

„13 Jahre Deutsche Vereinigung“ Ein Beispiel für ein Unterrichtsprojekt im Fach Deutsch

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Project Description: This is a semi-structured “inquiry project” in which students conduct in-depth research into the continuous process of unification in Germany. The project develops from a text (a speech), in which students learn about several key issues surrounding German unification. After identifying those key concepts, students select a set of sub-topics worth investigating further and do so in small groups. The products are a written report on their sub-topic and an in-class oral presentation.

Learner Group: This project is suitable for **high-intermediate** or **advanced students of German**. Students should have some general knowledge of German unification and need to have some experience working with journalistic texts and researching socio-political topics.

Language Abilities Developed through this Project:

- intensive and extensive reading
- acquiring content-specific vocabulary
- synthesizing information (speaking & writing)
- reporting information (speaking & writing)

Project Time Frame: Three weeks (with the course typically meeting 3 hrs per week and some out of class meetings by the students).

Materials for this Project: News reports; political speeches; photographs; video footage; dictionary.

Project Outline:

Phase One: Starting the Project

Preparing the Project, Reading the Speech, Identifying Key Concepts, Determining Sub-topics

Phase Three: Creating the Product

Writing the Reports and Practicing Oral Presentations

Phase V: Evaluating and Critiquing the Overall Project

Phase Two: Doing the Research

Collecting and Researching Sub-topics: Reading and Synthesizing Information

Phase Four: Presenting the Reports

Content Relevance of this Project and Rationale: Why would we want to engage in a project on the theme of “German unification” after 13 years? According to a recent poll by the Emnid Institute (October 2003), every 5th German citizen does not know why Germany celebrates October 3rd as the “Day of German Unity”. One year ago, on October 3, 2002, German President Johannes Rau gave a speech on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of German unification, in which he recapitulates about the process. On October 3, 2003 the German American Chamber of Commerce of the Southern United States held a one-day conference in Atlanta, GA, at which former President George W. H. Bush, former Chancellor Helmut Kohl and former President Mikhail Gorbachev presented their perspectives on the global impact of the unification of Germany and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Continuous media coverage and high profile political events suggest that the theme of German unification is still a current topic and still provides an excellent opportunity for students to investigate the process of a massive socio-political change.

Background Information: Over the years I have undertaken this project with several fourth and fifth semester German students at two universities. Each time the project took on a different shape. One reason certainly was that the political circumstances changed — what at some point in time was lived history became a historical fact — what in 1989 and 1990 was an event, became a process — concerns, issues and question five years ago were different from the ones raised today. The second reason, naturally, was linked to the specific instructional context in which the project was carried out. How familiar were the students with reading larger journalistic texts? How autonomous were they as language learners? How much time were we able to devote to the project? Which primary sources were available? How easy was it for students to access the Internet? And the usual myriad of other questions, which teachers face when teaching, also influenced the way each project was carried out. Thus, in the following I present the common features that were evident each time this project was undertaken. By highlighting these features, I hope to spark teachers’ interest in engaging in project work with their students.

FRAMEWORK FOR THIS PROJECT:

Phase I: Starting the Project

(a) Explaining the purpose of the project. The teacher outlines the purpose of the project by explaining the place of the topic within the course syllabus. In addition, the teacher presents an overview of the stages (cf. p. 1) of the project, and delineates which activities students will engage in, the time frame in which the project will be carried out, and what type of product they will be expected to produce (written report and oral presentation).

