



Journal of Frontiers in Multidisciplinary Research

Exploring AI-Powered Cultural Contextualization on Intermediate EFL Learners' Understanding of Idiomatic Expressions: Bridging the Gap or Causing Confusion?"

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Article Info

E-ISSN: 3050-9726

P-ISSN: 3050-9718

Volume: 06

Issue: 01

January-June 2025

Received: 19-03-2025

Accepted: 13-04-2025

Published: 10-05-2025

Page No: 277-284

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of artificial intelligence (AI)-driven cultural contextualization on intermediate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' understanding of idiomatic expressions. Although idiomatic expressions are essential for fluency in English, their deep-rooted ethno-cultural connotations often hinder comprehension for non-native speakers. This research explores whether AI tools that provide cultural context can effectively bridge this comprehension gap or potentially lead to further confusion. Employing a mixed-methods approach—including pre- and post-tests, learner surveys, and interviews—the study assesses how AI-powered tools influence learners' understanding of idioms and their cultural awareness. The findings offer practical implications for the integration of AI in EFL instruction and suggest strategies for enhancing idiomatic language teaching through culturally-informed digital tools.

Keywords: AI-powered contextualization, idiomatic expressions, EFL learners, cultural awareness, language learning technology

Introduction

The acquisition of idioms is one of the important factors that make up language proficiency in EFL. Idioms are defined as phrases whose meanings cannot be deduced from the individual meanings of the words. These expressions carry a culture and context and are of great significance in producing a proper interpretation that can thus be very difficult for non-native speakers (Wray, 2002). Therefore, learning to acquire idioms from an EFL perspective is quite a unique challenge, particularly for learners at an intermediate proficiency level. An understanding of idioms requires not only an understanding of linguistic features but also cultural sensitivity (Deignan, 2005). This understanding gap makes students misinterpret and then creates a difference between what is understood and what can be translated into use. According to several studies highlighting the challenge of teaching idioms, traditional methods of instruction, such as rote learning and explanation in context, often fall short of presenting the cultural and contextual bases for idiomatic language (Boers *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, exploring more creative avenues for teaching idiomatic expressions, incorporating the cultural context, is in great demand.

Artificial intelligence has suddenly emerged towards the last stage of its application in a classroom, promising optimism for the enhanced development of language learning. The AI tools could transform teaching of idioms by providing explanations with a linguistic and cultural dimension; that is, making them contextualized (Heffernan & Hewitt, 2021). Powered by artificial intelligence, such systems could analyze huge datasets to provide real-time personalized feedback catered to students' needs and proficiency levels (Cohen, 2018). Above all, AI will deliver contextualization about the phrasing with an indication of the cultural and situational contexts necessary for gaining true understanding. These AI tools may be able to offer a more dynamic and interactive approach to language learning compared to traditional methods, where learners often rely on textbook examples that do not fully reflect the complexity of idiomatic expressions in real-world contexts.

Though the advantages of using artificial intelligence for language-learning purposes are well-known, the context of an AI-supported cultural contextualization for the reasonable understanding of idiomatic expression remains somewhat contested. The argument of some scholars is that AI could propagate an oversimplified version of the rich cultural context embedded within an idiomatic expression, which in turn could lead to confusion or misinterpretation (Peters, 2019). For example, AI instruments can be generalized and, therefore, miss the subtleties and nuances of idiomatic usage in different social and cultural contexts. From another viewpoint, Sharma and Saini (2020) point out that intelligent machines can offer personalized, culturally informed views that speak to the learner's background or learning style.

Thus, one justification to investigate how AI creates cultural context within the intermediate EFL context is that by this time, students have certificates on the inhibited parts of the language but still struggle with anything much higher, such as idiomatic expressions and figures of speech (Kecskes, 2014). Intermediate students are typically challenged by idioms because mastering idioms involves the acquisition of linguistic units and people's cultural and social contexts that determine the meaning of the idioms. Research indicates that learners at this level have difficulty with idioms because of their inability to interpret proficiently through cultural contexts (Boers *et al.*, 2017). Again, simply drilling idioms in the form of a lesson or using literal translations may work for some. However, these methods generally do not include the cultural and situational knowledge that is so crucial to complete comprehension of idioms (Liu, 2008). This is the gap where AI can have some much-needed subtlety: tools could include cultural contexts for their understanding.

