

CULTURAL REFLECTIONS AND LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN SWEDISH AND GERMAN

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Abstract: *This article is a comparative analysis of idiomatic expressions in Swedish and German, emphasizing their cultural significance and linguistic characteristics. Based on examples of specific idioms, the article explores how idioms reflect the historical, cultural, and social aspects of both languages. She also discusses the influence of culture on the formation of idioms and their use in everyday speech, providing an in-depth understanding of how idiomatic expressions serve as a bridge between language and culture. The article is intended for linguists, translators, language students and anyone interested in intercultural communication.*

Keywords: *idiomatic expressions, Swedish, German, cultural reflections, linguistic features, intercultural communication, translation, comparative analysis.*

Introduction

Idiomatic structures are a unique and integral component of any language. They enrich linguistic expression by adding nuances of meaning, cultural nuance, and emotional depth to it. Idioms are phrases or expressions whose meaning cannot always be deduced directly from the meanings of the individual words that compose them. This makes them particularly interesting to learn, as they reflect the cultural specificities, historical contexts, and unique ways of thinking inherent in each language. For example, the Swedish idiom "passa som hand i handska" (to fit like a gloved hand) and its equivalents in other languages can show interesting differences in the ways in which the same idea is expressed. The study of idiomatic structures allows for a deeper understanding of the linguistic patterns and cultural characteristics of the people who speak that language, which makes it incredibly valuable for both linguists and language learners.

Idioms play an important role in the language landscape, enriching it and making it more expressive and colorful. They reflect the cultural, historical and social aspects of language



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communities, serving as a bridge between language and culture. The use of idioms in everyday speech and literature gives the language its uniqueness and originality, allowing it to express complex ideas and emotions through simple word combinations.

Idioms also play a key role in language learning. Understanding and using them can significantly improve language skills, especially in the areas of context understanding and cultural adaptation. They present a challenge for language learners because they require a deep understanding of both the language itself and the culture of its speakers.

In the context of comparative language studies, the study of idioms helps to identify similarities and differences between languages. For example, a comparison of Swedish and German idioms can show how different languages use different metaphors and images to express the same idea. It increases understanding of how different cultures perceive the world and enriches intercultural communication.

In this way, idioms not only strengthen the connection between language and culture, but also promote greater understanding and understanding between different linguistic and cultural groups.

The purpose of this article is an in-depth study of idiomatic structures that are key elements in linguistic diversity and cultural richness. Particular attention is paid to Swedish and German, which provide unique examples of idiomatic expressions. Through the analysis and comparison of the idioms of these two languages, the article seeks to illuminate both linguistic and cultural aspects that influence the formation of idioms, their use and translation. This study not only reveals the beauty and complexity of idiomatic expressions, but also contributes to the understanding of the deep connections between language, thought and culture, which is especially important in the context of intercultural communication and translation activities.

Theoretical Review of Phraseological Units and Idioms

Idioms and idioms are expressions consisting of two or more words that are used in the language as single semantic units. The peculiarity of these expressions is that their meaning cannot be fully understood by relying only on the literal meaning of the words that compose them. Idioms have several key characteristics:

Polylexicity: Idioms consist of two or more words that form a stable combination.

Ideomatic: The meaning of an idiom cannot always be deduced from the meanings of its constituent words. For example, the expression "adding fuel to the fire" literally describes one action, but figuratively means aggravating a situation or conflict.

Sustainability of use: Idioms are well-established in the language community and are used in the same way as common words.

Cultural specificity: Many idioms reflect the cultural characteristics and traditions of the people who speak a given language, making them unique to each language community.

The study of these characteristics allows for a better understanding of both semantic and cultural aspects of language, especially in the context of translation and intercultural communication.



Awareness of these features is important not only for linguists, but also for anyone interested in language, its structure, and its use in society.

Psycholinguistic Aspects of Idiom Perception

The psycholinguistic aspect of the perception of idioms is key to understanding how the human brain processes these unique language constructs. Idioms don't just convey a literal meaning; They often carry a hidden, metaphorical meaning that can only be understood in the context of culture and linguistic traditions. Research shows that the perception of idioms requires not only knowledge of language, but also the ability to instantly recognize and interpret metaphorical meanings.

