Bridging the Gap: Teaching and Learning German in High Schools by Tutoring with Students from the University based on Mnemonic Devices

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Introduction

Teaching and learning German as foreign language in the South Eugene High School by tutors in form of students from the University of Oregon is a program based on mnemonic devices. The program is related to the idea of giving a service by students from the University to local High School. The key idea is that first of all students from the University learned about mnemonic devices and could successfully transfer it while learning German.

Several learning strategies could be taught. In that program the focus will be lying on the keyword method. According to the textbook Berliner Platz 1 Neu which is used in most schools, a vocabulary book of approximately 1200 words is designed. (See examples) All the examples were created by students from the German course 101, 102 and 103 in 2010 and 2011 at the University of Oregon.

1.begrüßen= to say hello
Association: **be cruisin**by to say hello
2. das **Getränk**= drink
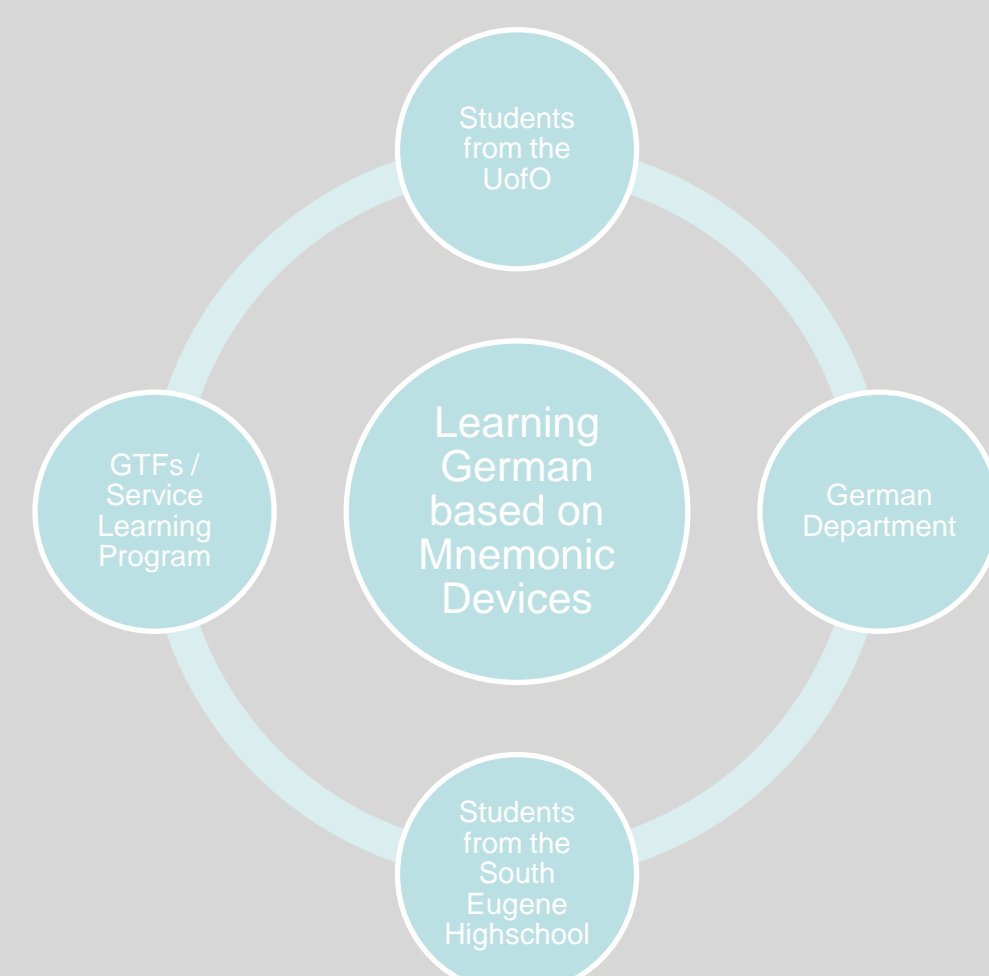Association: I went to **get** a drink and it was **rank** "**get drunk**"
3. anrufen= to call
Association: **an** alien got on the **roof in** Eugene to call me

The purpose is to support high scholars from the very first beginning while learning German. According to the linguistic department of the University of Oregon and several other institutions the agreement is that a language is learned through vocabulary. Because of the necessity of this need, students in schools could get a support from students of Universities.

