

German Reading and Writing Competencies Using Google Classroom

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Abstract. This research aims to acquire data and information regarding the reading and writing competencies of college students in the German language, using Google Classroom as a teaching medium. The design employed in this study is a mixed methods approach. The research was conducted within the German Language Education Program, Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Language and Literature, Universitas Negeri Makassar, involving 30 fourth-semester students as the research sample. Qualitative data were obtained through participatory observation by the researcher, who observed the activities of German language learning using Google Classroom. Meanwhile, quantitative data were obtained from the average reading and writing competence test scores in the German language and t-test results. The results of participatory observation indicate that Google Classroom serves as a platform and learning space and indirectly as a tool for students to download and access course materials and complete quizzes, thereby enhancing language competency. Indirectly, this platform has become a supportive companion for students learning the German language. The quantitative data analysis revealed that students' average reading competency score is 88.8, while the writing competency score is 85.2. The t-test results also indicate that the calculated t-value for reading competency (10.975) and writing competency (8.292) is greater than the tabulated t-table (1.714). This disparity suggests that Google Classroom effectively assesses the exploration of reading and writing competencies in the German language among students.

Keywords: Teaching German, Reading Competence, Writing Competence, Google Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a crucial instrument in the communication process and is a defining feature and cultural symbol within a nation. Its essence is intertwined with the human need to convey emotions, ideas, and concepts through spoken and written language. As the realms of knowledge and technology advance, particularly in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, linguistic diversity has become increasingly accessible to language users through the utilization of technological media and information platforms. This diversity can be broadly categorized into three main types: national languages, international languages, and foreign languages.

German is prominent in Indonesia's education realm. The advent of the contemporary digital industrial revolution significantly impacts the intricacies of the learning process for German as a second or third language, both within the context of Senior High School and Higher Education. Regardless, alongside these advancements, digital transformation also serves as a pivotal factor in shaping an individual's attitude and learning style, facilitated through optimizing applications and features within technology devices that might be less efficient.

Comparable to language learning elements in general, the German language comprises two primary competencies: receptive and productive competencies. Receptive competency is acquired through reading (Lesen) and listening (Hören) activities, while adequate competency is exemplified by writing (Schreiben) and speaking (Sprechen) activities. In addition to these two competencies, an individual's German proficiency and skills are supported by vocabulary acquisition (Vokabeln lernen) and grammar (Grammatik) mastery.

One characteristic considered vital in the process of comprehending and absorbing information for German language learners is reading. This comprehension is subsequently developed through productive activities, both oral and written. These activities represent a form of effort aimed at instilling a conceptual understanding of the taught material, whether through texts or dialogues and serve as productive endeavors in expressing ideas verbally and in penmanship.

Makassar State University is among the educational institutions offering opportunities for individuals to learn and comprehend the German language and culture through the German Language Education Program at both undergraduate and graduate levels. German language education at the undergraduate level encompasses a variety of courses. One of the courses systematically implemented in this program is "Lesen und Schreiben" (Reading and Writing). Both of these courses are designed based on quality learning outcomes aligned with the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework, thereby underlining that the learning achievements contribute to enhancing the quality of human resources. The language instruction provided in the mentioned program is supported by "Studio d A1" and "Netzwerk A1," which have served as instructional materials for approximately the past ten years, catering to the German language competency needs of the students.

The learning outcomes of the "Lesen" course underscore comprehension of information within reading texts and dialogues. At the same time, "Schreiben" emphasizes empowering the competence of expressing awareness in written form, adhering to the principles of correct and effective use of the German language. Interviews conducted on September 14, 2022, with the instructor of the "Lesen und Schreiben" course, along with observations of German language teaching within the German Language Education Program, Department of Foreign Language Education, Faculty of Language and Literature, UNM, revealed that new students often encounter challenges in understanding German language texts. This observation is corroborated by the average final exam scores of 67 in reading and 66.75 in writing competencies at the end of the first semester.

Another challenge students face during reading tests, which employ multiple-choice, matching, and true-false question formats in mid-semester and final exams, is that they sometimes randomly select answers as a last alternative rather than genuinely understanding the text. These challenges also impact students' ability to express ideas in writing based on the themes or topics covered in the lessons.

