Creating Settings for Successful Virtual Collaborations in a Language Learning Classroom:

First results of a literature review

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Being aware of whether the learner is learning

Transforming the knowledge into something „teachable/learnable“

Adaptability of teaching approach

learning curve resources, activities, methods, design

didactics content selection and evaluation, personal relevance, teacher’s competence

communication, rules, relations, responsibilities, expectations

Johann Friedrich Herbart
(1776 – 1841)

The „What“ and „How“ of Language Teaching and Learning: Pedagogical (didactic) Triangle

Language as the subject of teaching and learning

- Language
- Formulaic Chunks
- Form-meaning pairings
- Principles and parameters
- With/without resource packs
- With/without a facilitator

- What?
- How?
- Institutional

Learner variables:
- Age, L1 and other languages, motivation, aptitude, time, engagement and involvement, interest and other learner variables
The „What“ and „How“ of Language Teaching and Learning: Pedagogical (didactic) Triangle

- **What?**
  - Language
    - Formulaic Chunks
    - Prinzipien und Parameter
    - S1-R1; S2-R2
    - audiovisual and social media
  - Institutional
    - with/without a resource pack
      - social environment
        - with/without a facilitator
  - Incidental
    - incidental
      - audiovisual and social media
      - input and noticing

- **How?**
  - learner
    - age, L1 and other languages, motivation, aptitude, time, engagement and involvement, interest and other learner variables

- **What is language?**...
Oral Approach and Situational Language Learning (Situationsansatz)

Approach

Linguistic Theory
Structuralism

Assumptions regarding language learning:
Behaviourism (processes, but not learning setting)

Speaking as the central skill

Design
(mainly language-based curriculum)

Learning Goals:
Error-free grammar and pronunciation;
Reacting in oral communication;
Basic sentence structures

Types of Activities
The use of realia and fotos with accompanying action gestures
Material: Coursebook and visual aids

Learners’ role: listen and repeat/answer questions/comment
Teacher’s role: role model/present/give instructions

Structure

Pronunciation
Revision
Presentation
Oral Training
Reading and Writing Activities
Listening Comprehension
choral repetition

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The „What“ and „How“ of Language Teaching and Learning: Pedagogical (didactic) Triangle

age, L1 and other languages, motivation, aptitude, time, engagement and involvement, interest and other learner variables

learner

How?

in incidental

Input und noticing

audiovisual

social media

How does the learner learn?
What does the learning process look like?

social environment

with/without a facilitator

with/without a resource pack

What’s the driving force of this learning?

What are the necessary prerequisites for successful learning?

language

How?

institutional

Prinzipien und Parameter

Formulaic Chunks

What is the learning process like?

What’s the driving force of this learning?

What are the necessary prerequisites for successful learning?

S1-R1; S2-R2

What is language?
The „What“ and „How“ of Language Teaching and Learning: Pedagogical (didactic) Triangle

What are the necessary prerequisites for successful learning?

- Quality of the input
- Communicative activities should be of relevance to the learner
- New linguistic information is integrated into already existing knowledge
- Reflective of the learner’s experience
- Within the learner’s zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1980)
The „What“ and „How“ of Language Teaching and Learning: Pedagogical (didactic) Triangle

- What? language
  - S1-R1; S2-R2
  - Prinzipien und Parameter
  - Formulaic Chunks
  - ....
- How? institutional
- learner
- incidental
  - audiovisual and social media
  - social environment
  - with/without a facilitator
  - with/without a resource pack

What's the immediate utility of audio and social media in language learning?

age, L1 and other languages, motivation, aptitude, time, engagement and involvement, interest and other learner variables
Steel & Levy (2013) 587 BA-students at an Australian University studying different foreign languages

- Online learning platforms and tools for studying foreign languages (Online dictionaries; websites with conjugations etc.) are the most commonly used ones;
- more than half of the informants mentioned YouTube and social networks;

Eksi & Ayidin (2013) 177 EFL students in their first year of university studies

- Dictionaries and vocabulary learning tools are the most commonly used media resources;
- music, films, TV-series and Youtube are also quite common.

Interactive tools (communication tools; online chatting; video conferencing etc.) are least frequently used
The main benefit is better understanding of language use and culture; some respondents are sceptical with regard to the development of language skills.

Homework preparation and revision of the content.

