Learning a German Conversation in a Restaurant Using an iPad

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Abstract

What do learning by doing, information and communications technology in the classroom, and self-evaluation have in common? This paper presents not only a theoretical background but also a practical case.

This article presents how pupils of the 8th grade of primary school learned a conversation in a restaurant in German. They used an iPad and the applications that it offers to achieve their goal – speaking fluently and reacting correctly when they order and pay food and drinks in a restaurant. Since they had been learning German for five years, they were able to reinforce the words related to food with interactive exercises by themselves. Then they watched a video in German titled 'In a restaurant', translated phrases with the online dictionary, learned phrases and words, and filmed their conversations with iPads. Then they evaluated their conversations based on various criteria using iPads again.

Keywords: Learning German, iPad, filming and self-evaluating dialogues

INTRODUCTION

At our school, pupils can learn German for six years. They can start in the 4th grade and learn until the 9th grade straight or join the class at the beginning of each grade. The 8th-grade pupils, whose work is presented in this paper, have been learning German since the 4th grade, e. g. five years.

This paper shows how they learned using phrases and words in a real situation of their every day life – in a restaurant. They played the roles of a waiter and guest: they ordered food and drinks, they asked for the bill and paid it. They reacted correctly and sensibly in their roles. This paper shows step by step how information and communications technology (in our case iPads) helped them to acquire this knowledge. Moreover, the pupils filmed their dialogues and self-evaluated themselves using iPads. The paper presents the learning steps supported by iPad applications to achieve the main goal – to be able to talk fluently in a restaurant.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Learning by doing

"We learn skills in many ways, listening to lectures, listening to recordings, watching videos and films, live presentations or performances and by doing. Doing covers a wide range of activities, from practice and simulation sessions in the classroom," says Bartle (2012). Reese (2011) defines learning by doing as "learning from experiences resulting directly from one's own actions."

Furthermore, the Learning Pyramid shows that students learn more when they discuss, practice doing or teach others (Education Corner, 2020). Practical experience shows that this is very much true. Whenever students do something by themselves, they learn more, which was also true in our case.

In German language classes, we support learning by doing. In our case, pupils played the roles of a waiter and a guest in the restaurant and experienced by themselves what to say and how to react in such a situation. In the end they told us what they thought of such learning and how much they had learned.

Information and communications technology (ICT) in the classroom

Students are already interested and engaged in using technology. This creates many opportunities for schools and teachers to benefit from integrating technology in the classroom and to make teaching and learning more effective. Firstly, when technology is integrated into lessons, students are more interested in the subject. Secondly, students who are engaged and interested in things they are studying have better knowledge retention, because technology encourages active participation in the classroom. Thirdly, no one learns in the same way because of different learning styles and different abilities. Technology makes learning more effective for everyone, regardless of their needs. Fourthly, technology encourages collaboration between students (e. g. working on different projects, sharing documents, collaborating in forums, etc.). Furthermore, students can learn useful life skills through technology that are essential for the 21st century. And, last but not least, technology can help improve teaching. Teachers can use different apps or trusted online resources. Virtual lesson plans, grading software, and online assessments can help teachers save a lot of time, according to Savvidis (2020).

In our practical case, ICT was involved in the teaching and learning process, and the paper also shows the benefits that technology brought to our German language lessons.

Self-evaluation

When students want to evaluate their own work by themselves, they should participate in developing the evaluation criteria. Once students understand the goals and criteria, they must have the opportunities to evaluate their own performance and make adjustments. Furthermore, reflection is a critical part of the self-evaluation process. Reflection helps students think about what they know or have learned (McMillan and Hern, 2008).

After our pupils filmed and watched at the dialogues in the restaurant, they self-evaluated their work with the help of the criteria they had developed several lessons before this activity. Their evaluation was supported by ICT – the Xooltime online classroom. They performed their evaluation on iPads that were available in the school's mobile classroom.

LEARNING A GERMAN CONVERSATION IN A RESTAURANT USING AN IPAD

Video 'In the restaurant'

Since the pupils have been learning German for five years, they know a lot of words related to food. Therefore, it was not necessary to learn words anew. They just repeated and reinforced them using different interactive exercises on the Internet.

Then they watched a video 'In the restaurant' on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W37gDs2lUOk.

Picture 1: Video 'In the restaurant'

Adapted from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W37gDs2lUOk.

