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How Can You Teach HS German 3, 4, 5, 6 in One Class.

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Overview

The following topics are covered in this article:

- Background information
- Internet course structure including the rationale for the original course and a description of three essential areas: essential student learning skills, essential instructional needs, and essential administrative changes
- Measures of student achievement
- Student responses to a survey comparing traditional and online instruction
- How this program has helped students with individual needs
- Steps any teacher can take to start to use the Internet
- Conclusion
- References to specific German materials used in the author's classes

Background

When I began my teaching career, 16mm film projectors, reel-to-reel tape recorders, and filmstrip projectors were the advanced technology. Between 1979 and 2001, the classroom computer system went from one very elementary computer to a Novell-networked computer system of 20 computers with a few computers linked to the Internet. Videotape and laserdiscs were brought in during the mid-eighties and CD's by the mid-nineties. Since 2001 the entire German curriculum has been presented only over the Internet.

These instructional modifications allowed for the introduction of multi-level classes in the mid-eighties and new technology permitted students who wanted to continue their study of German to attend during any period of the day. By the late nineties about 10% of the students in the program attended at a different time than the class in which they were enrolled. These students were often the most highly motivated and succeeded remarkably well using the computer-based practice materials, video listening materials, and a variety of textual materials available in the classroom.

Other changes began to impact the German program in the late nineties. The Eastern-Pacific student population of the school was increasing and that led to the introduction of both Japanese and

Chinese language classes at the school. Fewer students were entering the German program as these languages grew in popularity. In addition, the California Digital High School program increased the emphasis on the use of technology, encouraged teachers to consider the concept of ‘anytime/anywhere learning’ and expanded the availability of Internet access. In January 2005, the National Educational Technology Plan 2004 was introduced by the United States Department of Education and it also strongly encourages – as one of seven recommendations - the migration of content to the Internet so that students will have continual access to it. Since students could already learn through a kind of anytime learning within the German classroom, a conversion of the in-class program to an Internet-based program was the way to continue to provide a German program after June 2001 to those students who had been in the regular class during the 2000-2001 school year. Twenty-eight students started in the first year of the Internet-based program in G2-G4 and four students continued into the second year in G3, G5. During the 2003-2004 school year, one student continued to German 4 and three ninth-grade students began German 1. Of the three ninth-grade students who began German, one was too young and is just now as a junior actually beginning to work effectively, one completed one semester of German 1 during the year, and one was very successful. During the 2004-2005 school year this young lady completed just one semester of German 2, but between early June and mid October, 2005, she put in about 110 hours of work and very successfully completed the second semester of German 2. Two junior boys entered German 3 in September 2004, completed the year very successfully in June 2005 and are now working in German 4 to be able to pass the German Language AP exam in May 2006. While an Internet-based, world language class is probably not the most appropriate teaching method for all students, it does provide options for highly motivated and interested students that may otherwise not exist.

The following recommendation from “The Future of German in American Education - Summary Report, July 1996” delineates quite clearly how the use of technology in language instruction can greatly modify the structure of the course and even support courses where there otherwise might not be any:

Consider technology not merely as an optional add-on but as potentially reshaping the entire language learning construct (e.g., individualized, student-centered learning, access to online information, task-based learning, linked learning with native speakers of German, distance learning in areas where German programs can otherwise not be supported, language maintenance, specialized programs). (Byrnes, 1996, p. 6)

For over 10 years the author has advocated the use of computer technology to focus on the teaching of the 'core curriculum' - that course content which the students must learn in order to pass their world language course and on which they are tested. In a recent article in OnCue Brian McDonough surveys a number of computer-using educators about the future use of computer technology, and the teaching of the 'core curriculum' through the use of technology is finally beginning to be considered by others as an appropriate use of computers (McDonough, 2005, p.12-13).