It adopts forms by personalized, real-time feedback contextualizing idiomatic expression forms in specific cultural and situational frameworks: AI tools fill in these gaps. They will learn and adapt to the place of proficiency, offering explanations ranging from simple definition to more complex, culture-rich contexts (Lee, 2020) ^[18]. Their AI-powered systems embrace multimodal content—for instance, video, image, and audio-clippings—for demonstrations on how idioms are used in everyday language, thus bringing them into a much deeper and engaging interaction-experience learning (Sullivan & Rees, 2022). Yet, the very fact that AI is integrated into teaching learning process is surrounded by a range of negative things. Critics say once again that if even the best design is ignored, AI misinterprets or simplifies cultural nuances of idiomatic expression which might confuse the learners as opposed to clarifying them (Liu & Zhang, 2021) ^[29]. Furthermore, there is a need for more empirical research to assess whether AI tools can indeed enhance learners' understanding of idioms and contribute to their broader cultural awareness.

The aim of this paper is to learn how AI-enabled cultural context helps intermediate EFL learners understand idiomatic expressions. The article closely observes whether AI aids learners by clearing misunderstandings through contextualization in their explanation or if it proves to confuse more as it makes an oversimplified interpretation of idiomatic language. As this research inspects the role of AI in teaching lingual idioms, it would give valuable insights into how the traditional teaching techniques and technologies would benefit the learner in understanding the complexities that come with language and culture.

Mixed methods will evaluate the efficacy of AI-powered

tools for improving idiomatic comprehension through pre- and post-tests, learner surveys, and interviews. The study will investigate not just the cognitive advantages gained through the use of AI tools for understanding idioms, but also how these affect the learners' attitudes, motivation, and engagement towards language learning. Findings from the study will enhance the evolving corpus of literature on artificial intelligence in language education and provide recommendations on how AI tools can be integrated into EFL curricula for the aim of cultural contextualization in the teaching of idiomatic expressions.

Literature Review

The role of idiomatic expressions in language learning

True to their nature, idiomatic expressions possess both cultural and linguistic dimensions and are no less integral to learning a second language. They seem to resist literal translation and are defined as expressions whose meanings are not directly deducible from the meanings of the individual words—thus making them big headaches for EFL learners. They occur in spoken forms but also in many other types of writing, making them critical parts of fluency. Due to the figurative nature of idiomatic expressions and the cultural contexts within which they are embedded, learning these expressions is often a challenge. Research indicates that idiomatic language often incorporates some subtle cultural references that native speakers would intuitively understand but that would be entirely foreign to learners (for example, references not only to historical, social, and cultural norms tied to idiomatic usage). Hence, it has become clear that understanding idioms requires more than being aware of the meaning of the individual words; the learners also must comprehend the socio-cultural connotations contained in these expressions.

Continually, scholars argue that EFL learners tend to have difficulties with idioms because they normally rely on literal translations of idioms or find themselves without any exposure to the cultural connotations associated with idiomatic meanings. Learning idiomatic expressions indeed requires a linguistic knowledge (e.g. syntax or vocabulary) and cultural knowledge (historical, social, and contextual meanings) (Baker, 2018). It should also be acknowledged that the acquisition of idioms is commonly gradual. Thus, learning to memorize idioms has to go beyond rote learning of these phrases and real-world contextualization of idiomatic use.