Then the pupils discussed the content of the video with the teacher in the classroom. For their homework, they described what happened in the restaurant using 5−7 German sentences. The pupils sent their descriptions to the teacher via e-mail (Gmail) using iPads or computers. The teacher provided feedback about their work via e-mail (Gmail) again.

Handout 'In the restaurant'

In the second lesson, the pupils obtained a handout with a dialogue titled 'In the restaurant'. They knew the meaning of most phrases and repeated the pronunciation of the words and phrases after the teacher.

Picture 2: Handout with the dialog titled 'In the restaurant'

IM RESTAURANT

Kellner:	Guten Tag!
Gast:	Guten Tag!
Kellner:	Was kann ich Ihnen bringen?
Gast:	Bringen Sie mir die Speisekarte und die Getränkekarte, bitte.
…	
Gast:	Danke. Was empfehlen Sie heute?
Kellner:	Die Rindfleischsuppe und Wiener Schnitzel mit Bratkartoffeln.
	Was möchten Sie essen?
	Was möchten Sie trinken?
Gast:	Ich trinke … **+ AKK!!!**
Gast:	Als Vorspeise
	Als Hauptgericht esse / nehme ich **+ AKK!!**
	Als Nachtisch / als Dessert
Kellner:	Danke für Ihre Bestellung.
…	
Kellner:	Guten Appetit!
Gast:	Danke.
…	
Kellner:	Na, hat's geschmeckt?
Gast:	Danke, es war sehr lecker.
…	
Gast:	Entschuldigung, die Rechnung bitte!
Kellner:	Komme gleich! / Sofort!
…	
Kellner:	Bezahlen Sie zusammen oder getrennt?
Gast:	Zusammen.
Kellner:	Das macht 19,90 €.
Gast:	20 €. Stimmt so.
Kellner:	Vielen Dank! / Danke schön!
Gast:	Auf Wiedersehen!
Kellner:	Auf Wiedersehen! Kommen Sie wieder!

Adapted from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W37gDs2lUOk.

They looked up the unknown words in an online dictionary sl.pons.com and translated the dialogue into the Slovenian language. For their homework, the pupils wrote a dialogue titled 'In the restaurant' using the phrases from the handout. They sent the conversation to the teacher via e-mail. The teacher provided feedback about their dialogues. For their homework, the pupils learnt the phrases and repeated the vocabulary very well.

Picture 3: Translating German vocabulary into Slovenian language

Adapted from: https://sl.pons.com/prevod/nemščina-slovenščina/Speisekarte

Filming a dialogue

In the third lesson, the teacher brought accessories – tablecloth, cutlery, plates, glasses, napkins, a list of beverages, and menu – into the classroom. She also brought iPads in a mobile classroom (it is a big iron box, locked with a key, with iPads inside). Three pupils played the roles of the waiter and two guests. Other pupils filmed the conversation using the iPad Camera application from different angles. Then they changed roles so that each pupil talked and filmed the conversation. When this activity was over, the pupils sent their films to the teacher's e-mail via wetransfer.com.

Evaluation of the 'In the restaurant' dialogue

In the fourth lesson, the pupils watched their dialogues and evaluated them following the criteria of the Xooltime online classroom. Each pupil evaluated his/her own dialogue. Twelve pupils took part in the whole process. The pupils' answers were the following:

Chart 1: Content and length of the dialogue

Adapted from: https://xooltime.com/teacher/8218#/

A) The content and length of the dialogue are adequate (9 pupils).

B) The content is adequate and the length does not deviate essentially from the foreseen one (2 pupils).

C) The content is mainly adequate and the length does not deviate essentially from the foreseen one. The message is not clear in some places (0 pupils).

D) The content is partly adequate and the length deviates essentially from the foreseen one. The message is not clear in several places (0 pupils).

E) The content is mainly inadequate and too short to evaluate. The message is not clear (1 pupil).

Chart 2: Vocabulary of the dialogue

Adapted from: https://xooltime.com/teacher/8218#/

A) The vocabulary is adequate and rich (5 pupils).

B) The vocabulary is adequate and quite rich (6 pupils).

C) The vocabulary is adequate, basic, and repeats itself (1 pupil).

D) The vocabulary is limited and modest, it repeats itself, and it is often inadequate (0 pupils).

E) The vocabulary is very modest. The dialogue is almost impossible to understand (0 pupils).