The phenomenon, as mentioned earlier, can serve as motivation for educators to enhance the learning process by utilizing models, strategies, media, instructional approaches, or materials that naturally optimize the potential, understanding, and skills of students while aligning with relevant and situational learning themes that cater to the current digital revolution era.

The smartphone is a prominent digital product widely used for various activities. Using multiple applications on this platform triggers a psychological dependency on the comfort zone, which can indirectly negatively affect German language students' culture, style, and learning experiences. Presently, educators face the challenge of harnessing the potential of the digital industry within and beyond the classroom environment. Consequently, smartphones are anticipated to evolve into companions for students, aiding them in the German language learning process under any circumstance or condition.

The widespread use of various online platforms for German language learning since the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a primary driver for changes in instructional design and procedures. Google Classroom has gained prominence among the commonly used platforms for language education. Google Classroom is one of the world's most popular platforms, offering flexible learning features like an e-learning environment. Keeler and Miller (2015, p. 27) proclaim, "Google Classroom is an online platform that allows teachers to streamline the digital process with their students." This statement implies that Google Classroom is an online platform that allows educators to communicate and interact with their students in a virtual environment. Consequently, this platform can be regarded as a medium or tool that aids teaching and learning.

As an educational tool, Li et al. (2016) and Lin et al. assume that Google Classroom aids educators in minimizing time, organizing classes, and enhancing communication with students. Al-Marroof & Al-Emran (2018) further add that Google Classroom is a type of blended learning that elevates the quality of both learning

and teaching by placing the learner at the center of the educational experience. It is attributed to the platform's seamless integration with Gmail, Google Drive, Google Documents, and Google Tables. It allows students to access information and learning materials and submit assignments within specific timeframes through the classes established by educators on Google Classroom. This approach also offers a solution to reducing paper usage.

This platform enables educators to create multiple classes within a single application, greatly facilitating class organization, distributing instructional materials assignments, and tracking assessment and attendance. These aspects are seamlessly integrated with Google Calendar, presenting an efficient solution for managing educational activities.

Integrating Google Classroom with miscellaneous Google features, as previously described, offers benefits to educators and students in the learning process, both within and beyond the classroom. Moreover, it can optimize time management when challenges arise. For instance, when an educator cannot attend a classroom session, students can access instructional materials, such as videos, documents, or web links attached by the educator on the class page within Google Classroom, providing descriptions or explanations of the lesson. This integration also serves as an efficient means of online storage, eliminating the need to use storage space on laptops or smartphones.

The presence of Google Classroom as an online learning platform during the current endemic is anticipated to foster a more enthusiastic learning atmosphere. It is attributed to students being able to engage with various challenges presented by instructors in the form of assignments, exercises, or quizzes, all thoughtfully packaged and designed to be completed individually or collaboratively. Using Google Classroom in education is supported by [Robinson et al. \(2019\)](#) and [Sahlström et al. \(2019\)](#), whose research suggests that this platform enhances student enthusiasm and competence due to its user-friendly nature and flexibility. Students can monitor their learning activities and access information anytime and anywhere through its ease of use.

The disparity between the "sufficient" level of reading and writing competence in the German language and the advent of smartphones that streamline activities with just a single click serves as a primary motivation for researchers to examine and understand the process of German language learning in higher education, particularly in the context of blended learning, through the use of Google Classroom.

Likewise, the researcher is intrigued to explore whether Google Classroom effectively facilitates improved reading and writing competencies in the German language. This study is particularly pertinent in the era of blended learning. By delving into these aspects, the study sheds light on the effectiveness of Google Classroom for enhancing German language learning outcomes concerning reading and writing skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research design employed in this study is a mixed methods approach. The research was conducted within the German Language Education Program, Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Language and Literature, Universitas Negeri Makassar, involving 30 fourth-semester students as the research sample. Qualitative data were obtained through participatory observation by the researcher, who observed the activities of German language learning using Google Classroom. Meanwhile, quantitative data were obtained from the average reading and writing competence test scores in the German language and t-test results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data for this study were analyzed based on the outcomes of the researcher's participatory observations during German language learning sessions using Google Classroom and the results of reading and writing competency tests administered to the students.