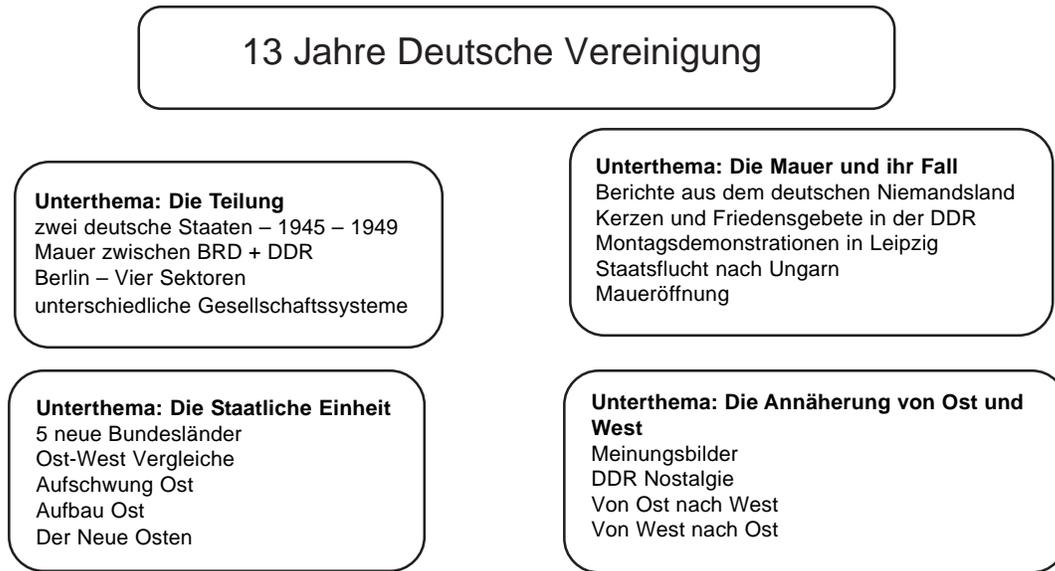
(b) Brainstorming about the theme. The teacher initiates a brainstorming session with the whole class, the purpose of which is to a) “mobilize” students’ knowledge (Legutke & Thomas, 1991) about the theme, b) spark their interest in further inquiry and c) orient them towards the theme. To initiate this session, the teacher can ask questions such as: Do you remember when the wall came down? (Most likely students will not.) Were did you learn about the fall of the wall? What do you know about the two German states before 1989? What do you know about problems that arose during the 13 years of unification? To facilitate the brainstorming session, the teacher should be encouraged to show pictures from magazines, easily accessible through internet sites, and political caricatures that depict the pivotal 1, 5, and 10 years after the fall of the wall. Points, bits of information, and associations which students contribute should be recorded in a topic web. The brainstorming session is an important stage in the project and needs to be directed by the teacher. It is in this session that the teacher motivates students to “dig deeper” into the theme and to uncover the issues surrounding “13 years of unification” and where the teacher emphasizes that merely composing a chronicle of events, or timeline, is not the purpose of the project.

(c) Reading the speech. After the brainstorming session, the teacher presents the students with the initial text (a speech), explains the function of the speech and gives reasons for why it was selected. On the basis of students’ familiarity with reading larger texts, the teacher needs to decide whether students should read individually or in small groups in class or out of class. The teacher orients the students towards reading the text with the specific goal of selecting critical concepts (key issues) that necessitate further investigation (cf. p. 7 for a list of some critical concepts). Students should understand that the purpose for reading the text is “to warm up to the topic” and “find critical concepts”, which they might not have known about prior to reading the speech. The purpose is not to analyze the speech in detail. The teacher may need to gloss some vocabulary items, highlight

particular sections of the speech to locate important points, prepare some comprehension questions, and otherwise assist students in a way that facilitates their understanding of the speech.

(d) Determining sub-topics. While reading and after reading, each student compiles his/her list of critical concepts and presents it to others in their small group. Each small group will then negotiate a “group list” of concepts, which it will subsequently present to the whole class. The result of this phase is a “whole-group” negotiated list of critical concepts, grouped together into four “sub-topics”, which will then be researched by four small groups.

The following shows a possible list of key-concepts and resulting sub-topics of this project:



This phase typically takes two class sessions with a group of advanced learners, if students begin reading in class and finish reading at home. It will take three or even four sessions, if students do the reading in class.