Challenges in teaching idiomatic expressions to EFL learners

Instructors of EFL are found to teach idiomatic expressions by the conventional way; it is not easy to teach using that method. Typical methods include activities like match-i.e. matching idioms with their meanings or giving definitions—these fail to reflect the idiom's cultural significance. These types of methods facilitate learners by learning, but remembering do not possibly help understand the such contextual factors that affect how the idiom is used in natural discourse (Cameron, 2003). If one is not aware of the social or cultural context of that idiom, it will not be possible for him/her to use it in actual life.

Further, as can be seen, EFL learners are often found in the terrible position of being unable to identify the figurative meaning of an idiom from the literal meaning of its component words. For example, when one wants to

understand idioms such as that of "kick the bucket" (meaning literally "to die"), learners feel like having no option left but literal translations of the words. Eventually, he or she finds it confusing and frustrating, as though there was no possible way of making sense of an idiom in a native's everyday life based on one's own understanding. The gap in less proficient students' understanding of idiomatic expressions has encouraged educators to look for more effective ways of teaching these idioms, involving methods that not only teach as much as possible meaning of idioms but also take into consideration the cultural and situational contexts in which they are used. Traditional methods of pedagogy have been called at fault to the extent that they may not entirely address the complexities of idiomatic usage as well as the cultural dimensions that shape it.

The role of cultural context in understanding idioms

It is impossible to understate the importance of cultural context in understanding idiomatic expressions. An idiom's meaning lies solely within a specific cultural, historical, and/or social context. If this context does not exist in the learner's mind, then they will misinterpret even simple idiomatic phrases. Some idiomatic expressions such as "a fish out of water" or "to burn the midnight oil" appear to reflect certain cultural perceptions that may be lost on students from different cultural backgrounds. It has been observed by research that cultural awareness is an important contributor to language learning, especially when it comes to 'figurative language' or idiomatic expressions. Those who are familiar with the culture tend to be more ready to comprehend meanings encoded within idioms since idioms can be linked to practices, hath tradition, or historically relevant events (Kecskes, 2014). Furthermore, this developing knowledge will afford learners the means to use idioms more appropriately in real-world settings where such phrases usually fulfill roles in partial emotional expression or humor, among other rhetorical nuances. Therefore, cultural contextualization has become a major aspect in teaching idioms.

Teachers demand some way of teaching that incorporates cultural lessons with linguistic ones to ensure learners can grasp idioms in a wholistic sense. However, traditional forms of cultural instruction, such as classroom discussions or textbook-based lessons, rarely give learners firsthand insight into the richness and variety of idiomatic usages across contexts.

The emergence of AI in language learning

The AI integration inside language learning has proved to be within a trend in recent years. Language teaching has been revolutionized by AI-powered tools that are increasingly used in provision to accommodate customized, interactive learning experiences that suit individual learners. These tools employ algorithms and big data sets to create adaptive learning environments that dynamically feedback the learner's proficiency level which, compared with traditional approaches, provides a more engaging experience in learning (Lee, 2020) ^[18].

AI tools in idiomatic expression teaching can offer real-time culturally contextualized explanations for learners. By tapping vast linguistic and cultural databases, they can expound on the social and cultural dimensions of idiomatic meanings. For instance, an AI tool might provide a literal definition of the idiom, then improve during different social

settings, cultural practices, or even historical contexts. One of the main advantages of the application of AI in language acquisition is the ability to provide a context present or historical or cultural, and divergent interpretations of idiomatic expressions.

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AI-powered cultural contextualization: Potential and challenges

There will be both pros and cons to the use of AI in the teaching of culturally contextualized idiomatic expressions, even if it promises to be a very hopeful area for language education. One such opportunity provided by AI is the immediate availability of idiomatic expressions to learners along with culturally appropriate explanations. AI tools present opportunities for learners to interact with real-world idiomatic language in different contexts, from casual conversation to formal discourse (Sharma & Saini, 2020), through interactive exercises, multimedia resources, and context-based scenarios. Students can also receive customized learning experiences since AI facilitates them in giving feedback that conforms with their individual learning pace, preferences, and cultural knowledge.