„only a limited few used related technological resources to connect with native speakers of the language and to interact with others for the purpose of daily life communication and social exchange…“

We greeted each other and then we asked about how the day went, what we had for lunch and what we ate and did yesterday. Then just after a while, I felt, and I think he felt too, bored

Like when I communicated with my friends on WhatsApp, we could not actually talk about something that’s real in my life. And for this, it’s really just for learning. It’s really not authentic enough

It’s more public, right? Everybody could see it. Anybody who could follow you could see you had made a mistake. … It’s a little bit embarrassing in that way

„…the participants reported a tendency to connect with their classmates, but not with native speakers of a language, and to use these experiences as venues for learning, such as solving problems with homework or eliciting error corrections…“
Competences of Facilitators (Ernest et al., 2013; O‘Dowd et al., 2019)

though students can gain increased motivation, linguistic output, participation and interaction during synchronous online teaching (Helm, 2015), teachers may not be prepared to teach online in real-time as it requires new digital competences (Starkey, 2020)

„the nature of discourse facilitated electronically actually ascribes a greater importance to teachers, and thus to teacher education programmes“ (Belz, 2003)

- Designing appropriate tasks (initial warm-up and closing activities);
- Promoting social interaction (clear instructions/negotiating ground rules for participation);
- Knowing when and how to intervene (cf. a balance between constructive scaffolding & intervening);
- Choosing the right environment and the appropriate tools for the collaborative activity;
- Promoting critical thinking skills amongst learners.

Teacher-training programmes should include hands-on experience of online collaboration; Teachers should themselves be exposed to the opportunities and challenges of virtual environments (Ernest et al., 2013)

Pedagogical Mentoring Strategies (O‘Dowd et al., 2019)
- Presenting online interaction strategies before exchange (examples of successful and less succesful online interactions → how culture, technology and language interact to shape meanings in online communication)
Competences of Facilitators  
(Ernest et al., 2013; O‘Dowd et al., 2019)  

Pedagogical Mentoring Strategies (O‘Dowd et al., 2019)  

- Presenting online interaction strategies before exchange (examples of successful and less successful online interactions → how culture, technology and language interact to shape meanings in online communication);  
- Facilitator-led models of virtual exchange: Trained intercultural educators take place in synchronous online discussions between students (cf. Soliya Connect (2018); Sharing Perspectives (2018)) → good facilitator skills such as active listening, asking good questions, summarizing and reframing, managing power dynamics, building a sense of safety and trust.  
- Using students’ communications as content for subsequent classes → data-driven pedagogical interventions (Cunnigham & Vyatkina, 2012), e.g. sociopragmatic use of certain linguistic structures in US-German bilingual telecollaborations (use of modal verbs in German for establishing social distance)
Competences of Facilitators (Ernest et al., 2013; O’Dowd et al., 2019)

“…communication breakdowns and misunderstandings in online intercultural exchange should be considered as opportunities for reflection and learning and not as failure of the learning process…”

Pedagogical Mentoring Timeline
Construction of Tasks (Gonzalez-Lloret, 2020)

- primary focused on meaning (part of the learning should be incidental)
- goal-oriented (with a communicative purpose and an outcome resulting from the task completion)
- learner-centered (engages learner's linguistic, nonlinguistic, and digital resources)
- as authentic as possible/related to the learner's real world
- a task should have a reflective component
- promote true collaboration and learner interaction (Gonzalez-Lloret, 2020)

Extempore allows instructors to obtain and assess authentic speech without having to schedule face-to-face time with each student. Instructors can now create an activity on the Extempore website, selecting a set of parameters for each question, depending on the learning objectives. When configuring a final exam or any other form of summative assessment, for example, the teacher may limit the time the student has between reviewing the prompt and answering the question.
Construction of Tasks
(Gonzalez-Lloret, 2020)

Task 3: A Netflix mini-series
Level: Advanced
Skills: Writing and speaking-listening
Technology: Google documents, Google slides, Google Meet, and Google forms

In groups, learners prepare a pitch to Netflix for a new movie or mini-series. The topic can be predecided by the teacher according to topics in the curriculum or left open. Learners collaboratively discuss (using the chat or video function in Google) and write their idea in a Google document (i.e., format, synopsis, characters, episode breakouts, etc.); develop a presentation using Google slides (or any other tool) to present the idea to the class; and video record themselves performing a dialogue in the show. After all the proposals are complete, the feedback has been incorporated, and their ideas and language perfected, the presentations are shared (in a Google shared folder) with classmates and students vote on the best idea using Google forms.

