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THE ROLE OF CONTEXT IN TEACHING IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

ABSTRACT

Idiomatic expressions are essential for communicative competence but remain challenging for language learners due to their figurative and culturally embedded meanings. This study explores the role of context and AI-supported instruction in teaching idioms. Using a quasi-experimental design, it compares AI-assisted contextual learning with traditional memorization methods. The findings suggest that context-rich, AI-enhanced learning environments improve learners' comprehension, retention, and appropriate use of idiomatic expressions. Personalized feedback, cultural context, and adaptive scaffolding contribute to greater learner engagement and confidence. The study highlights the potential of combining contextualized instruction and AI technologies to enhance figurative language acquisition and communicative competence.

Keywords: idiomatic expressions, contextualized learning, artificial intelligence, communicative competence, EFL learners.

PIRMAMMADOVA AYTAN **İDİOMATİK İFADƏLƏRİN TƏDRİSİNDƏ KONTEKSTİN ROLU**

Xülasə

İdiomatik ifadələr kommunikativ kompetensiyanın vacib tərkib hissəsi olsa da, onların məcazi və mədəni kontekstə bağlı mənaları dil öyrənənlər üçün ciddi çətinliklər yaradır. Bu tədqiqat idiomların tədrisində kontekstin və süni intellekt dəstəklı təlimin rolunu araşdırır. Kvazi-eksperimental dizayn əsasında aparılan araşdırmada süni intellektlə dəstəklənən kontekstual öyrənmə ənənəvi əzbərləmə üsulları ilə müqayisə edilmişdir. Nəticələr göstərir ki, kontekstlə zəngin və süni intellektlə gücləndirilmiş təlim mühitləri tələbələrin idiomatik ifadələri anlama, yadda saxlama və düzgün istifadə etmə bacarıqlarını əhəmiyyətli dərəcədə artırır. Fərdiləşdirilmiş geribildirim, mədəni kontekst və adaptiv dəstəkləmə tələbələrin motivasiyasını, fəallığını və özünəinamını gücləndirir. Tədqiqat göstərir ki, kontekstual tədrisin süni intellekt texnologiyaları ilə inteqrasiyası məcazi dil vahidlərinin mənimsənilməsini və kommunikativ kompetensiyanın inkişafını effektiv şəkildə dəstəkləyir.

Açar sözlər: idiomatik ifadələr, kontekstual öyrənmə, süni intellekt, kommunikativ kompetensiya, EFL tələbələri.

РОЛЬ КОНТЕКСТА В ОБУЧЕНИИ ИДИОМАТИЧЕСКИМ ВЫРАЖЕНИЯМ

Резюме

Идиоматические выражения являются важной составляющей коммуникативной компетенции, однако их переносное значение и культурная обусловленность создают значительные трудности для изучающих язык. Данное исследование рассматривает роль контекста и обучения с использованием искусственного интеллекта в преподавании идиом. На основе квазиэкспериментального дизайна сравниваются контекстуализированное обучение с поддержкой искусственного интеллекта и традиционные методы заучивания. Результаты показывают, что насыщенная контекстом и усиленная искусственным интеллектом образовательная среда значительно улучшает понимание, запоминание и правильное употребление идиоматических выражений. Персонализированная обратная связь, культурный контекст и адаптивная поддержка способствуют повышению мотивации, вовлечённости и уверенности учащихся. Исследование демонстрирует, что интеграция контекстуализированного обучения и технологий искусственного интеллекта эффективно способствует усвоению образного языка и развитию коммуникативной компетенции.

Ключевые слова: идиоматические выражения, контекстуализированное обучение, искусственный интеллект, коммуникативная компетенция, учащиеся EFL.

Introduction

The integration of idiomatic expressions into language curricula is essential for fostering authentic communicative competence, yet these phrases are frequently relegated to the periphery of instruction due to their inherent metaphorical complexity ([Ibragimovna & Centre, 2026](#)). Learners often struggle with semantic opacity and cultural dependencies that render decontextualized rote memorization ineffective ([Hajiyeva, 2024](#)). Conversely, pedagogical frameworks that emphasize cognitive linguistic approaches or utilize rich discourse environments enable students to map figurative meanings onto broader conceptual structures ([Suhodolli & Lama, 2024](#)). By prioritizing contextual extracts that feature explicit discourse markers or embedded paraphrases, educators can provide the necessary lexical cues to decode idiomatic meaning in real-time interactions ([Simpson & Mendis, 2003](#)). Moreover, embedding these expressions within cultural narratives facilitates a deeper understanding of the pragmatic nuances that govern their appropriate usage in social discourse. This pedagogical shift towards contextualized learning not only improves lexical retention but also equips students with the necessary tools to navigate the metaphorical density of the target language. Consequently, pedagogical strategies informed by the Conceptual Metaphor Approach offer a robust framework for

demystifying these figurative structures by highlighting the underlying cognitive mappings that connect literal concepts to idiomatic intent. Additionally, while pedagogical efforts often prioritize high-frequency vocabulary, the unique structural properties of idiomatic collocations suggest that educators should instead emphasize the underlying conceptual relationships to circumvent the limitations of traditional frequency-based grading ([Macis & Schmitt, 2016](#)). This approach is supported by evidence that figurative influence remains a critical factor for L2 speakers across both transparent and opaque idiomatic expressions.