The observational findings insinuate that Google Classroom is an effective online learning platform for facilitating German language instruction. Like traditional face-to-face instruction, the activities accomplished through this digital medium align with the instructional design, encompassing the lesson's opening, core, and closing phases. The learning process within Google Classroom commences with greetings and the delivery of instructional materials and progresses to practice exercises, assignments, and quizzes. Google Classroom is a partner and companion in the student's learning journey. Beyond providing information and announcements, the platform empowers students to download and share learning materials. Furthermore, students can complete assignments, exercises, and quizzes at their convenience, irrespective of time and location. The experience of learning through this application has shifted students' perspectives, transforming their smartphones from potential distractions into partners for improving their German language competency and proficiency.

The results of the reading and writing competency tests in German for students reveal that the average reading competency score after being taught using Google Classroom is 88.8, and the average writing competency score is 85.2. These scores indicate a positive shift from the "sufficient" category to the "good" category in the German language's reading and writing competencies. This improvement is further supported by the t-test analysis results, demonstrating that Google Classroom is an effective instructional medium for enhancing German language learning, particularly in reading and writing competencies among college students. It is highlighted by the condition that the calculated t-value (10.975) is greater than the tabulated t-table (1.714).

German Teaching and Learning by Using Google Classroom

German language teaching in this study was conducted throughout four sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. The overarching theme addressed during these sessions was "Reisen" (Traveling). The first session commenced with the presentation of learning objectives and an introductory activity involving checking

in with the students and discussing current news. Subsequently, the instructor instructed students to join a pre-formed class by entering a specific code through their devices. Following this, students downloaded reading materials aligned with the guidelines and instructor's instructions. This approach reflects the blended learning setup, combining online and traditional elements for effective language education. Through this methodology, students were guided through the learning process, engaging with materials and activities designed to enhance their language proficiency within the context of the "Reisen" theme.

The core activity of the first session focused on comprehending a text globally. Before delving into understanding the text and answering questions to assess their comprehension, students listened carefully to how the strategy for global text comprehension was explained. Additionally, they were allowed to inquire about any unfamiliar vocabulary. To demonstrate strong vocabulary proficiency, students participated in a vocabulary quiz related to the text via Google Classroom. After a joint review of the vocabulary quiz by students and the instructor, students worked on several practice questions. These questions aimed to gauge the extent of their comprehension of the text and the efficacy of their application of the global reading strategy. In the concluding segment of the learning activity, students and the instructor engaged in a comprehensive review of the exercises completed through Google Classroom. This comprehensive approach to instruction combines vocabulary enhancement, global reading strategy implementation, and practice exercises to foster a well-rounded understanding of the teaching theme.

The second session's focus shifted to the strategy of selective reading, which is essential for accurately answering questions related to advertisements and short texts. The session began with an opening activity to prepare students physically and mentally before delving into the lesson. This activity was followed by a discussion of assignments that students had completed online via Google Classroom outside of the class environment. The core of this lesson commenced with an explanation of the selective reading strategy and its benefits. Students then understood the text and addressed practice questions through Google Classroom. As [Robinson et al. \(2019\)](#) and [Sahlström et al. \(2019\)](#) highlight, one of Google Classroom's advantages is its user-friendly accessibility. This advantage is consistently harnessed by instructors who provide quizzes and exercises related to the material taught to enhance student engagement and learning. By employing Google Classroom, instructors can optimize this accessibility to facilitate meaningful learning experiences both in and outside the classroom. This session's structured approach underscores the importance of selective reading strategies and actively involving students in the learning process through online assignments and collaborative discussions.

The third and fourth meetings focus on the skill of writing in the German language. The intended writing skill refers to the student's ability to express ideas using appropriate norms and grammar. As usual, the learning process begins with checking the students' attendance and conducting a warm-up activity, as done in several previous meetings. Following this, the instructor explains the learning

objectives effectively based on the materials accessible to the students on Google Classroom. The activities for these two meetings involve providing tips and tricks for composing informal and semi-formal emails while considering the situations outlined in each question and several key points that need to be included in the email. At the end of the class, students and the instructor collaboratively review errors found in each exercise completed on Google Classroom.

