



THE ROLE OF HOMETASKS IN TEACHING GERMAN AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5821847>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 20th December 2021
Accepted: 25th December 2021
Online: 30th December 2021

KEY WORDS

*homework, foreign
language, interesting,
learning, teaching*

ABSTRACT

In the article were analyzed the role of hometasks in teaching German as foreign language

Homework continues to appear to be a stepchild of foreign language teaching: everyone knows it and uses it, but nobody wants to seriously think about it. Especially digitally supported homework offers freedom that can be used in a motivating and profitable way for foreign language acquisition. In many contexts in which the learning of German as a foreign language is institutionally controlled, homework is an integral part of the lesson: learners carry out task-based learning activities outside of the actual lesson time as a continuation of the lesson, with the tasks mostly being set by the teacher and the results by them to be controlled.

MAIN PART

The practice of homework in GFL lessons seems to have hardly changed in the last few decades: Homework is given regularly and a lot, but it often lacks a "concrete, meaningful, comprehensible and well-planned role in the entire lesson

preparation, implementation and also-postprocessing". As a rule, teachers use homework as a follow-up. Homework is used to practice and check new learning material, to carry out a transfer or to apply something productively.

Teachers only occasionally give up homework in order to expand or supplement the lessons, to complete or deepen what they have learned. In doing so, the teacher is wasting valuable potential. Because homework can also be used in preparation for lessons, for example to activate known knowledge. This can make it easier for learners to hear and read texts in subsequent lessons. In addition, learners can develop expectations so that they are more motivated to face new content, or gain new knowledge and insights in a self-directed manner.

Closely related to this is the possibility of using homework for the (further) development of independence:



Homework is the element of teaching in which the self-control skills of the learner are more strongly required by the external framework conditions than in many phases of face-to-face teaching. Often, learners are left alone with this requirement (and potential). We should therefore urgently think and talk more about the sensible use and organization of homework time.

Methodical suggestions for the effective and motivating design of homework primarily relate to aspects of teaching organization. In addition to the interlinking of lessons and homework, the feedback is also a critical point.

If teachers only give up a homework afterwards and they neither control the processing nor include it in the subsequent lessons, the homework is often of no real significance for the learners or for the lesson. The likelihood that they will not be done at all or only half-heartedly increases. If, on the other hand, homework is used in a preparatory function, it is automatically interlinked. In this way, learners can also be given more responsibility for the lesson and its success, for example by preparing lesson content not only for themselves but also for other learners. In order not to jeopardize the quality of the teaching, learners must be prepared for this independent work. To do this, the teacher should introduce helpful strategies in class and practice them with the learners. Teachers should provide relevant feedback on homework.

With regard to feedback, empirical studies show, among other things, that expected factual feedback increases willingness to process it. This is not only due to the fact that the learners are preparing for a control of their homework. For them, factual feedback often also represents recognition of their work and shows the

teacher's interest in their results. At the same time, in the sense of lifelong learning, learners should also be motivated to request feedback or to organize feedback themselves.

Not only organizational aspects, but also socio-emotional aspects play an important role in homework. This also includes the motivation of the learner: Motivating homework generally requires motivating lessons. The motivation of the learner can also be increased by the special design of the homework. This means that the design of the homework should follow the same principles as the lessons. If teachers make this action-oriented, homework should also offer incentives to deal with the language in an active manner. Choices and thinking about meaningful homework together can also have positive effects. Interest-based internet research can increase the motivation of learners for homework - if the results play a role in subsequent lessons.

The blended learning approach (i.e. the mixture of face-to-face and online teaching) can be used to rethink homework. It's not just about using digital media for homework, but also about figuring out the screws that can be turned to make the mix of homework and attendance time more colorful (and more effective) overall. Three examples make this clear:

Homework can be used to enable authentic communication and situated learning, for example by coming into contact with target language speakers. Both virtual locations such as a foreign language forum and real locations such as the train station in one's own city can be used for this. Working together on a learning platform and using mobile devices allow the learners to be provided with tasks at these locations



and possibly even to receive direct assistance.

DISCUSSION

Forms of interaction and work. Learners still do their homework physically alone. But completely new constellations are opening up virtually. Social media can be used to increasingly use cooperative forms of work for homework (without great organizational effort). Audio and video chats, cooperative text editors such as Wikis or Google Docs make it possible to work with one another on texts or to discuss content almost in real time. Teachers, on the other hand, can also act as learning assistants during homework: They may be available synchronously at certain times or give individual feedback asynchronously, i.e. delayed.

Individual learning. Homework is very useful for differentiation. For example, depending on their level of learning and their learning preferences, learners could be given the freedom to choose the media

format in which they implement a project task. Here, too, a learning platform is used to make the results accessible to everyone and to enable peer feedback.

If you take the time to take a closer look at homework in foreign language lessons, it quickly becomes clear which treasures are still to be found here. In many cases, however, this requires a rethinking of both teachers and learners.

CONCLUSION

Teachers should (also) design their homework differently, give them more freedom and incorporate digital media. In this way, learners can be encouraged to take on more responsibility for the learning space that they offer homework and to help shape it independently. Then they will no longer see homework as just a necessary evil.

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