Designing Digital Material for Foreign Language Learning

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This abstract provides

- a summary of the symposium on digital games and material design as task in second language teacher education,
- summaries of all five contributions,
- a summary of the final discussion about formats of teacher education.

Rationale

New objectives, new preconditions and a growing range of media and applications to teach second and foreign languages call for a re-evaluation of teachers' professional knowledge base for teaching foreign languages under the promises and challenges of digitalization. Consequently, teacher education needs to find answers to these new challenges and can draw itself on a growing range of media, applications, and collaborative learning formats. With this double perspective in mind – of shifting demands and possibilities for both, language education and language teacher education – this symposium focused on issues of language teacher education that wants to prepare student teachers for a conscious, principled, and successful decision-making when selecting, adapting, or designing digital media and digital education formats for language learning inside and outside the classroom. This perspective clearly stands again simplistic views that media or digitalization bring about the necessary changes in education but that it needs professional educators to use the new options and tackle the new challenges responsibly, efficiently and to the benefit of the learners and society (cf. Stockwell & Reinders, 2019). To this end, teacher educators can draw on a growing number of models (e.g. a critical appreciation of the SAMR model, Hamilton et al., 2016) and competence models (e.g. DigiCompEd, Caena & Redeker, 2019) or techPCK (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) which were used and discussed in the presentations and discussions from different perspectives and to varying degrees.

In five 20-minute presentations, different trialed formats of language teacher education from different language backgrounds were presented. All aimed at student teachers' language-related digital teaching skills and had in common that student teachers were introduced to

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different digital learning materials or formats for foreign language learning and supported in the design of their own materials or learning scenarios.[14]

Designing Digital Material for Foreign Language Learning

In the first presentation, Fabian Krengel, teacher and teacher educator at University of Göttingen, Germany, highlighted the need to equip young learners with the competences required to become responsible 'actors of change' in today's globalized world and thus started with a comprehensive view on the issue. A prerequisite for this is that teachers are specifically trained for this purpose, for example by integrating a 'glocal' dimension into their classrooms. Fabian Krengel reported on a virtual exchange project targeting the development of the 'global teaching competencies' of pre-service EFL teachers across the world through a combination of task-based language teaching, telecollaboration, and global education. The talk elaborated on the theory and rationale behind and the practical implementation of the project and discussed specific student products and preliminary results of ongoing research and evaluation procedures.

In the following presentation, Torben Schmidt from the Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany, focused on the systematic integration of (digital) game development processes into the training of foreign language learners to develop job-relevant competencies. The presentation reported on the structure, goals, activities, and products of a Master level action-research seminar, taught over 3 semesters. By describing and reflecting on two student game prototypes (a Zoom-based virtual mystery dinner for learners at the high school level and a hybrid escape game for elementary school) typical features and potentials of the development process for the participants were discussed and research findings of the action-research projects (focusing on learning with the games) were presented. The results show that this teacher training seminar format can contribute to developing relevant competencies for planning, implementing, and evaluating competency-based, digitally-supported, motivational English instruction.

Michaela Rückl, teacher, researcher and teacher educator at Paris-Lodron University Salzburg, Austria, presented and discussed a classroom-based e-tandems project, in which student teachers were introduced to the potentials of virtual exchange to bring foreign language learners into direct contact with peers who live abroad and speak the target language. Using the example of an Austro-Italian e-tandem project in upper secondary schools, student teachers of Italian as a foreign language explored the potential of a social constructivist perspective to focus on the question how differences in prior cultural knowledge and language competence can be valorized in peer interaction. The SAMR model was used to analyze the extent to which e-tandems allow for significant task redesign and the creation of new tasks that enhance communication and authenticity as well as individualization and adaptivity in the foreign language learning settings.

Stefanie Wössner, teacher of French and English and team leader at Landesmedienzentrum Baden-Württemberg, Germany, discussed how games are usually used to reward or motivate learners but far less often for learning, e.g. to engage learners in task-based activities or help

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them enhance their future skills. Her presentation offered an introduction to the use of virtual worlds not only as an opportunity for learners of all ages – including teachers – to acquire and practice language skills, e.g. in French as a foreign language, but also future skills. Learners can tackle future-oriented challenges by immersing themselves in a story and by interacting with each other which provides ways to acquire and practice the foreign language, media literacy, and citizenship skills. Virtual worlds can also be used by teachers to collaboratively engage with and discuss teaching-related questions and design learning adventures.

In the last presentation, Manuela Schlick, researcher and teacher educator at University of Vienna, Austria, focused on student teachers' self-perception of their digital teaching skills. Whereas many student teachers see the importance and potential of digital education, they simultaneously voice a lack of confidence and competence to properly pursue digital education in their subjects. Within a Master course of ELT methodology, student teachers explored ways of combining subject-specific learning, in that case literary learning, and digital education. Learning and reflection tasks were developed to scaffold student teachers' methodological learning for digital education in ELT. The learning process and individual development of the students was documented through surveys, written tasks, students' self-assessment and interviews about their learning process.

Discussion Outcomes

The final discussion in the second half of the symposium centered around exploring requirements and potentials of suitable teacher education formats that prepare (student) teachers well for digitally supported and digitally enhanced language classroom. The five presenters discussed together with the audience and highlighted from different perspectives the particular importance of integrating the joint development of digital teaching and learning materials for the training of prospective teachers. The guided, principled and cooperative development of (digitally supported) learning games represents a complex critical thinking and problem-solving task that has proven conducive to train student teachers' digital teaching competences. The design and implementation of digital games, materials and learning environments can be used as a highly integrative learning tasks for prospective teachers for digitally sensitive and enhanced lesson planning, the creation of motivating, meaningful, competency-based tasks and exercises that provide individualized, adaptive learning and high-quality learning material design. The perceived value of instructional technologies determines teachers' decisions to use them. Initiatives in teacher education programs to make pre-service teachers play and analyse, design and use (digital) games and learning material for second language classrooms are being experienced as efficient and should be furthered to support pre-service teachers' professional development in the dynamic field of digital education.

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