One interesting aspect of idioms is that they are often perceived and processed as a whole rather than the sum of their individual components. This is because the human brain is wired to find meaning in context, which makes idioms a particularly powerful means of expression. It's also interesting to note that native speakers may not be aware of the literal meaning of an idiom, but still have no trouble understanding its figurative meaning in conversation.

The importance of the psycholinguistic aspect of the perception of idioms is especially highlighted in the process of learning a foreign language. Knowing idioms not only expands vocabulary, but also helps you better understand cultural contexts and improve communication skills. This makes them an important element in learning any language, highlighting the importance of cultural awareness in the learning process.

Idioms are essential for the enrichment of language and its expressiveness. They add a unique character to the language, allowing complex ideas and emotions to be expressed through simple yet powerful verbal imagery. Idioms are able to convey nuances that often cannot be fully expressed in literal words, making the language more colorful and lively.

In each language, idioms reflect cultural characteristics and historical contexts, making them not only a means of communication, but also a tool for transmitting cultural heritage. For example, many idioms are based on cultural traditions, literary works, or historical events, making them an important element in understanding the cultural context of a language.

In addition, idioms play a significant role in literature and fiction, enriching texts and providing authors with the opportunity to express their thoughts in a more sophisticated and subtle way. They can be used to create a special atmosphere, to convey the character of the characters, or to add humor and irony to the text.

In this way, idioms not only enrich language, but also serve as a bridge between the past and the present, between culture and language, providing an invaluable means for understanding and learning languages and cultures.

Analysis of Idiomatic Structures in Swedish

Swedish, like many other languages, is rich in idiomatic expressions that vividly reflect its cultural and historical characteristics. Below are some examples of Swedish idioms:

- **"Inte alla hästar i stallet"** literally translates to "not all the horses in the stable". This expression is used to describe someone who behaves strangely or irrationally.



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- **"Att glida in på en räkmacka"** literally means "to slide on a shrimp sandwich", which means to succeed with minimal effort.
- **"Det ligger en hund begraven"** – "a dog is buried here" – is used when it is assumed that there is a hidden problem or mystery in the situation.
- **"Att kasta sten i glashus"** - literally "to throw a stone at a glass house", which corresponds to the English expression "to throw stones while sitting in a glass house", and means to criticize someone while ignoring one's own shortcomings.

These idioms are examples of how language can use figurative and metaphorical expressions to describe complex ideas and emotions. They show how idioms become part of everyday speech, becoming an integral part of linguistic expression and cultural exchange. The importance of these idiomatic expressions lies not only in their literal meaning, but also in how they reflect the cultural characteristics, history, and worldview of the Swedish people.

Cultural and Contextual Aspects of Swedish Idioms

Swedish idioms are a mirror of the cultural and social features of Sweden, reflecting the historical, everyday and mental aspects of the life of the Swedish people. Each idiom carries a unique combination of cultural meanings and contexts that can only be fully understood within Swedish culture. For example:

- **"Lägga näsan i blöt"** (literally, "to wet one's nose") is used to refer to interference in other people's affairs. This idiom reflects the Swedish perception of personal space and respect for the privacy of others.
- **"Gå som katten kring het gröt"** (to beat around the bush, literally "to walk like a cat around hot porridge") underlines the Swedish penchant for avoiding direct and frank discussions, preferring a more cautious and tactful approach.
- **"Det är ingen ko på isen"** (no cow on the ice) means that there is no cause for concern. This idiom illustrates the typical Swedes calmness and moderation in responding to problems.
- **"Att ha många järn i elden"** (to have a lot of iron in the fire) reflects the multitasking and active lifestyle that is common to Swedes.

These examples highlight how closely idioms are intertwined with the culture and traditions of the people. Understanding them provides a deeper understanding of Swedish culture, its values and worldview, making the study of idioms not just a language exercise, but an immersion in the cultural dimension of the language.

