Exploring word and strategy knowledge of high school students in a German classroom

Kristin Kuchenbecker, University of Iowa

DOI
10.17077/etd.sigfp4e8

Document Type
Dissertation

Date of Degree
Spring 2013

Degree Name
PhD (Doctor of Philosophy)

Degree In
Teaching and Learning

First Advisor
Leslie Schrier

Second Advisor
Lia Plakans

First Committee Member
Michael Everson

Second Committee Member
Pamela Wesely

Third Committee Member
Volker Thomas

Abstract
Vocabulary learning strategies and word knowledge are two central factors in learning a foreign language. Researchers have acknowledged the vital role of vocabulary in second language acquisition. This particular study is trying to fill a void by looking at high-school aged learners, by looking at beginning learners of German and by looking at the expression of word knowledge and strategy use qualitatively.

The research methodology for this study is qualitative and exploratory in nature. The participants of this study are 29 high-school students, who participated in a vocabulary review game and filled out exit slips following the game. Of these students, 13 participated in a follow-up interview in which the prompts from the review game were discussed and analyzed.

The study revealed beginning learners of German use a variety of learning strategies. Students preferred semantic context over linguistic and social context. They were also able to describe vocabulary items in the target language German, without major breakdowns in communication. Students tried to avoid the use of the German articles and confused grammatical terminology at times. Overall, students knew high frequency vocabulary and how to use it.

Keywords
German, Learning strategies, Vocabulary knowledge, Vocabulary strategies, Word knowledge

Pages
x, 144 pages

Bibliography
Includes bibliographical references (pages 128-144).

Copyright
Copyright 2013 Kristin Kuchenbecker

Recommended Citation
The cognitive writing strategy K-W-L helps students identify the gaps in their prior knowledge and guides them through what they are reading and writing. When using a K-W-L strategy to plan a research paper, students can complete the first two columns while doing their research and the last column after completing their research. Use the outline feature in a word processing program to organize main ideas and supporting details. Use the first-level headings of the outline to write out your main ideas and arrange them in a logical order. Use second-level headings to include sorting details, figures, tables, and other points to support each main idea. These tasks involve students in high-level thought processes such as decision making and problem solving that are best accomplished in collaboration. These tasks enable students to make connections to real-world objects, events, and situations in their own and an expanded world, and tap their diverse attitudes and experiences. Teachers and others also wonder whether shy students can fully participate in a classroom that depends so much on dialogue. We suggest that these students might feel more comfortable talking in small groups that share responsibility for learning. Furthermore, interaction between learners can happen in ways other than oral dialogue, for example, writing and classroom. In earlier times, most instructors agreed that introducing learners to high culture was the most appropriate method of teaching culture. However, the 1970s turn to communicative age teaching brought with it the idea that culture should be taught alongside language, encouraging the study of patterns for living instead of literature and fine arts. Lalande argues that “high” need not focus on literature, but should also focus on the sciences. A Comparison Of Student Performance In An Online Introductory Accounting Course With Traditional Classroom Students.