Phase II: Doing the Research

(a) Collecting Information. Small groups form; the number being determined by the number of sub-topics identified. Since the teacher is also a “reader”, the teacher will be able to anticipate some of the likely sub-topics and will make some source materials on those available to the students. These materials will include articles from magazines and newspapers and relevant websites. Many German teachers probably have accumulated their own collection of central articles on this theme over the years. Those who do not have such a collection, may find the materials compiled by “Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung” on “Die Deutsche Einheit” a good starting point (cf. web address below) for primary texts. While in an unstructured project, students would be solely responsible for locating source materials, in a semi-structured one, the teacher selects some of the literature for them. Locating appropriate texts is rarely easy and can be quite time-consuming, therefore getting students started with materials not only saves some time, but also creates a sense of confidence in students that the project is actually “doable”.

(b) Researching Sub-topics. Students begin researching their sub-topics. They sort through the material and review the information. They skim the articles, determine relevance, read them more closely, and write short summaries. Since students will consult a variety of sources, they are required to make decisions about the appropriateness of their primary texts. Eventually, they have to be able to summarize key points in the texts, thus they need to take notes on the information. It is critical for the success of the project that students are asked to return from their research on a regular basis. Meeting in their small groups and presenting their information gives them the opportunity to practice “reporting” and receive feedback about what and how they report information. It also helps them document the process of engaging in project work. Both students and the teacher have to stay in contact with each other to be able to monitor this process and re-direct it if problems arise. Sometimes students become overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of information available, thus the

teacher might have to assist them with their selections. The short summaries, which students write, can be part of assessing the overall project and function as products that address the benchmarks of the overall project. A useful activity for keeping track of their progress is for students to construct a portfolio.

Phase III: Creating the Product(s)

(a) Coordinating the presentation. Group projects necessitate time set aside for students to come together in their small groups and coordinate their individual efforts into a coherent presentation.

(b) Preparing for the oral presentations. Experience has shown that this project requires students to have significant control over “pronunciation”. The high frequency of more or less unfamiliar compounds is challenging. Practicing pronunciation, especially the stress pattern of words, has proven invaluable so that the students listening to the reports can actually understand the presentation. Equally important are the use of visuals (OHP, handout, PowerPoint slides), which show an outline of the presentation with key vocabulary items in chronological order. This enables listeners to visually follow the sequence of the presentation. Since listeners are not immersed in the same sub-topics, they will lack specific vocabulary knowledge. Before the final presentation, the teacher might also want to provide feedback on the handouts etc. (e.g. unorganized lists of words, or alphabetically organized list, as some students like to compose, are not very helpful to listeners) and help students with pronunciation.

Phase IV: Presenting the reports

Each small group presents its report to the whole class. Additionally, every member of each group must participate in the presentation. In preparing their reports, students will keep an eye on the criteria on which their presentations will be evaluated. The minimum time allotted for each small group should be 20 minutes, preferably more. Students have put a great deal of effort into these projects, thus they should be given sufficient time to present their work. Again, the criteria on which the presentations are evaluated by the students and the teacher depend on the specific instructional context. Typically, criteria should focus on the “individual speaker”, and the “group effort”. Students should also be encouraged to articulate what they learned from the presentations of their fellow students. An example evaluation sheet, which can easily be modified, is the following:

Project:	<i>“13 Jahre Deutsche Vereinigung”</i>				
Group:	Sub-Topic of the group				
Speaker:	_____				
SPEAKER:					
The speaker is comprehensible	1	2	3	4	5
The presentation was well-organized (beginning, middle, end)	1	2	3	4	5
The speaker provided enough vocabulary to help me understand	1	2	3	4	5
The speaker used aids(OHP etc.) to help me understand	1	2	3	4	5
The speaker presented interesting and valuable information	1	2	3	4	5
GROUP:					
The group presentation reflected team effort.	1	2	3	4	5
I:					
What I learned from the presentation?					
What I liked in this presentation?					
What I disliked in this presentation?					