Task 4: Art and Artists
Skills: Reading and speaking-listening
Technology: Email and Zoom

At a novice level, each learner is assigned via email a famous painting from the C2 which they need to describe (what are they doing, colors, like, dislike...). At an intermediate level, the teacher assigns a painting, sculpture... and the name of the author and the learners need to find and read information about the author and the piece of art (origin, what represents, where it was painted, where we can see it now...). Afterward, each student presents their painting to the class and the other students have a chance to ask questions. As a follow-up, students write a short essay describing what three paintings they would like to have hanging in their house and why. At an advanced level, each student could virtually visit a museum and select their favorite piece of art, research about the author and the piece, and then present it to their classmates, emphasizing why that piece is special for them. See for example, the virtual tours of the Louvre (https://www.louvre.fr/en/visites-en-ligne#tabs), the Remwick Gallery at Smithsonian American Art Museum (http://americanart.si.edu/multimedia/wonder360/), or the Museum of Frida Kahlo (https://www.museofridakahlo.org.mx/en/the-blue-house/multimedia/).

https://calcommunities.org/index.php/calmex-demo/
### Potential and Limitations of Tools

(Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020)

- one of the most popular STMs;
- features such as annotation tools, polls, BORs, video & screen sharing
- communicative language learning through the use of authentic language instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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<tr>
<td>non-verbal icons for questions, agreement, slowing down or speeding up; for teachers to provide corrective feedback (Wang &amp; Loewen, 2016)</td>
<td>group discussions take longer and are more challenging to monitor compared to F2F lessons</td>
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<td>BORs – opportunities for students to use language productively, meaning-focused output, student-to-student interaction (Nation, 2007), e.g. spoken language practice, discussions, role-plays</td>
<td>Students are less willing to self-nominate themselves to respond to questions or provide opinions</td>
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<td>In combination with other tools (Google Forms, Google docs) – co-construct texts, complete language exercises in groups</td>
<td>hard to observe learners’ engagement (Moorhouse, 2020)</td>
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<td>polls and surveys – gather answers, perceptions, ideas from the class/formative assessment/exercises with right/wrong answers</td>
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<td>Whiteboard function – mismatch between language production and the target form; highlight cohesive devices, stamp-feature to indicate parts of speech or underline stress in two-syllable words</td>
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*STM – synchronous meeting tool*
Google Apps
(Abdel-Reheem Amin, 2020)

- GALL – Google Assisted Language Learning
  learners learn by creating, commenting, sharing documents and ideas (McNeely, 2015)
- Pedagogical utility of tools that are communicative, informative, productive and collaborative
- Add-Ons for Google Docs: clipboard, translate EasyBib, Track Changes
- Google Classroom: create classes and invite students/add assignments, tests, questions, share posts, create and schedule announcements
- Areas of Investigation: vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, accuracy of speech, lexical knowledge, error correction, collaborative writing, engagement in reading classes, using reading strategies, quality and accuracy of translation

Table 1. In-depth review studies by research field

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Google Apps
(Abdel-Reheem Amin, 2020)

➢ Google Earth in a game-based learning class improves vocabulary acquisition; reading and writing skills, language learning (Dourda et al., 2014);
➢ Google Docs and Google search engines improve students’ writing performance; Google search engines help students indentify and correct writing errors;
➢ Google speech recognition system as a valuable tool in English language learning
➢ Google Docs as a Tool for Reading Comprehension Development (Park, 2013): shared place for a group of students to discuss what they have read in a book/collaborative note on a chapter in the textbook/summarize key concepts/re-reading chapters for clarification of questions/drawing a concept map etc.
12-week postgraduate *English for special purposes* course for military and civilian students;

- share the course outline, the bibliography, the academic requirements (+);
- share students’ performance records, feedback on their projects, presentations, assignments, e-portfolios etc. (+);
- teachers read files, highlight, leave comments on it, save annotations (+);
- student-to student exchange of ideas/useful materials → students feel empowered and responsible for the overall success of the course (+);
- files can be deleted from free and inactive accounts (-)
Take-Home Messages from the Review
(Chisega-Negrila, Kraft, 2020)

• Language learners’ use of online tools is mostly receptive; especially at lower levels of linguistic competence they rarely find social aspects and possibilities to connect attractive enough;
• Computer-supported collaborative learning is promising: „Each individual learns more than what he or she would learn on his or her own as a result of the interaction with other team members“ (Guitert & Giménez, 2000; translated by Ernest et al., 2013);
• Simply engaging learners in virtual exchange does not guarantee successful outcomes, such as developing intercultural and digital competences;
• Teachers should be equipped with the necessary skills to design appropriate tasks, choose the right environment and appropriate tools;
• The tasks should promote true collaboration and build classroom community;
• Teachers should be on the look-out for the so-called *rich points* (Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2002) that may involve both linguistic phenomena and, more importantly, interactional and communication strategies and linguistic phenomena related to interpersonal and intercultural (mis-)understanding.
Vielen Dank!

Time for questions!