

INNOVATIVE METHODS IN THE TEACHING PROCESS: THE BOOMERANG MODEL

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Abstract

The starting point of this research is chapter 2.3. "Models for lesson planning" from the volume *Deutsch Lehren Lernen 6* (Ende K., Grotjahn R., Kleppin K., Mohr I., 2013). In this section it is a description of the teaching process, which Jeremy Harmer (2007) called the "boomerang model". Because I noticed the German language learners have difficulty in understanding and in acquiring language structures and grammatical rules, and because they were inhibited to express themselves in a foreign language and made many grammatical mistakes, I introduced this method in the course. According to this model, the teacher motivates the students in the initial phase; it arouses interest and establishes a task, such as the correct application of prepositions (where? / wo and wohin in German). The advantage of this method is the development of autonomy in the learning process, and the discovery of the grammatical rules, of the linguistic means, necessary for the accomplishment of the work tasks which is coming naturally.

Key words: boomerang method, German language, teaching, education

The starting point of this research was the chapter 2.3. "Models for Lesson Planning" of the volume *6 Deutsch Lehren Lernen* (Ende K., Grotjahn R., Kleppin K., Mohr I. 2013, p. 97-114). In this section it is a description of the teaching process, which Jeremy Harmer (Harmer J., 2007) called the "boomerang model". The learners have difficulty in understanding and acquiring language structures and grammatical rules, they are willing rarely to speak during the class, and they are still doing many mistakes after the phase of explanations and practice. According to this model, the teacher motivates the learners in the initial phase: the pretask phase (*Einstigsphase*) (Ellis, 2009); it arouses interest and provides a task, such as the correct application of the prepositions (*wo?* - *wohin?*). The learners, assisted by the teacher and the teaching materials, develop the language resources they need to perform the tasks. They discover for themselves the grammar rules, the linguistic means, which are needed to fulfill the tasks: the main task phase (*Erarbeitung*) (Ellis, 2009). They try to find out what causes the differences (*zum-zur*). In this example, this is related to the gender of the nouns and they need to write the article next to it:

Wie komme ich **zum** Postamt? / **das**

(How do I get to the post office? / the)

Wie komme ich **zur** Bushaltestelle? / **die**

(How do I get to the bus station? / the)

Wie komme ich **zum** Bahnhof? / **der**

(How do I get to the train station? / the)

The formulation of the rules leads to a learning autonomy: by the own discovery, a better retention of the rule becomes possible. At the same time, the information is better retained when the learned is recorded with its own terms and an individual representation.

The presentation of the work results is followed by a phase in which the class focus on the phenomena where difficulties in production have arisen or which they have not used correctly: the post task phase (*Ergebnissicherung*) (Ellis, 2009). This model (*figure 1*) is based on the concept of task orientation.

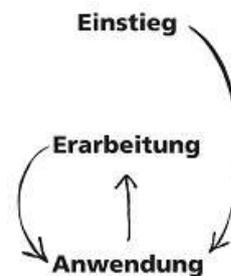


Figure 1 The Boomerang Model

This method leads to inductive recognition and the formulation of grammar rules and makes the learner aware of this learning strategy. With

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regard to the grammatical structures, we have followed this plan:

1. Collect example sentences
2. Arrange the corresponding sentence parts, so that the same is written among each other
3. Mark structure-relevant elements using the visualization techniques

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This is how I did the practical research project: I did the project in a student group at the university, where I teach German as a Foreign Language. The group consists of 28 participants. The course takes place once a week with 2 hours of lessons. The practical research of the project lasted for three weeks, with a total of 6 lessons.

We followed these steps in the implementation of this project:

- 1st step: 2 hours - linear lessons
- 2nd step: 3 hours - lessons according to the Boomerang model
- 3rd step: 1 hour - Evaluation: feedback from learners (questionnaire)

The exercises used were in particular:

Role-playing games, letters, autograph hunting, pantomime, phrases, interview questionnaire.

This is how I collected data and these are the instruments that we thought:

- Teacher observations
- Questionnaire for the learners (Figure 2)

The observations of the teachers referred to the following focus:

Speech improvement: using the structures used and the grammar rules that you have discovered yourself; if the participants understand the linguistic structures more easily

- Number of errors: if the students generally make fewer errors using this method
- Mood: if the participants are more active, more motivated, if they consciously notice that the lesson has been planned differently.

The questionnaire for the learners

During the last 3 German lessons I liked that ...	Y E S	N o	I don't know
We first practiced the linguistic structures and only then derived the theory.			
The participants could develop the grammatical rules.			
In the exercises and tasks we have practiced such speech situations that could also occur in our real life.			
We have discussed the difficulties and mistakes that			

4. Categorize the structure-relevant elements by introducing grammatical terms
5. Formulate the grammar rule and note the rule in an appropriate form
6. Check the rules found using further example sentences.

have arisen.			
After these 3 hours I noticed that			
I commit less mistakes through this method.			
I unconsciously appropriated the linguistic structures.			
I understood the grammatical rules faster.			
I participate more actively in the activities.			
I had much more fun with German lessons.			
I am much more motivated to develop my German language skills.			