Analysis of Idiomatic Structures in the German Language

German, like Swedish, is rich in idioms that are often used in everyday speech and have deep cultural roots. Here are some examples of German idioms:

- **"Da liegt der Hund begraben"** literally means "there is a dog buried there". This expression is used to indicate the main problem or the key part of the question.



- **"Etwas in den Sand setzen"** is literally "to bury something in the sand", which means to fail or spoil the business.
- **"Hals- und Beinbruch"** - literally "fracture of the neck and leg", similar to the English "break a leg", is used as a wish for good luck.
- **"Jemandem die Daumen drücken"** means "to keep one's fingers crossed", which corresponds to the English "keep one's fingers crossed" and means to hope for success or good fortune.

These idioms reflect the cultural characteristics and traditions of the German people, as well as their way of expressing feelings and views of the world. Knowing and understanding these idiomatic expressions helps to better understand the depth and richness of the German language, as well as providing an opportunity for a deeper understanding of German culture and mentality.

The Influence of Culture on the Interpretation of Idioms

In understanding and interpreting idioms, cultural context plays a fundamental role. Idioms, as part of a language, are closely related to the culture and history of the people who use them. These unique linguistic constructs often include references to cultural symbols, historical events, and social norms that can only be fully understood in the context of the culture in question. For example, idioms can reflect attitudes in society, approaches to work or family relationships, and can also be based on cultural imagery and metaphors that enrich language and give it unique shades.

When idioms are translated from one language to another, it is important to consider their cultural specificity in order to preserve their original meaning and emotional connotation. In this context, translators and language researchers need not only knowledge of the language, but also an understanding of the cultural and historical aspects that underlie these idioms. As such, idioms are a powerful tool for exploring cultural diversity and understanding between different linguistic and cultural groups.

Table 1

| Swedish idiom | Translation into Russian | German idiom | Translation into Russian |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Inte alla hästar i stallet</i> | Not all the horses are in the stable | <i>Da liegt der Hund begraben</i> | There's a dog buried there |
| <i>Att glida in på en räkmacka</i> | Slide on a shrimp sandwich | <i>Etwas in den Sand setzen</i> | Bury something in the sand |
| <i>Det ligger en hund begraven</i> | A dog is buried here | <i>Hals- und Beinbruch</i> | Fracture of the neck and leg |
| <i>Gå som katten kring het gröt</i> | Beating around the bush | <i>Jemandem die Daumen drücken</i> | Keeping Your Fingers Crossed For Someone |

Comparative Analysis of Swedish-German Idioms

Idiomatic Differences and Similarities: Comparing Swedish and German idioms, we can see that while they may have similar themes, such as the use of animals or natural elements to express



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ideas, their specific uses and meanings can vary greatly. This reflects the unique cultural contexts and ways of thinking of each nation.

Cultural influence on idioms: The idioms "Not all horses are in the stable" and "There's a dog buried there" in Swedish and German, respectively, illustrate different ways of expressing the concept of mystery or something hidden. This may reflect different cultural approaches to discussing and solving problems.

Symbolism and imagery: The use of imagery such as "sliding on a shrimp sandwich" and "burying something in the sand" emphasizes the richness of language and the ability of idioms to convey complex ideas and concepts through simple yet powerful imagery.

Communication and Interpretation: Idioms in both languages are used to convey emotions, intentions, and outlooks on life, making them a key element in communication and understanding between cultures. They also play an important role in language learning by providing context for a deeper understanding of cultural nuances.

Conclusion

Studying and comparing Swedish and German idioms opens a unique window into understanding the cultural differences and similarities between the two languages. Idioms serve not only as a means of expressive linguistic communication, but also as cultural markers reflecting the history, traditions, and way of life of peoples. They demonstrate how language and culture are interconnected, allowing for a deeper understanding of the mentality and attitudes of the people who speak these languages.

The study of idiomatic expressions is an important aspect of linguistic research, as it helps language scholars, translators, and students better understand the nuances and contexts that play a key role in intercultural communication and language learning. As such, idioms represent a valuable resource for anyone interested in languages, literature, and culture.

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