Program Overview

After the principal of the author’s high school had decided to discontinue the German program as a regular course in the school curriculum upon the retirement of the author, he wanted to know what to do in the following year with the students who had been in the last year of the regular program. The original design guidelines for the proposed Internet-based class had the following parameters some of which are still valid today:

- The author would teach the continuing students to provide at least one additional year, but there would be no first-year students for various reasons – first-year students were included last year.

- He would be on trips some of the time during the year, but the students would have access to online information as to what to do and when the instructor would meet with them.
- The instructor would not meet the students on a daily basis – during the first year meetings with students often occurred two times per week to do testing and oral work, later at most once a week.
- The students would work independently using the online curriculum
- A meeting place would be provided where students could locate readers and video material - reading and listening materials are, unfortunately, no longer available in the meeting room.

Both in the previous regular program and in the current Internet-based program, the curriculum for levels one through three is one that focuses on 'learning the language' and is determined to a great extent by the teacher. Now, however, the unit outlines, resource and practice materials and answers are on-line, and the students have extensive computer materials for home use for practice and testing vocabulary knowledge and the understanding of grammar concepts. Students are also required to fulfill specified outside reading requirements and to complete a certain amount of listening to the spoken language. Oral and written exams are done primarily, although not exclusively, during the in-class meetings.

Once students reach the fourth level and beyond, a pre-determined curriculum is no longer provided due to the varied background and needs of the students. The focus now shifts to 'using the language' and the students now need to begin to consider what they want to emphasize. The school motto 'Life-Long Learning' was taken into consideration in the original design of the advanced program that allows students to actually have the opportunity to select much of their work so that they can have some exposure to the concept of designing a learning program along the lines of their interests. Students are required to do at least one assignment in seven of the ten defined learning categories (Morrey, 1998, p. 12) and produce a minimum of 450 points of work per each six-week grading period. Students electing to do AP work need to complete between 550 and 650 points per grading period in order to obtain enough exposure to the written and oral language to be successful. Students at this level find the online materials very helpful: they are able to review any of the grammar concepts they might have forgotten, they can study a variety of topics in further depth and learn new advanced topics, they find a variety of reading materials online and some students listen to online material in the language they are learning.

During the first two years of the Internet program, a small room in the library contained a broad text library and a videotape collection with a viewing center that students could access and use anytime during the week, so most of the textual and listening materials were based there. That repository is no longer available. Now reading materials are borrowed from the author and listening materials are either purchased by the student or from online listening and reading sources. Students do have access to modern computers linked to the Internet in the library, but their primary work with the online materials is through their home computer. At home they also have an extensive set of computer practice materials for grammar and vocabulary work, they all have CD players to listen to dialogs and stories, and Internet access for e-mail and instant messaging.

The Online Program

In order for the Internet-based program to be effective and successful, several changes and additions to the normal classroom program were made. These changes can be classified into three major areas: essential student learning skill needs, essential instructional needs, and essential administrative changes. In the next section of this paper these areas are amplified and defined.

Essential student learning skill needs:

Most incoming students have never experienced a course in which there are no daily homework assignments, where they see the teacher and their peers usually no more than once a week, for which all instructional material is written and available only through the Internet. It is no wonder that the acquisition of new skills is essential, especially for the younger students. The instructor must devote significant time to defining the skills and helping the students understand how to function and what to do in this new environment. New skills needed may require that the student:

- Use resources to learn new concepts rather than listen to a teacher –
- Seek assistance when things are unclear
- Ask for alternative learning ideas or resources if difficulty persists
- Be personally active in one's own learning and not take shortcuts, i.e., copy or cheat
- Learn how to know what to do
- Learn how to keep track of what is done

Two kinds of computer resources are essential: the currently in-home computer practice and testing materials and the online unit work. Students must learn how to install and effectively utilize the computer practice materials to help them learn new vocabulary and master new grammar concepts and then complete tests on these materials. They must also have access via a computer at home to the Internet so that they can use the unit outlines, the explanatory material and the online written practice material (with answers).