Phase V: Evaluating and Critiquing the Overall Project

The last phase in undertaking the project consists of an overall evaluation. In practice talking about the process, the difficulties encountered, the progress made both with regard to advancing the language as well as learning the content, is an important phase. Not only does it make students become more reflective about their own learning, it also provides the teacher, with insights about students’ development and how students can be supported when they engage in project work.

ADVANCING STUDENTS' LANGUAGE ABILITIES

A semi-structured inquiry project, such as this one, requires teachers to anticipate some of the “language demands” (Stoller, 2002) that students will be faced with in their work. In doing the project, students will engage in an array of activities that have substantially different demands. The particular technique or even the method a teacher will employ in order to help students with such language demands, depends largely on the situational context and the teacher’s general teaching approach. For instance, do the students have a supplementary grammar textbook which they use throughout the course? Does the teacher typically present and practice language features in class? If yes, the teacher will likely review respective sections in the grammar text with the students. In contrast, if the teacher regularly works with students individually on aspects of the language in their writings (such as in portfolio or journal writing), the teacher will likely continue to do so and clarify language features as they emerge or point students to language activities that they can do on their own. The extent to which such “language features” are explained, reviewed and/or practiced depends most certainly on the teacher’s practice and the particular instructional context.

In this project, where information will predominantly be gathered from texts (journal and newspaper articles; documentaries; video clips), the following language demands are recurrent and relevant. It will be up to the teacher to decide which ones warrant focused practice for the particular learner group.

I. Working with Media Texts

Discourse Features of Media Texts:	Supporting Language Work:
Passives	Passive Voice – present tense and past tense
Indirect discourse (speech) in media reporting	Subjunctive I
Comparisons (tables, charts, statistical information)	Comparatives and Superlatives of Adjectives Percentages and Fractions Ordinal Numbers
Past	Past Tenses
Connectors	Conjunctions Da-compounds
Time	Dates: am; im Jahre; 1989 Duration: vor + dative; von bis
Pre-nominal Modifications	present participle + present participle and “zu” past participle

II. Reporting Information

high frequency reporting verbs: <i>ausdrücken, beschreiben, darstellen, erklären, erwähnen, zeigen</i>	Separable Prefix Verbs Non-separable Prefix Verbs
high frequency non-factive verbs: <i>behaupten, glauben</i>	
<i>wollen, sollen, können, müssen</i>	Modal Auxiliaries expressing intention, supposition, possibility and probability

III. Citing text

<i>zitiern; in Zeile xxx; auf Seite xxx im ersten (zweiten ...) Absatz in der ersten (zweiten ...) Spalte am Anfang, in der Mitte, am Ende</i>	Prepositions + Cases Ordinal Numbers
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IV: Content-specific Lexicon

In content-based projects, acquiring the special lexicon naturally can be overwhelming, especially when students have little or no knowledge of the overall theme. Teachers may find it necessary to devise work sheets, in which they compile essential content-specific vocabulary. One way to organize such work sheets could simply be by “word class”:

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives / Adverbs
<i>e staatliche Einheit e Teilung e (Reise-), (Presse-), Meinungsfreiheit s Bundesland</i>	<i>trennen vereinigen diskutieren</i>	<i>unterschiedlich verschieden staatlich</i>

