, combined with implicit strategies like storytelling and role-playing (Deignan, 2013). In short, the application of cognitive and sociolinguistic approaches to the teaching of idiomatic language is a huge leap in German language teaching. Supported empirically by previous studies, this approach not only enhances the linguistic ability of learners but also enhances their intercultural competence and communicative ability. Subsequent research will need to explore further how technology and actual materials can be combined in the instruction of idioms so that the learners are better equipped to deal with the complexity of international communication.



### Implications of the Study

The pedagogical impact is immense. Language teachers need to consider embedding idiomatic expressions within language instruction using contextualized and technology-enhanced teaching methods. With the combination of idiom training and cultural competence training, teachers can promote linguistic accuracy and cultural awareness (Byram, 2021; Reinders & Benson, 2024). Furthermore, digital tool utilization in supporting idiom acquisition has proven to be beneficial in promoting participation and long-term recall. Language learning programs must therefore employ digital media to introduce idioms in interactive and context-based modes (Godwin-Jones, 2023).

### Limitations of the Study

Despite the promising results, this study has some constraints. Sample size was generally fairly small and biased towards high German learners and older teachers. Future studies could possibly aim for a larger sample consisting of learners of varying proficiency levels as well as learners with differing cultural backgrounds. Although enlightening, relying solely on qualitative data may also benefit from complementing such data with statistical analysis of quantitative analysis.

### Suggestions for Further Research

Longer-term implications of contextualized instruction of idioms on language proficiency and cultural flexibility need to be investigated in future studies. Longitudinal designs would provide more understanding of the duration of the acquired learning. In addition, testing the transfer of digital tools to different linguistic and cultural environments would allow for generalizing the findings and informing the development of universal models of instruction for the learning of idioms.

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