

# Learning German: The significance of language in a multicultural graduate school

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# Background

The HOSST and TOSST transatlantic graduate schools were conceived and designed as

multidisciplinary  
and  
multicultural

training opportunities.



# Locations

A map of the North Atlantic Ocean with three locations marked by black dots and connected by thin lines. The locations are Halifax, Canada (on the west coast of North America), Kiel, Germany (on the northeast coast of Europe), and Mindelo, Cabo Verde (in the central Atlantic). Three large blue circular callouts provide additional information about each location and the programs TOSST and HOSST.

Halifax,  
Canada

Cabo Verde is a  
HOSST/TOSST partner  
location (summer schools,  
research collaborations).

The North Atlantic is the  
focus area of TOSST/  
HOSST.

Kiel,  
Germany

HOSST is  
based at the  
GEOMAR Helm-  
holtz Centre for  
Ocean Research in  
Kiel, Germany.

TOSST is run out  
of Dalhousie  
University in  
Halifax,  
Canada.

Mindelo,  
Cabo Verde



# English

English is the language of science. Thus, the main language of communication in both the HOSST and TOSST program is English.

For most HOSST- and TOSST students, however, English is not their native tongue, but a second or even third language.



# Language is culture, culture is language

Language is a fundamental aspect of any culture; in fact, they are intertwined and mutually influence each other.

A culture can only be fully understood through its corresponding language, while interacting with a different language always also illuminates the respective culture.



<https://www.briefmarken-sammlung.com/briefmarken/1003537.jpg>

# Cross-cultural research exchange

An integral part of the HOSST- and TOSST graduate schools is the requirement that each student spends a 4-month research exchange at the sister institution.

For most TOSST students, this meant immersing themselves not only into the German culture but also the German language.



# Getting ready to live and work in Germany

TOSST offered their students a German language course

- to make working and living in Kiel easier
- due to student request
- solidly supported by the TOSST leadership team
- organized by the local German Heritage Language School



GERMAN  
HERITAGE  
LANGUAGE  
SCHOOL

# Learning German

Many students accepted the offer to immerse themselves into a new language and culture ahead of their research exchange.

Some even continued upon their return to Halifax.





# The TOSST German course

- LEVEL: Beginners (A1-A2)
- DURATION: 2 years, 6 terms
- CLASSES: 2 hours/week, 14 weeks/term
- NUMBER OF STUDENTS: 10 (7 TOSST, 1 HOSST, 2 external)
- PRIOR LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCE: highly prevalent
- ENGAGEMENT: Students attended from 1 to 6 terms
- COMPLETION: Two students were preparing for the Goethe-Prüfung (standardized German language exam) when the pandemic stopped everything

studio[express]



KOMPAKTURS DEUTSCH

A1

Kursbuch | Übungsbuch



Cornelsen



[www.cornelsen.de](http://www.cornelsen.de)

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KOMPAKTURS DEUTSCH

A2

Kursbuch | Übungsbuch



Cornelsen



# Language skills, language goals



After one or two terms, the students obviously did not reach fluency.

But studying German prepared them to engage with residents in everyday situations and to better understand the local culture.

# Further benefits

Both the students and the teacher found interacting with the German language as part of their work days to foster their creativity by providing a different stimulus than their usual research efforts.



# Lifelong learning, lifelong friendships

The German course further provided an opportunity to build and deepen friendships among TOSST students across cultures and disciplines.





# What a student had to say

“I had the opportunity of taking German classes supported by TOSST before undertaking my research exchange in Germany and it was incredibly useful and empowering. I did not only learn about the language but about the culture, gastronomy, history and acquired very practical basic conversation skills to use while living in Kiel. The classes helped to make my research exchange a successful and fun experience! Tschüss!”

# We laughed a lot, now it is your turn

1

LEHRERIN



Was habt ihr am  
Wochenende gemacht?

2

STUDENTEN



Wir haben einen  
Ausflug gemacht!

3

LEHRERIN



Und was habt ihr  
gesehen?

4

STUDENTEN



Wir haben einen  
großen... Igel...  
gesehen!

5

LEHRERIN



Einen großen Igel?

6

STUDENTEN



Ja! Die Igel hier sind  
sehr groß. Sie können  
Katzen jagen!

7

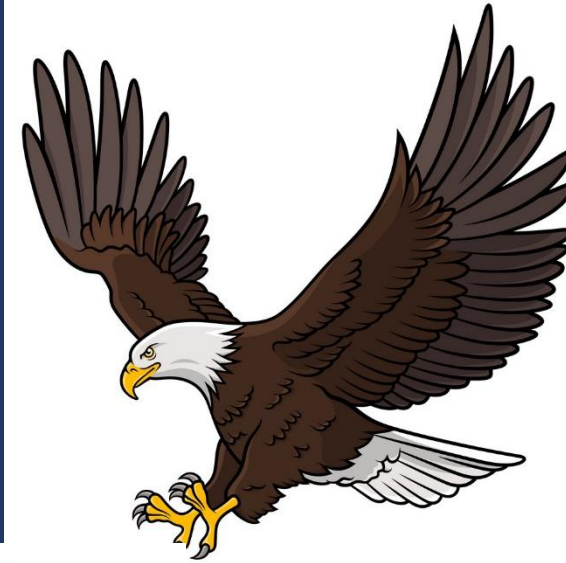
LEHRERIN



Wirklich?!

Man merke:  
**EIN IGEL IST  
KEIN ADLER.**

ein Igel



ein Adler

(eagle sounds  
like Igel)

(eine Katze)



# Vielen Dank!

Thank you for your interest!

Please direct any questions,  
comments or concerns to  
[m.held@dal.ca](mailto:m.held@dal.ca) . Danke.