Related to a service learning program, this program could not just take place in Eugene/Oregon. So far the program is established by the GTF Benjamin Adamic which would be continued by the faculty and stuff of the German and Scandinavian Department of the University of Oregon. The responsible faculty members are Susan Anderson and Matthias Vogel.

As the following diagram shows, the program allows involving several institutions into a learning process whereas each of them is same important and takes responsibility of each other. Such an interdependent progress is an innovative way in education and could support students as best as possible.

Description	Example Activities	Materials
Learning & Memorizing	• Link method with location or person &objects: T hands out images of three locations. Ss know them well so they can associate them with the vocabulary. After the explanation of the T, the Ss match the given words taken from the textbook Berliner Platz 1 NEU to each location. All masculine nouns are matched to the soccer field etc. • The activity can be expanded when students do it in group work and try to match as many nouns with the appropriate location as possible. Here also a third S can be announced as a referee.	Images of Person & Objects
Learning & Memorizing	• Link Method with Memory Cards: In this activity the Ss play regular memory but just with prepared cards from the T. Location and nouns should be matched and repeated. The S with the most cards wins. This activity can be played in pairs or in groups with a maximum of four people. The activity also includes oral skills and refers to an Intake Response Activity.	Memory Cards

Theory

With the following program, "Bridging the Gap: Teaching and Learning German in High Schools by Tutoring with Students from the University based on Mnemonic Devices", the needs of students could be respected and met.

The authors of the article "Teaching abstract vocabulary with the keyword method: Effects on recall and comprehension" examine the use of the keyword technique. As a result they could show that various learner can profit from the keyword method, such as students with learning disabilities. That makes the keyword method very attractive because it does involve all students. The authors of "Keywords Make the Difference! Mnemonic Instruction in Inclusive Classrooms" made a study with 76 participants and investigated the effectiveness of the keyword method. As a result they revealed that learners who used the keyword method were more successful in remembering vocabulary than participants who used verbal definitions or representational pictures. As a result they write that "the keyword method enhances learning of both concrete and abstract vocabulary, as measured by tests of both recall and comprehension" (Uberti, Scruggs &Mastropieri 2003, 57).

Service Learning is a popular form of education in the USA. In Europe and in specific in Germany Service Learning is unknown. Professor Martin Weingardt from the University of Education in Ludwigsburg started in 2009 the first time a transatlantic service learning project in Germany with the support of the Western Oregon University. This led me to enhance the idea of creating tutoring by students from the University for students in the local high school. It could also be described as paying it forward.

Why should students from the University tutor in schools? According to the research studies could show of service learning projects that the success seemed to base on the young and authentic tutors. Whether if it was teaching sport or building new garden ponds in schools. This positive effect should be used as win to win situation. Both sides benefit from learning with each other.

Plan

According to the outcome the input and plan might be quite simple. In 2010 and 2011 the German student Benjamin Adamic introduced to 90 students at the University of Oregon the keyword method. While teaching German in 101 level his students created a vocabulary workbook related to the textbook used in class, called Berliner Platz 1 NEU.   In a qualitative study among these students he could prove that approximately six students were willing to tutor younger students in high schools.

Also, in a qualitative study with the German and Scandinavian Department at the University of Oregon the supervisor Matthias Vogel and Professor Susan Anderson were willing to support this project in form of extra credits where German students could get extra credits for tutoring.

Further, in a qualitative study taken place with the Service Learning Program at the University of Oregon the department director John Duncan is willing to share his knowledge for a successful relation between the University – High School.