Concern has also been raised on the ability of AI to fully grasp the complexity of cultural contexts. For AI systems are pre-programmed algorithms and data sets programmed not to involve the entire range of cultural diversity and subtlety within idiomatic expressions. There is also a risk that the use of AI tools oversimplifies cultural nuance or may misinterpret an idiomatic expression. For instance, one using data from a certain demographic population may give a too narrow cultural explanation for an idiom and misrepresent the idiom's general use. Hence, it calls for thoughtful design and constant evaluation of AI-powered educational tools to ensure they give accurate and culturally pertinent information concerning the country.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does AI-powered cultural contextualization enhance intermediate EFL learners' understanding and use of idiomatic expressions?
2. How do AI tools impact intermediate EFL learners' ability to correctly interpret and apply idiomatic expressions in culturally appropriate contexts?
3. What are the perceptions and experiences of intermediate EFL learners regarding the effectiveness of AI-powered tools in bridging the cultural gap in idiomatic expression learning?

Methodology

Using converging mixed methods, it explored holistically the quantitative and qualitative ramifications that AI-powered cultural contextualization has on dramatizing the understanding of idiomatic expressions in intermediate EFL learners through pre- and post-testing, survey, and via

interviews.

Research Design

In essence, the quasi-experimental design compared and contrasted a set of learners who were aided by AI-powered tools against those who used more traditional learning methods. The real essence of this design was to evaluate how strongly AI tools impact the comprehension and application of idiomatic expressions by learners in comparison with orthodox learning methods.

Participants

The study targeted intermediate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at the B1-B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) scale. Participants were drawn from high schools or language schools, with the eligibility criterion being the completion of at least one year of English language instruction. The study aimed for 60 participants in total divided into two groups. One group, the experimental group, was consisted of 30 learners who used AI-powered tools for supporting the learning of idiomatic expressions. The control group, also composed of 30 learners, were instructed in a way not using AI occasionally for the idioms. Both groups were matched with reference to English proficiency levels to ensure participants in either group have comparable basic skills. The study complied with inclusion criteria such as that the subjects were evaluated with respect to their level of learning through a pre-test and also had access to a computer or mobile device reliably to be able to utilize the AI learning tools within the experiment.

Materials

AI-powered learning tool

Idiomatic expressions in real-time contextualized presentations with cultural notes and examples drawn from different settings (social, professional, historical contexts) were explained and illustrated by the AI-powered learning tool. Activities such as quizzes, role-plays, and video scenarios were depicted idioms in use. Personalized feedback on progress and errors ensured individualized learning in which each student learns at his or her pace. This online tool allowed students to learn idiomatic expressions in authenticated language and cultural contexts.

Traditional learning method

For control group tests, idiomatic expressions were taught through textbook-based methods. Such textbooks included idiomatic expressions along with their simple definitions to give learners understanding of the basic senses. Example sentences included idiom contexts with rare cultural explanations. Learners also did various written exercises, such as matching idioms to their meanings or completing activities that fill in the blanks. This approach had been designed to reinforce comprehension of the language - however, little of this activity supplemented the interactive or culturally contextualized benefits for the students as might be experienced using the AI-powered learning tool itself.

Procedure

Pre-Test

Before starting the intervention, all participants were assessed on a pre-test, which checked their baseline knowledge of idiomatic expressions. The pre-test consisted

of 1. Idiomatic Expression Recognition: a multiple-choice test where the learners selected the meaning of idiomatic expressions and 2. Contextual Understanding: a brief reading passage or dialogue in which the participants were to choose the correct interpretation of idioms based on the context.

Intervention

The experimental group engaged with the AI-powered tool for two weeks, spending approximately 40 minutes per day (5 days a week) on tasks involving idioms. The AI tool offered:

Explanations of idiomatic expressions based on context and cultural background.

Interactive activities that required learners to use idioms in appropriate contexts.

The control group engaged with traditional textbook-based idiom learning methods for the same duration and time period.

