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Homework as a Motivational Factor in Teaching German Language: the Results of an Empirical Research

Extended summary

The aim of this paper was to examine the motivational potential of homework in teaching German as a foreign language (GFL). The results of the empirical study indicate that homework assignments which correspond to learners' interests, promote the use of authentic texts, and are aimed at the direct application of language skills can be a strong motivational factor in foreign language instruction. Interestingly, in the experimental group both homework assignments and authentic instructional content (music, films, television series, journalistic texts) received high mean scores, whereas in the control group homework and didacticized materials (textbooks and supplementary materials) showed moderate mean scores. The results suggest that teaching content is closely related to homework and that it can influence the design of homework assignments. For this reason, it is important to use authentic texts alongside textbooks, as well as digital media, which also offer many possibilities for the design and development of homework.

These results further show that learners are willing to demonstrate greater engagement and effort when they receive motivating homework. The homework tasks completed by learners in the experimental group were undoubtedly more complex and more demanding than those of

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learners in the control group. However, their personal interests and preferences were taken into account when selecting the tasks, so that they approached the homework with a great deal of enjoyment and enthusiasm.

The quality of the tasks had an impact not only on the motivation of the experimental group but also on their language competences. At the end of the study, both groups took a Goethe Certificate test. Statistically significant results were found in writing test. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Trautwein and his colleagues, who determined that cognitively stimulating homework has a direct effect on learners' motivation and learning success.

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that homework has a high motivational potential and can therefore contribute to learning success. In order for homework to genuinely motivate learners, greater attention should be paid to the use of authentic texts, as these offer more opportunities for the design and development of homework assignments. Furthermore, it is important to take learners' personal interests into account and to differentiate and individualize homework tasks. Another important motivational factor is the relevance of the learning content as perceived by the learner. For this reason, homework should be designed to promote all four language skills.

Keywords: motivation, German as a foreign language, homework, digital media

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