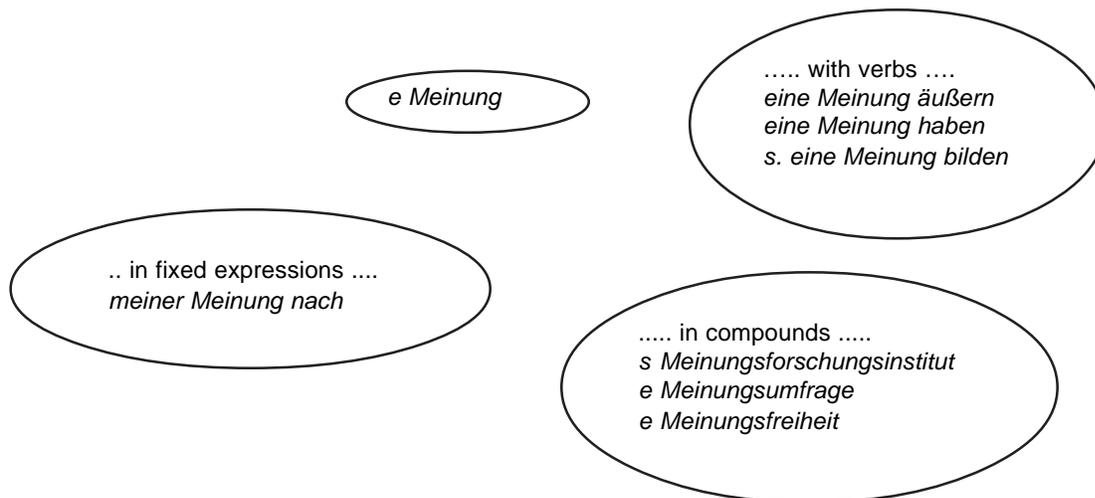
Helping Students Work with Vocabulary: One of the critical tasks of the teacher in this type of project is to assist students in managing vocabulary. While there are many support materials available for teachers on how to further develop students' vocabulary knowledge, here are two points worth considering.

a) Using a Substantial Bilingual Dictionary. Dictionaries become essential tools in inquiry projects. When working with texts, students typically encounter a large number of unfamiliar words and need to consult a dictionary quite frequently. But often they are not experienced in using a dictionary to its fullest extent. A very general approach towards promoting more effective ways of working with new words, is to remind students that dictionaries provide more information than simply one of meaning-equivalency (e.g. *r Unterschied – difference*). Any substantial German/English bilingual dictionary lists at least three types of information:

- a) What is the meaning of the word? [*der Unterschied – difference*]
- b) What are the grammatical features of the word? [e.g. *prepositions / cases / number / vb irreg*]
- c) Which words is the word associated with? [e.g. **es besteht ein ~ Unterschied zwischen**]

Whether or not the teacher deems it necessary to asks students to do focused “dictionary” activities (look up a set of words in small groups; compare meanings across several dictionaries; find derivations and inflections of words, etc.) again depends on the specific instructional context. More advanced learners might feel quite comfortable with how they utilize dictionaries, less advanced learners might appreciate additional focused activities. In general, students familiar with project works are likely to be more autonomous when it comes to working with dictionaries. Students for whom project work is fairly new might need more guidance from the teacher.

b) Remembering New Words. It is generally assumed that words are remembered better when they are learned in the form of a network. In order to manage the network of a word, students should be encouraged to keep a vocabulary notebook (or journal). The following illustrates a potential entry in a vocabulary notebook for the word “Meinung”, which occurs with high frequency in this project. The organizing principle is “words associated with *Meinung*”.



Another central word within the context of this project is “*Einheit*”. Students should be encouraged to record its uses in the political speech and in other texts. Here are some examples:

die deutsche Einheit
die staatliche Einheit
die wiedergewonnene Einheit
die innere Einheit

die Einheit unseres Landes
der Weg in die Einheit
der Tag der deutschen Einheit
die Vereinigung
die Wiedervereinigung

MATERIALS SUPPORTING STUDENTS' INQUIRY IN THIS PROJECT:

The Initial Text: "Aus Hoffnung wird Wirklichkeit" – 3. Oktober 2002

URL: http://www.zeit.de/reden/deutsche_innenpolitik/200241_einheit_rau

Quelle: *Die Zeit*

In his speech, President Rau touches upon the following critical concepts (key issues):