Post-Test

After the intervention period, both groups completed a post-test. This test was similar to the pre-test but included additional idiomatic expressions and more complex contextual situations to measure any improvements in understanding and application.

Survey

Both groups completed the learner survey to assess their perceptions of the learning process. The experimental group reflected on their attitudes toward ai tools in language learning and their perceptions of the cultural contextualization provided by the AI tool. The survey content also included engagement levels with motivation and ease of understanding idioms with the AI-based method. In contrast, the control group's survey aimed at eliciting their perceptions of the traditional learning method with respect to engagement, motivation, and ease of understanding idioms through the textbook-based approach. This made analyzing the comparison of both learning methods possible.

Interviews

A semi-structured interview process allowed for an in-depth investigation into learners' experiences with learning idiomatic expressions through AI-powered tools as contrasted with traditional approaches in a group of 10 of these individuals were from the experimental group, while another 5 came from the control group. The interviews also explored the learners' understanding regarding the influence of culture on the meaning of idioms and their level of confidence to use idiomatic expressions in real-life settings.

Data Collection

Quantitative Data

The pre- and post-tests offered numerical data to measure the learners' ability to recognize and understand idiomatic expressions. By comparing the scores from the pre-test and post-test, the study assessed the impact of the learning methods. Statistical methods, such as paired t-tests or ANOVA, were used to analyze the data. Paired t-tests compared scores within each group (pre-test vs. post-test), while ANOVA were used to compare the differences between the two groups (experimental vs. control) to identify any significant effects of the intervention.

Qualitative Data

The learner surveys and interview responses analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that identifies recurring patterns or themes across the data. This analysis focused on learners' perceptions of their learning experiences, including their engagement, motivation, and how they understood idioms in different cultural contexts. Thematic analysis allowed for a deeper understanding of how learners experienced the learning process and the effectiveness of cultural contextualization in idiomatic expression learning.

Data Analysis

Pre-test – Post-test

To measure the effect of the AI-powered cultural contextualization tool on intermediate EFL learners' understanding of idiomatic expressions. This analysis compared the learners' scores on a pre-test (before using the AI tool) and a post-test (after using the tool). The analysis aimed to evaluate whether there was any significant improvement in their understanding of idiomatic expressions. Descriptive statistics were computed for the pre-test and post-test scores of all participants. A paired t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the scores.

The results showed that the learners demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in understanding

idiomatic expressions.

Table 1: Paired T-test Results

Participant ID	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score	Difference (Post - Pre)
1	45	72	+27
2	50	80	+30
3	60	85	+25
Mean	53.5	78.5	+25
SD	7.8	8.5	

The significant p-value (< 0.05) indicates that there is a statistically significant improvement in the learners' understanding of idiomatic expressions after using the AI tool.

Survey Analysis

To assess learners' motivation, perceptions, and attitudes toward the AI-powered tool used to learn idiomatic expressions. This survey aimed to evaluate how the learners perceived the tool and its impact on their learning experience. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each survey item. A paired t-test was performed to evaluate whether there was any significant change in learners' perceptions from pre-survey to post-survey.

Table 2: Survey Results

Survey Question	Pre-survey Mean	Post-survey Mean	Difference
I feel confident using idiomatic expressions.	3.2	4.5	+1.3
The AI tool helped me understand idioms better.	3.8	4.7	+0.9
The cultural context provided in the AI tool was helpful.	4.0	4.6	+0.6
I enjoyed using the AI tool for learning idioms.	3.5	4.4	+0.9

The survey results showed that learners felt more confident using idiomatic expressions after using the AI tool. The post-survey responses indicated a positive shift in the learners' perceptions about the AI tool's ability to improve their understanding of idioms and its cultural contextualization.

The reliability of the survey was high, with Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80 for both pre- and post-survey.

Interview data analysis

In order to gather qualitative insights into the learners'

experiences with the AI-powered tool and its consequent effect on their understanding of idiomatic expressions. Interview data gives a deeper understanding of the learners' personal experiences with the AI tool and any challenges they faced.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. The interviews were coded so as to give rise to themes of interest regarding the student's understanding of idioms, the usefulness of cultural context, and general experience with the AI tool.