Finally the teacher Kathy Saranpa, a German teacher from the South Eugene High School is willing to support the program.
1. All members must get together and leaders as rules should be announced.
2. The existing materials can be used to teach the students at the University by GTFs
3. Students tutor once a week over each term in school or on campus as volunteers students from South Eugene High school. According to the fast learning process the keyword method does not need to be explained very often and after the third or fifth meeting students from school are easily able to learn on their own or if they prefer to stay in touch with a student from University.
4. GTFs introduce every term in each German class (101-301) keyword method and educate students to become volunteers in high schools.
Timeline; No specific date required. Teaching and tutoring can start anytime. Previous know ledge is not necessary because all the materials exist.
Budget and Stuffing:
No budget needed! Students from the University of Oregon are tutoring as volunteers. Rooms in school etc. are available. No extra buildings.
Students can take the bus for free
Stuff: Several members from the department whereas in the beginning an extra meeting is needed. After the meetings are not necessary anymore and just the responsible person can stay in touch via mail.
GTFs support their students
Outcome: The outcome would speculative and therefore a quantitative study should take place if e.g. students who did learn with the keyword method had better grades. Assisting social responsibility for students
Creating a new educational environment where all important social institutions are involved

4. Advantage / Disadvantage

- no costs - authentic teaching by students - better results / more fun - short teaching periods - not many students are needed - existing materials with a vocabulary book based on the keyword method - mnemonic devices is related to intrinsic/ natural learning - high efficiency of keyword method/lasting impact - short amount of time - can be extended on any schools/no new development needed - program can be transferred to other subjects - Ponzi scheme by students from school to University etc.	- tutoring is based on volunteering/no money is earned by students - knowledge of the keyword method - GTF/Professor who supports students in school - reaches not every student - based on volunteers, which means no volunteers, no tutoring.

Conclusion

According to a previous study taken place in Germany 2009 the student Benjamin Adamic could prove in his thesis about the German gender issue that students who learned with mnemonic devices made less mistakes. The study evaluated more than 160 students from high schools from 22 nations. None of the students ever learned with mnemonic devices.
The first chart shows how the students improved while using mnemonic devices. Test 1 and 2 was done without the knowledge of a learning strategy.
In test 3 and 4 a mnemonic device was introduced and the students could memorize more words with the appropriate gender. The percentage measures the quotient errors.
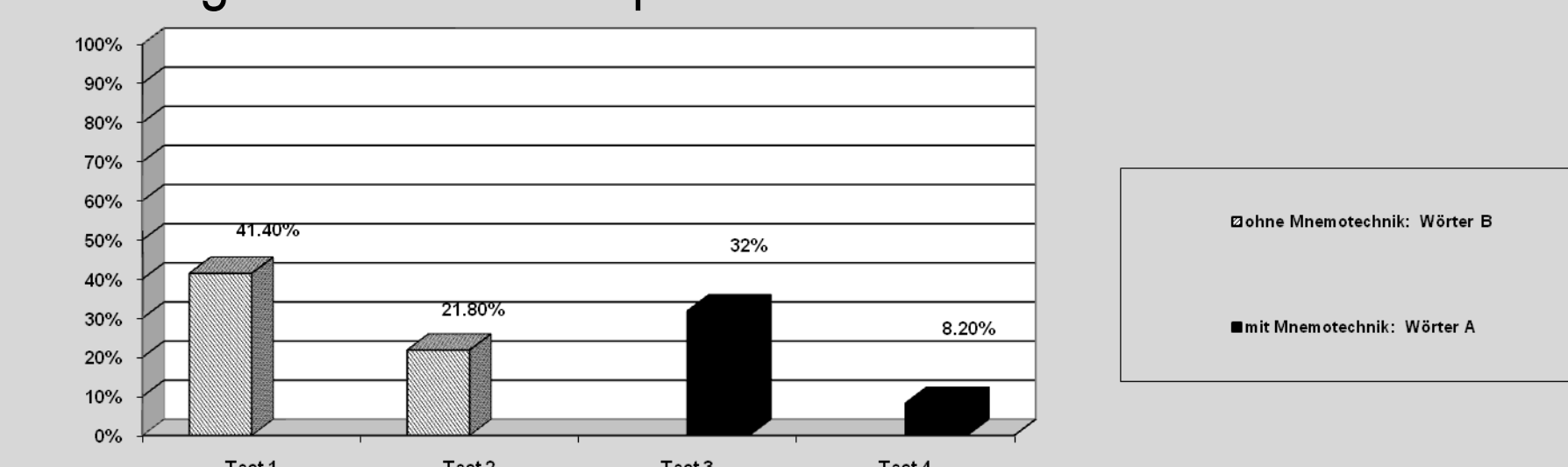
The following pie graph shows the dominance learning with mnemonic devices. The black part shows in percentage the success of the learning strategy.

Contact Information

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