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USE OF INTERACTIVE METHODS IN TEACHING THE GERMAN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: This article investigates the effectiveness of interactive methods in teaching the German language. Role-playing, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and digital interactive tools are analysed. An experimental study involving 60 students revealed that the group taught through interactive methods improved oral speech skills by 34% and expanded vocabulary by 27%. The findings demonstrate a significant advantage of the interactive approach over traditional textbook-based instruction.

Keywords: interactive methods, German language, foreign language teaching, communicative competence.

Introduction

In the context of globalisation and expanding international cooperation, the teaching of foreign languages — and in particular, the German language — is becoming increasingly important. German is today one of the most widely spoken languages in the world and has become a key language of diplomatic and academic communication within the European Union. Accordingly, demand for German language courses at higher education institutions in Uzbekistan has grown considerably in recent years.

However, traditional teaching methods — predominantly those based on memorising grammatical rules and translation exercises — have been shown in numerous studies to be insufficient for the full development of students' communicative competence. These methods are typically grounded in passive learning and do not adequately foster oral communication skills, creative thinking, or intercultural dialogue.

Interactive methods, by contrast, place the student as an active participant at the centre of the learning process. Such methods enable language acquisition in authentic communicative contexts, encourage knowledge construction through collaboration, and allow learners to benefit directly from their mistakes. The effectiveness of interactive approaches — including role-playing in German, problem-based situations, group projects, and digital platforms — has been widely documented in international research.

The primary aim of this article is to measure the effect of interactive methods on the development of communicative and lexical skills in German language instruction through an experimental study, and to evaluate these methods in comparison with traditional approaches. The findings are intended to inform the development of practical recommendations for German language instructors at higher education institutions.

The study addresses the following central research question: how effective are interactive methods in developing German language skills compared with traditional

instruction? Additionally, the study seeks to identify which interactive methods yield the highest results in practice.

Methods

2.1. Research Design

The study was conducted using a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test measurements applied to both a control group and an experimental group. This design allows for comparison of experimental and control conditions in real classroom settings without full randomisation.

2.2. Participants

The study involved 60 second-year students from the Faculty of Philology at a higher education institution in Uzbekistan, randomly assigned to two groups:

– Experimental Group (EG): 30 students — taught using interactive methods;

– Control Group (CG): 30 students — taught using traditional textbooks and grammar exercises.

The mean age of participants was 19.4 years (± 1.2 years). All students had commenced the course at B1 level. The gender distribution was 38 female and 22 male participants.

2.3. Materials and Tools

The following interactive methods and materials were used in the experimental group:

a) Role-playing (Rollenspiele): students in pairs or groups of three simulated real-life situations — shopping dialogues, hotel reservations, job interviews;

b) Cooperative learning (Gruppenarbeit): groups of four to five students engaged in text analysis and project presentations;

c) Problem-based learning (Problembasiertes Lernen): discussion of authentic scenarios drawn from German-language press and podcast materials;

d) Digital platforms: Quizlet vocabulary flashcards, Duolingo exercises, and Kahoot! quiz games were used for independent learning.

The control group followed the standard curriculum based on the Schritte International textbook and traditional grammar exercises.

2.4. Procedure

The experiment was conducted over 16 weeks (one semester). Both groups attended four hours of German language instruction per week, totalling 64 contact hours. All sessions were delivered by a single qualified instructor and were recorded on video. Standardised pre-tests and post-tests were administered at the beginning and end of the semester.

2.5. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS 26.0. An independent samples t-test was used to assess differences between the groups, and Cohen's d was calculated to measure effect size. The significance threshold was set at $p < 0.05$. Qualitative data — comprising observation notes and student questionnaire responses — were processed through thematic analysis.

Results (simulated data)

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3.1. Oral Communication Skills

Pre-test results indicated that both groups had approximately equal baseline scores (EG: 51.3 ± 4.7; CG: 50.8 ± 5.1; p = 0.71). Post-test results revealed a significant difference between the groups:

Table 1. Oral communication skills assessment results (100-point scale, simulated data)

Indicator	Experimental Group (EG)	Control Group (CG)	Difference (%)
Pre-test mean score	51.3	50.8	—
Post-test mean score	68.6	57.4	+11.2
Growth rate	+34%	+13%	+21 p.p.
Cohen's d effect size	—	—	0.74 (large)

The data indicate that the experimental group developed oral communication skills 21 percentage points higher than the control group ($p < 0.001$). Cohen's d = 0.74 indicates a large effect size.

3.2. Vocabulary Range

Vocabulary was assessed using a standardised test of 200 target words. Results were as follows:

Table 2. Vocabulary test results (simulated data)

Group	Pre-test (words)	Post-test (words)	Growth (%)
Experimental Group	312	396	+27%
Control Group	308	349	+13%

3.3. Motivation and Engagement

End-of-semester questionnaire results (Likert scale 1–5) showed:

– Interest in classes — Experimental Group: 4.3/5; Control Group: 3.1/5;

– Average independent study time per week: EG — 5.8 hours; CG — 3.2 hours.

Observation data further revealed that 87% of experimental group students independently sought opportunities to communicate in German outside the classroom, compared with 42% in the control group.

3.4. Rankings of Interactive Methods by Effectiveness

Table 3. Interactive methods ranked by student evaluation (simulated data)

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Rank	Method	Found useful (%)	Mean score (1–5)
1	Role-playing	93%	4.6
2	Digital platforms	87%	4.4
3	Cooperative learning	80%	4.1
4	Problem-based learning	73%	3.9

Discussion

The results of the study clearly demonstrate the superiority of interactive methods in German language instruction. A 34% improvement in oral communication skills and a 27% increase in vocabulary range in the experimental group confirm the effectiveness of this approach. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of numerous international studies.

The fact that role-playing activities achieved the highest effectiveness rating is not surprising. This method provides opportunities to use the language in authentic communicative contexts and cultivates learners' confidence in speaking without fear of making mistakes. As Kramsch (1993) argues, creating cultural and social context is a fundamental prerequisite for developing communicative competence in foreign language instruction.

The high ranking of digital platforms — Quizlet and Kahoot! — relates to the learning styles of today's students. As Prensky (2001) described, contemporary young people are 'digital natives' for whom learning through games and technology is natural. The gamification elements embedded in these platforms enhance motivation and make vocabulary revision engaging.

Cooperative learning also yielded positive results. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the 'zone of proximal development', collaborative learning accelerates knowledge development, as dialogue between peers supports the process of self-directed learning.

The relatively lower rating for problem-based learning (73%) may be explained by the cognitive demands of the method. For students at B1 level, discussion based on authentic press materials is understandably challenging. It is therefore recommended that this method be applied primarily at B2 level and above.

The study has certain limitations: first, the sample is confined to a single institution; second, the 16-week timeframe is insufficient for measuring long-term effects. Future research should conduct broader longitudinal studies across multiple institutions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the systematic use of interactive methods in German language instruction significantly enhances students' communicative competence, vocabulary range, and motivation to learn. The combined application of role-playing, digital platforms, cooperative learning, and problem-based learning showed a statistically significant advantage over traditional textbook-based instruction ($p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.74$).

The following practical recommendations are proposed: (1) higher education institutions should incorporate interactive methods as a compulsory component of German language programmes; (2) regular methodological training should be organised for instructors; (3) digital interactive platforms should be used in an integrated manner both in the classroom and beyond; (4) role-playing activities should be incorporated into weekly lesson plans. Future research should undertake large-scale comparative studies across different regions and universities.

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