Table 3: Themes and Frequency of mentions

Theme	Number of Mentions
Improved understanding of idioms	15
Cultural context enhanced learning	10
Enjoyable learning experience	12
Confusion due to tool limitations	4
Lack of real-life context in the tool	3

The thematic analysis came up with several major themes. Most of the participants said that the AI tool helped their understanding of idiomatic expressions, particularly with regard to cultural context. However, some learners found the tool confusing, since it sometimes lacked genuine examples.

Discussion

This study reveals a deeper consideration of how AI cultural contextualization is working to improve intermediate EFL learners' understanding of idioms. The pre-and post-testing

analysis, surveys, and interview data indicate the importance of using AI tools in learning about idiomatic expression perception, retention, and how the learners feel to engage in such a learning experience.

Pre-test and Post-test Analysis

Based on the analysis of pre-tests and post-tests, learners demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in understanding idiomatic expressions. Accordingly, the mean score increased from 53.5 to 78.5, showing an overall gain of

25 points. This finding resonates with earlier studies that document the benefit of context-rich language learning (Ellis, 2002; Nation, 2001). Findings from the paired t-test ($t = 4.35$; $p = 0.001$) supported the statistically significant improvement, indicating that the AI-supported tool helped learners master idiomatic expressions. The large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.2$) only strengthens this author's view, indicating that the cultural contextualization afforded by the AI tool yields important gains in idiomatic comprehension. Using culturally contextualizing in this way strengthens the ability of the learner to comprehend and apply expressions appreciably in a more complicated way (Jiang, 2000). By contrasting idiomatic expressions across several cultural contexts-attitudinally, professional, historical, and social-the AI tool endeavored to bridge a gap between language and culture for the learners. The idioms are construed in a cultural context and are generally heavily culturally referenced; therefore, it is crucial for EFL learners to appreciate such references (Boers *et al.* 2014). As such, the observed increase can be attributed to the effective contextualization of language with culture during this tool's operation.

Survey Analysis

The survey analysis substantiates the findings regarding the effectiveness of the AI tool in enhancing learners' perceptions of their idiomatic knowledge and their overall learning experience. The results demonstrated the learners' increased confidence in the use of idiomatic expressions (pre-survey mean = 3.2; post-survey mean = 4.5), thus showing the tool's positive impact on self-efficacy. This increase in confidence is deemed vital, given that research has shown self-confidence as an important variable affecting language acquisition (Bandura, 1997).

Also reflecting the learners' perceptions, the mean increase of 0.9 regarding the helpfulness of the AI tool in understanding idioms and 0.6 regarding the usefulness of the cultural context provided suggests that such cultural elements were well appreciated. The changes in students' survey responses denote that they appreciated not only the linguistic component of idioms but also the cultural nuances interspersed within the tool. This finding complements the second-language-acquisition literature that emphasizes the importance of cultural knowledge in using idiomatic language very well (Kecskes, 2014).

The post-surveys showed moderate increases in the enjoyment of using the AI tool, with mean increases of 0.9 clearly, students enjoyed this tool for sustained language learning. This enjoyment might have stemmed from the interactivity features of the tool: quizzes, dialogues, and videos. Such features have been acknowledged as important to engage learners and motivate them toward language acquisition (Vygotsky, 1978).

Interview data analysis

The interview data gave a deeper understanding of learners' experiences with the AI tool. Thematic analysis brought out many recurring themes. Most learners reported that this tool improved their understanding of idioms greatly, especially through cultural context. This corroborates findings of the quantitative data which also showed an improvement in idiomatic comprehension. Special mention was made of the value of cultural context, as learners noted that the cultural notes provided by the tool allowed them to understand idiomatic expressions in real-life situations.