Figure 2 Questionnaire for the learners

Thomas Unruh (2019) describes the meaning of a phasing of the course as follows: the phases of a lesson or lesson sequence that extends over several hours are like the chapters of a book. They structure the process, facilitate the overview, bring variety and tempo into the classroom, provide hold and rest points and thus opportunity for better orientation and new attention. A precise planning of individual phases makes it easier for the teacher to provide methodological diversity in the classroom and not to lose sight of the thematic thread of the hour. In addition, they provide the necessary transparency and sustainably ensure a growing planning competence on the part of most students.

Because everyone learns better, when they know what's going on, it's important to provide each phase of an hour with its own "chapter heading," which clearly indicates what the content is about in each phase and what that aspect is about the subject the hour has to do. It is worthwhile to formulate these topics of the individual teaching phases in a way that is suitable for students, so that they can present themselves (from the first grade on) under the respective headline.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data allow the following conclusions (figure 3 and figure 4). The use of the Boomerang method has the following advantages:

- The learners are more "in the thing" through the self-activity and connect the rules with their already existing grammatical knowledge, thereby

reactivating this and anchoring this process better in the memory.

□ The learners formulate the rule, how it is understandable to them and also the chance of better keeping is increased. It does not use a scientifically exact and all-encompassing rule, which nobody understands and keeps and which hardly promotes the linguistic competence.

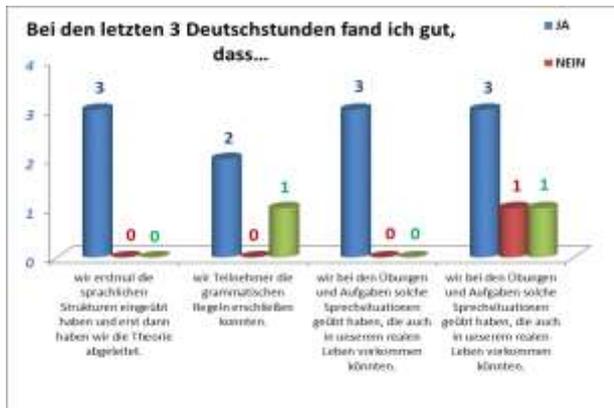


Figure 3 Obtained results 1

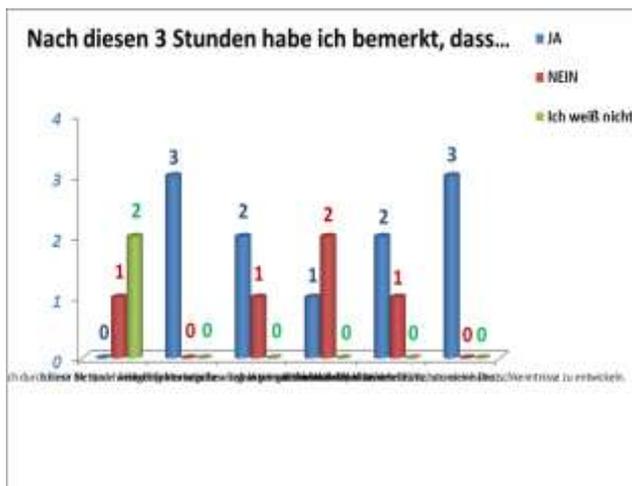


Figure 4 Obtained results 2

The Boomerang method represents a significant step towards understanding the functioning of the German language, the realization of a language awareness that can once again be a contribution to the development of a sense of language.

□ The learners made fewer mistakes / Incorrect: after 3 hours rather unrealistic.

□ They have become more active and motivated in the classroom

□ They have much more fun with the German lessons

□ They have practiced speaking situations that can also occur in their real life

□ They supported and helped each other

□ They have become aware of the difficulties and mistakes that have appeared in the exercises and tasks

□ They have consciously noticed that the lessons were planned differently.

CONCLUSIONS

I have personally learned from the evaluation of the practical research project in the team and from the reactions of the colleagues:

□ easy handling of the Boomerang model

□ unconscious appropriation and practice of the linguistic structures with discovered grammar - we save time with it

□ use of the language in life like speech situations

□ varied teaching design: more motivated attitude and more fun at German lessons.

New and perhaps unexpected, there are two things to this model of teaching:

1. The learners will develop their own linguistic and professional competence. They will receive support from the teacher through the formulation of the task, through the furnishing of learning materials and tools, through the moderating or supportive supervision during the preparation phase. The learners have a responsibility to plan, execute and monitor the task. This is how they train the key competences required at the beginning. In addition, learners introduce individual prior knowledge and internal differentiation regarding the difficulty of the task is possible.

2. However, this concept also supports the development of learners' language learning and autonomy: in the post-tasking phase and the presentation of the work results, the learners together or individually reflect on phenomena or difficulties encountered in the development. They also reflect on how they came to the results and what problem-solving strategies they used.

From our experience in dealing with this model, we could give more tips:

- There will not be all the phases in each lesson.

- Plan sufficient time for all the phases. Career beginners tend to extend the entry and motivation phase so that there is not enough time to work out.

- Always plan 15% more time than expected; there are always disruptions in the class that will delay you.

- For fast learners it is always good to have extra activities or additional materials prepared.

- Change in the rhythm is good for the learners.

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