9. November 1989 – Mauerfall
Kerzen und Friedensgebete, Montagsdemonstrationen, wachsender Unmut, Staatsflucht
unnatürliche und willkürliche Teilung
Berlin – Heinrich-Heine Strasse, Bornholmer Strasse, Checkpoint Charlie, Friedrichstrasse
Freunde und Verbündete – Versorgung, Schutz, Verträge
John F. Kennedy – Schöneberger Rathaus
gegensätzliche Gesellschaftssysteme 1949-1989
unterschiedliche Geschichten
gemeinsame Geschichte entsteht durch gemeinsam Erlebtes
Aufbau Ost
schulpartnerschaften.de
Jugend trifft Jugend

Information available on the Internet:

There are numerous reference lists and other resources available, which focus on a number of aspects of the "fall of the wall" and "German unification". The following resources represent a very small selection and are listed for illustrative purposes only. **A more substantial collection of annotated Internet resources is available at CALPER's website at: <http://calper.la.psu.edu/probl.php>**

Die Berliner Mauer - Fotoausstellung mit Bildern der Berliner Mauer 1979-1989 von ©Jürgen Müller-Schneck. <http://www.dieberlinermauer.de>

Chronik der Mauer - Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung - <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de>

Chronik der Wende - http://www.chronik-der-wende.de/_/index_jsp.html

DDR-Suche - Die Suchmaschine zum Thema DDR. <http://www.ddr-suche.de>

Die Deutsche Einheit – Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung - Schwerpunktthema
http://www.bpb.de/themen/452AA4,0,0,Die_Deutsche_Einheit.htm

LeMO – „Lebendiges virtuelles Museum Online" - <http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/DieDeutscheEinheit/index.html>

Linksammlung zur Deutschen Einheit – Landesregierung Sachsen-Anhalt - <http://www.sachsen-anhalt.de>

Angekommen in Deutschland? – Der Osten zehn Jahre nach dem Mauerfall. Eine Dokumentation des WDR aus dem Jahre 1999. <http://www.wdr5.de/morgenecho/serien/seriemaer.phtml>

Information from the Library:

a) Newspapers and News Journals

Der Spiegel

Die Zeit

Frankfurter Rundschau Online

Der Spiegel Online

Die Zeit Online

Frankfurter Rundschau Online

<http://www.spiegel.de>

<http://www.diezeit.de>

<http://www.fr-aktuell.de/>

References on Project Work:

Frey, K. (2002). *Die Projektmethode*. Weinheim: Belz [9th rev. ed.]

Henry, J. (1994). *Teaching through projects*. London: Kogan Page.

Legutke, M., & Thomas, H. (1991). *Process and experience in the language classroom*. London: Longman.

Stoller, F. L. (2002). „Project work: a means to promote language and content“, In J.C. Richards & W. A. Renandya (eds.), *Methodology in language teaching* (pp. 107-118). Cambridge: CUP

Further references, including Internet sites on "Project Work" and "Project-based Learning", are available at the CALPER website:

calper.la.psu.edu

What is Project Work?

“Project Work” is a systematic instructional method based on the principles of project-based learning. Project Work” offers a constructivist perspective on language learning, creating opportunities for students to actively participate in their own learning and become more self-directed learners of other languages while creating a product that is both realistic and meaningful.

Where do Projects come from?

Ideas for projects can emanate from a number of different sources.

- Course curriculum
- Students/teachers raised topics
- Special events

Realistic and Meaningful Products of Project Work

- Oral presentations
- Portfolios
- Poster sessions
- Reports
- Interviews

Project Work Essential Features

- Students engage in substantial inquiry over an extended period of time
- Teachers provide guidance and direction to students
- Students become more self-directed and autonomous learners who monitor, analyze and evaluate their own learning.
- Students work collaboratively with others using their language in an integrated rather than isolated way
- Content, process, and product are essential features of project work

CALPER

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