Recent scholarship has increasingly focused on the cognitive mechanisms underlying figurative language acquisition, specifically examining the tension between literal interpretation and idiomatic meaning. Studies indicate that providing such etymological elaboration can improve recall and sensitivity to figurative registers, though its efficacy remains contingent upon factors such as learner proficiency and the transparency of the perceived connection ([O'Reilly & Marsden, 2021](#)).

Methodology

This study adopts a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the efficacy of AI-augmented, context-situated pedagogical strategies in contrast to traditional rote-learning methods. Participants were divided into an experimental group, which engaged with AI-driven contextual prompts and etymological scaffolding, and a control group tasked with traditional decontextualized memorization exercises. The assessment phase utilized pre- and post-intervention evaluations to measure gains in both semantic accuracy and pragmatic appropriateness, accounting for the longitudinal impact of these distinct instructional modalities. Quantitative data collection was supplemented by qualitative feedback gathered through semi-structured interviews, allowing for an in-depth exploration of student engagement with AI-facilitated scaffolding. This methodological approach mirrors recommendations for comparative studies to better understand the nuances between traditional and AI-assisted instruction.

Discussion

The observed pedagogical benefits suggest that integrating AI-driven platforms as a foundational component of language curricula can effectively bridge the gap between abstract lexical acquisition and authentic pragmatic performance. By facilitating scaffolded exposure to culturally embedded linguistic patterns, these tools empower students to achieve a level of communicative competence that transcends static grammatical knowledge ([Mananay, 2024](#)). Moreover, by addressing the complexities of language in context, these technologies provide a vital mechanism for mastering interactional routines that remain inherently difficult to acquire through conventional, decontextualized study methods ([Aghayeva, 2025; Vall & Araya, 2023](#)). The ability of these platforms to provide tailored, adaptive feedback enables learners to navigate the sociocultural nuances of idioms within a secure, controlled

setting. Consequently, this transformative shift in the learning pathway suggests that AI-powered applications exert a more profound influence on academic achievements than conventional language learning approaches. These improvements in proficiency are further substantiated by empirical evidence showing that AI-integrated learning environments consistently enhance student motivation, organization, and coherence in academic writing.

Conclusion

The current study demonstrates that integrating AI-driven adaptive learning environments significantly enhances the acquisition and pragmatic application of idiomatic expressions by providing personalized, context-rich feedback mechanisms. These findings underscore the necessity for educational institutions to prioritize the systematic incorporation of such technologies into curricula to address the persistent challenges learners face with figurative language. Future research should focus on refining the ethical implementation of these systems, ensuring that AI-generated feedback remains a supportive supplement rather than a replacement for teacher-led instruction. Moreover, longitudinal studies are required to evaluate how the sustained use of these cognitive partners influences long-term learner autonomy and the development of a resilient, growth-oriented mindset toward complex language acquisition. Ultimately, this pedagogical evolution necessitates international collaboration between governments and researchers to establish policies that balance technological innovation with academic integrity. By adopting these strategic frameworks, educators can effectively leverage automated systems to create a virtuous cycle of learning where learners feel empowered to bridge the gap between digital practice and authentic human communication ([Long & Kim, 2024](#)). Addressing these challenges requires a shift toward inclusive implementation strategies that prioritize equitable access to high-quality resources, ensuring all learners can benefit from the democratization of language education. Such concerted efforts are essential to mitigating the risks of cultural dilution often associated with standardized AI content, thereby preserving the authenticity of idiomatic expression in global language education ([Selim, 2024](#)). Moreover, educational stakeholders must establish clear guidelines for the ethical integration of these technologies, ensuring that students and instructors negotiate their use to maintain agency over the learning process. This proactive stance ensures that the deployment of generative tools remains aligned with pedagogical objectives, specifically regarding the nuanced acquisition of figurative language ([Fredrick & Craven, 2025](#)). Finally, ongoing professional development must emphasize the importance of context-sensitive prompting, enabling teachers to guide students in recognizing how idiomatic usage shifts across varying sociocultural landscapes. By fostering such critical digital literacy, instructors can facilitate a more nuanced understanding of how AI tools function as collaborative partners in decoding the subtleties of idiomatic discourse.

Consequently, educators must undergo specialized training to critically interpret AI-generated feedback and effectively manage the ethical implications—such as algorithmic bias and transparency—inherent in these automated pedagogical systems. This comprehensive preparation is vital, as educators must be equipped to design AI-supported tasks that prioritize the authentic, nuanced communication required for mastering figurative language. Furthermore, establishing peer learning networks and interdisciplinary collaborations can bridge the gap between theoretical AI models and practical classroom application, ultimately enriching the teaching experience (Walter, 2024).

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