

German as a Foreign Language for International Relations:
Methods for dealing with complex teaching topics using German reunification as a case study.

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Overview

- 1. The German reunification as an example for complex topics in German lessons**
- 2. Methodological procedures for dealing with authentic texts**
- 3. Example of a lesson plan**
- 4. Conclusion**

1. The German reunification as an example for complex topics in German lessons

- **Reunification 1990: Important historical milestone**
- **Unique: Peaceful merger of two independent states**
- **Relatively fast (within less than one year)**



1. The German reunification as an example for complex topics in German lessons

- **Relevant for subjects as International Relations, International Law, World Economics**
- **Relevant for Kazakh students especially (Independence of Kazakhstan, Soviet legacy)**
- **Added academic value by looking at "the other side"**



1. The German reunification as an example for complex topics in German lessons

Key questions for Students of IO/IR (...):

- **Who made the decisions about how reunification should be organized?**
- **How and where were law and administration reorganized?**
- **What happened to Germany's international organs, e.g. the foreign ministries of the FRG and the GDR?**
- **Was reunification a merger of two states or an incorporation of one state into the other?**

1. The German reunification as an example for complex topics in German lessons

**Scientifically reliable yet understandable texts include
Manfred Görtemaker, "Probleme der Inneren Einigung"**

<https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/deutsche-einheit/deutsche-teilung-deutsche-einheit/43787/probleme-der-inneren-einigung>



2. Methodological procedures for dealing with authentic texts

1. **Understanding authentic texts**
2. **Pre-Exposure**
3. **Textwork**
4. **Follow-up**

2.1 Understanding authentic texts

- **Texts are not predefined to a specific area**
- **No inflection-tables, no rules to apply**
- **Still, students have to get along with authentic texts. But how?**

kippeln

Verb

| | Person | Wortform |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Präsens | ich | kipp(e)le |
| | du | kippelst |
| | er/sie/es | kippelt |
| Präteritum | ich | kippelte |
| Konjunktiv II (Präteritum) | ich | kippelte |
| Imperativ | Singular | kipp(e)l(e) |
| | Plural | kippel |
| Perfekt | Partizip II | Hilfsverb |
| | gekippelt | haben |

2.1 Understanding authentic texts

- **Solution: Dividing the process into steps**
- **Pre-Exposure to prepare students for the actual matter**
- **According to some didacticians, this is more important than reading itself.**



2.2 Achieving learning objectives in steps

- **Another playful method: "Sun and Moon"**
- **Divide the classroom into accordingly named halves**
- **Formulate statements about topics in the text.**
- **Those who agree move to "sun", those who disagree move to "moon"**



2.2 Achieving learning objectives in steps

Possible statements for the reunification-topic:

- The Berlin Wall was just
- The construction of the Berlin Wall was politically without alternative
- Mikhail Gorbachev was a good politician



2.3 Text-work

- **No reading without tasks (e. g. gather information from the text)**
- **No reading aloud! (Students will be focused on pronunciation rather than content)**
- **Don't translate the text, since translations do not result in the target language becoming embedded in the student's memory.**



2.3 Text-work

- **Method: "Circle of stairs"**
(two students sit facing each other at a time.)
- **Everybody has to read the text in a given time, then try to reconstruct it with their partner (without looking at it again)**
- **Afterwards, the inner circle "rotates" (--> new pairs, the process is repeated until everybody feels confident with the text)**



3. Example of a lesson plan

The screenshot shows a LibreOffice Writer window titled 'Unterrichtsskizze für Präsi.odt'. The document contains a table with four columns: 'Time', 'Phase', 'Goals, Description', and 'Social Method'. The table is divided into five rows, each representing a different activity in the lesson plan. The text in the 'Goals, Description' column is italicized. The status bar at the bottom indicates 'Seite 2 von 3', '312 Wörter, 1.818 Zeichen', and 'Deutsch (Deutschland)'. The system tray shows the time as 07:34 on 21.01.2021.

| Time | Phase | Goals, Description | Social Method |
|-----------|--------------|--|----------------------|
| 7 min | pre-exposure | Reactivate and introduce vocabulary on the topic of politics, institutions. <i>- The students receive cards with important vocabulary from the text (e.g. Grundgesetz, Volkskammer, Wirtschaftsordnung) and matching pictures or symbols. They now have to match the vocabulary to the appropriate picture or symbol.</i> | group work |
| 10 min | pre-exposure | Arouse curiosity about the text. <i>- Sun and moon (see above). At the end, announce that you are about to read a text and ask what these statements might have to do with the text.</i> | plenary |
| 3 min | pre-exposure | Arouse curiosity about the text and consolidate vocabulary. <i>- The students are now given the title of the text and are asked to formulate hypotheses about the content of the text. It is advisable to give the students a framework to work with, e.g., templates like "I think that..." / "In my opinion, the text is about..."</i> | working on their own |
| 15-20 min | text work | The students should understand the most important theses of the text, e.g.: <i>- Even before reunification, there was a change of power in the GDR. The last East German elections were held according to democratic principles. - The democratically legitimized, last GDR government pleaded for accession to the West German federal territory. - As a result, the former GDR became part of the EU and NATO and the German currency area. There was no new constitution but the West German Basic Law became valid also in the East German territory.</i> | working in pairs |

4. Conclusion

- **German Reunification is a relevant topic for Kazakh students of IO, IE, IL**
- **Authentic texts necessary to understand the topic – >challenge for teachers**
- **With a good set of methods, it should nevertheless be possible to master this topic under reasonable condicitions**



Sources and Literature

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