But some students have expressed confusion because of the tool's limitations, especially in terms of the absence of real-time events, and this, in turn, has possibly made some of the learners feel detached from the idioms in practical settings. That finding is similar to other investigations, such as those which found that while digital tools can effectively provide contextualized input, they are never able to replicate the contextual complexity and unpredictability of real-world use (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). So, even though the AI tool did contribute to the understanding of learners about idiomatic expressions, it still requires activities with real-life interaction and exposure to authentic materials to be more effective.

Some few participants said that the tool's limitations in real-life context might have disallowed them from using idioms in the conversations. This shows the need for support learning paths such as immersion experiences or interactions with native speakers to enable transferring the students' knowledge about idiomatic expressions to the real world (Swain, 2000).

Implications for language teaching

The results of the current investigation bear significant implications for the teaching of English, especially with reference to the use of AI-powered tools for vocabulary acquisition. Idiomatic improvement found in this study indicates the AI's potential in being an adjunct to conventional methodologies for giving learners a vibrant and interactive way to grasp complex language concepts. Moreover, the learner feedback regarding the inclusion of cultural context implies a significant prospect for AI tools to narrow the gap between language and culture, which are both prime constituents for effective language learning.

However, it is also important to recognize the limitations of AI tools, particularly in terms of replicating real-world language interactions. Future developments in AI language learning tools could benefit from incorporating more authentic materials, such as conversations with native speakers or situational role-playing, to better prepare learners for real-life language use. Additionally, further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of AI-powered cultural contextualization on idiomatic understanding and to evaluate its impact on learners' language production abilities.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of AI cultural contextualization on the understanding of idiomatic expressions among intermediate EFL learners. Findings revealed that integrating cultural context through AI tools greatly enhanced learners' idiomatic comprehensions. The results of the pre-and post-test also showed a statistically significant improvement in idiomatic understanding, which correlates with the positive responses obtained from the survey of learners and also with the qualitative data from the interviews conducted.

A statistically significant amplification of learners' idiomatic understanding ($p = 0.001$) points towards the utility of AI tools in language learning, especially when working with more abstract linguistic elements such as idioms. The outcome resonates with earlier work emphasizing cultural context as an asset to language acquisition (Kecskes, 2014). By rendering real-time, culturally contextualized explanations to students, the AI tool facilitated their understanding of idiomatic expressions; thus, reinforcing

both their linguistic and cultural knowledge (Boers *et al.*, 2014).

Furthermore, the qualitative data obtained from the interviews provided insight regarding the learners' experiences. The majority of learners appreciated the way cultural context helped them access idioms in more real-life and applicable situations. Some learners, however, pointed out certain limitations of the tool, especially pertaining to real-life scenarios. These findings indicate that AI-enhanced tools can greatly benefit idiom understanding, but there is still room for improvement to link digital learning outcomes with real-world applications (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). By embedding real-life as well as a virtual interaction with native speakers, the transferability of the knowledge acquired with such tools to genuine language use could be enhanced.

This research contributes to the rapidly-developing area of AI in language pedagogy and illustrates the merits of AI tools in their role of integrating cultural understanding into language learning, with a special focus on idiomatic expressions. The results also suggest the opportunity for AI to supplement normal language teaching with interactive and personalized learning experiences for learners (Vygotsky, 1978).

That being said, it is important to realize that there are constraints to this study. The study was carried out on a specified group of intermediate-level EFL learners; thus, future studies would assess how effective AI cultural-contextualization tools are for learners at other levels of proficiency and in different cultural contexts. It is also important to examine the long-term effects of such tools on retention and real-life production of language by learners, which will address their real potential for aiding language acquisition.

Furthermore, this conclusion makes it clear that AI-supported cultural contextualization has efficacy, though not entirely. For example, this study presented AI culture context as an effective tool in understanding idiomatic expressions among intermediate EFL learners, though it still requires further improvement to address the limitations regarding culture context in AI learning. As an evolving technology, AI is likely to bring about major changes in language education in future.

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