Chart 3: Pronunciation of the dialogue

Adapted from: https://xooltime.com/teacher/8218#/
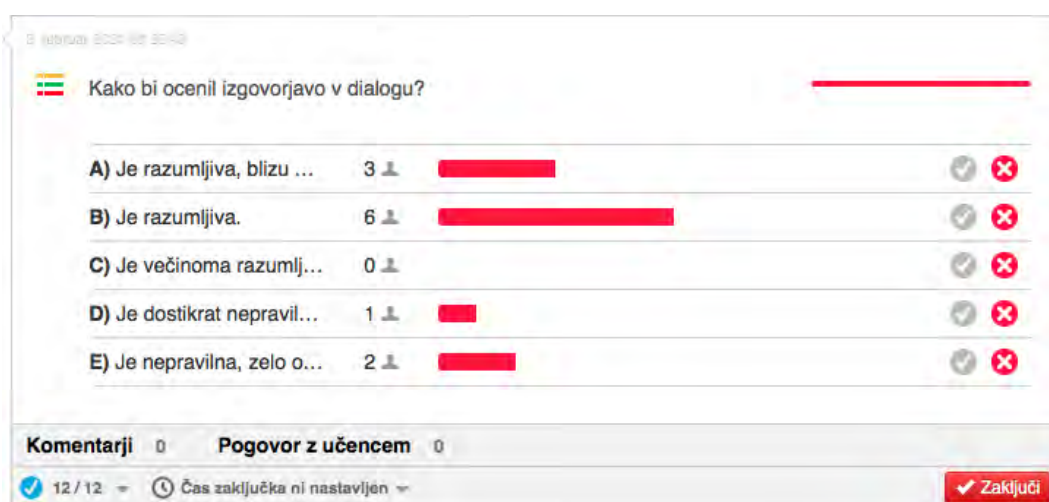
A) The pronunciation is understandable, close to the native speaker (3 pupils).

B) The pronunciation is still understandable, close to the native speaker (6 pupils).

C) The pronunciation is mostly understandable, there are minor deviations that don't make understanding difficult (0 pupils).

D) The pronunciation is incorrect many times, it deviates from the norm substantially, and makes understanding difficult (1 pupil).

E) The pronunciation is incorrect, it deviates from the norm a lot, and makes understanding difficult (2 pupils).

Chart 4: Correctness in language

Adapted from: https://xooltime.com/teacher/8218#/

A) Correct language structures are used (8 pupils).

B) Correct language structures are mostly used (1 pupil).

C) Language structures are used, but mistakes are made many times (0 pupils).

D) Language structures are used, but basic mistakes are often made (2 pupils).

E) Completely wrong language structures are used (1 pupil).

In the end, the teacher provided feedback to the pupils regarding how they played their roles and how they evaluated their own work in the class.

Pupils' opinion about this kind of work

The teacher asked the pupils what they thought about learning German in such a manner – using iPads, filming the dialogues, evaluating themselves. She encouraged them to express their points of view and opinions.

The pupils believe that working out the meaning of new words by themselves in the online dictionary helps them remember new words better, if they translate them by themselves. They like the work in pairs and groups, because they can communicate and get to know many new words. They learn a lot that way.

All the pupils shared the same opinion that filming the dialogues helped their knowledge of the German language. When asked the question 'What did you learn when you filmed the dialogues?' they gave the following answers:

  − I learned a lot.
  − I gained new knowledge.
  − I learned how to order food and drinks.

- I learned the correct pronunciation of the words.
- I learned how to make a conversation in a restaurant.
- I learned a lot of new words.
- I learned almost the whole vocabulary.
- I learned a lot.
- I learned German.

CONCLUSION

The fact is that the pupils were active and motivated the whole time. They were very keen to learn. They reacted very positively towards working with iPads: online dictionary sl.pons.com, Gmail, filming with the Camera application, and evaluating in the online classroom. The latter gave them a new view of their work. They were concentrated and eager to co-operate. They enjoyed listening to each other and in the end, they watched their conversations. Consequently, they learned a lot in the classroom and they didn't have to repeat and reinforce so much at home. It turned out that reasonable use of ICT in the lessons is welcome. Not only it makes the lessons more interesting, but it also helps the pupils acquire the wanted knowledge. Still, it is necessary to make sure in the foreign language lessons that the pupils speak and write enough, and that they create texts by themselves – spoken as well as written. These activities were well supported in this case with the Gmail and Camera applications.

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