The results of the researcher's participatory observation in German language learning activities indicate that Google Classroom is one of the easily accessible instructional media. It has an automatic storage system connected to Google accounts, optimizes time through designated durations for task completion and submission, and is free of charge. Hilal et al. (2022) also state that Google Classroom is an immensely beneficial online learning platform due to several advantages, including simplifying instructional activities, ease of access, and utilizing a cloud-based system with robust and secure storage. Furthermore, Marone & Heinsfeld (2023) assert that implementing Google Classroom in language education is suitable and adequate for enhancing learner enthusiasm.

Reading and Writing Competencies of German Students in The Third Semester after Learning by Using Google Classroom

Several competencies set as targeted goals while students actively engage in the learning process include the ability to comprehend texts and select appropriate answers by implementing global or selective reading strategies. Students are also expected to proficiently compose informal and semi-formal emails based on key points provided in the prompts, adhering to German grammar and usage rules.

The reading competency test provided to the students consists of 30 questions divided into five sections. The first section contains an article from a German magazine or newspaper with six multiple-choice questions. The second section comprises two short texts, each with three multiple-choice questions. The third section contains seven questions involving matching a person's situation with the appropriate advertisement. The fourth section consists of a text containing comments from several individuals regarding a specific topic, with seven yes/no questions. Students must select whether each person's word in each text agrees or disagrees with the discussed topic. The fifth section contains a simple text providing information and instructions about public services. In this section, there are four multiple-choice questions. The test results indicate that the average reading competency score of the students is 88.8, which falls within the "good" category.

The writing skills test consists of two sections: composing an informal email and a semi-formal email. In the casual email section, students are provided with a scenario related to the question and three key points. They must describe the situation, express reasons, and arrange to meet. In the semi-formal email section, students are asked to politely apologize and provide reasons for being unable to attend an invitation. The test results reveal that the average writing competency score of the students is 85.2, which also descends within the "good" classification.

Exploring the German language, mainly in terms of writing and reading skills, using Google Classroom is an action to drive technology, one of the primary gateways for training and enhancing an individual's language competency. This

argument aligns with the findings of research conducted by Alon et al.(2023), Alyoussef (2022), Chen (2023), Hilal et al. (2022), Jardim et al. (2023), Kwong & Churchill (2023), Tsai et al. (2023), Tseng et al. (2023) and Wang et al. (2023), who have suggested that Google Classroom is one of the digital platforms that can improve learning competency and sustain learner enthusiasm throughout the learning process. Several benefits derived from the use of Google Classroom in German language learning also indicate that the implementation of the flipped learning concept is a strategy and approach that continually maximizes the outcomes and enhances the quality and competency of learners through both online and offline learning. Alvi (2021), Joy et al. (2023), Lawter & Garnjost (2023), Marone & Heinsfeld (2023), Ng (2023) and Sorvari et al. (2020) have affirmed that Google Classroom is considered one of the flipped learning-based teaching tools because it can be utilized not only during online sessions but also during in-person learning. Consequently, instruction can become more versatile by combining online and offline learning approaches.

CONCLUSION

The observational findings insinuate that Google Classroom is a partner and companion in the student's learning journey. Beyond providing information and announcements, the platform empowers students to download and share learning materials. Furthermore, students can complete assignments, exercises, and quizzes at their convenience, irrespective of time and location. The experience of learning through this application has shifted students' perspectives, transforming their smartphones from potential distractions into partners for improving their German language competency and proficiency.

The results of the reading and writing competency tests in German for students reveal that the average reading competency score after being taught using Google Classroom is 88.8, and the average writing competency score is 85.2. These scores indicate a positive shift from the "sufficient" category to the "good" category in the German language's reading and writing competencies. This improvement is further supported by the t-test analysis results, demonstrating that Google Classroom is an effective instructional medium for enhancing German language learning, particularly in reading and writing competencies among college students. It is highlighted by the condition that the calculated t-value (10.975) is greater than the tabulated t-table (1.714).

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