In addition to computer resources, students need to have access to a variety of materials to help them develop their listening comprehension and reading skills. If these are available in a library setting in their school, they need to have access to the material so that they can listen whenever they have time. There are also an increasing number of sites on the Internet where students can find both listening and reading material at a variety of different levels of difficulty. These materials, especially video materials, however, usually are quite large and are mostly effectively accessed over a fast Internet connection.

Several kinds of assistance should be made available to the students. Every student at a particular level was provided with the name, e-mail address, and telephone number of each of the other students at the level to encourage peer assistance. Students can often be encouraged to request additional resources in terms of other books or be directed to other Internet sites that explain the same material in perhaps a somewhat different manner. In the program here all the students had telephone access (rarely used) and e-mail contact (often used) with the instructor.

Start of the year procedures – L1-L3

All the students in the first three levels of instruction were given informational pages describing teacher contact information, the course websites, and the unit cover sheets. They were provided with research-based guidelines on how to 'read to learn' (Green, 2001, p 8) effectively, a research-based list of 'learning strategies' (Bruen, 2001, p.221) and things that good learners do to be effective students. All students also receive articles describing the need for self-directed learning, the value of educational technology, and the overall course design for this new type of learning program. The L2-L3 students all complete a pretest covering the previous year's material which becomes the basis of an assigned, individualized set of 12-14 computer review programs. These students are given further details concerning their work with the online units including an introduction to suggested daily learning schedules for the first few units of the year – after these first units each student is expected to be able to organize his/her own learning to complete the unit in the three to four weeks of time that is allotted to it.

Start of the year procedures – L4 and L4+

The L4 students complete a pretest covering the previous year's material, which becomes the basis of an individualized set of computer review programs that they might choose to include in their curriculum plan. The advanced students also receive information concerning the development of a six-week learning plan: a description of the ten categories (Morrey, 1998, p. 12), guidelines for determining how to calculate the number of points for an activity, and a default plan design. Additionally, the students are able to view a number of plans created by previous students in order to get an idea of how they might proceed. Then they are asked to create and submit their own six-week plan to the instructor. Finally - if listening and text materials are locally at hand - they select readers and other materials to help them complete their plan or they need to obtain information as to how to find the needed materials on-line.

Essential Instructional Needs

The principles listed below guided the development of an Internet-based course that would provide:

- a way for first-year students to learn to say the sounds of the new language
- a way for students to review English grammar terminology and learn the corresponding world language metalanguage terms
- a way to develop and expand the students' active vocabulary
- a way to learn the grammar of the language under study and be able to practice the new material
- resources to allow students to review previous grammar and vocabulary materials
- practice listening to spoken language at their level
- procedures for producing spontaneous language (such as in a conversation)
- opportunities to read the language at their level
- procedures for producing reasoned written language
- access to cultural information through their reading, listening, and viewing materials

In a traditional world language classroom, most students learn to pronounce the sounds of a new language by emulating their teacher. In an Internet-based program there is little in-class language contact with the instructor and thus no significant opportunity for students to learn the new sound system through emulation, but students need to be able to say the new sounds and to read words in the new language correctly before they are required to begin independent learning. Various activities in the first unit help students establish correct pronunciation patterns from the very beginning of their contact with the new language. The first steps taken to help students acquire this skill are to expose students to the sounds of the language through intensive audio-only practice (Pimsleur, 2000). Then the students are provided with a written description of the sounds and how they compare to English with sample German words (Morrey, 2002). These lists of words are provided to the students also as audio files. During in-class sessions the students do read the sample words and words from their vocabulary lists with the instructor for verification and correction. Later the students answer and ask questions and have their pronunciation continually corrected as they work.

Since the explanatory materials are no longer teacher-led discussions but are primarily portable document format (PDF) files available on-line, English (and later) German grammatical terminology is employed throughout these materials. Many American students today do not receive a very comprehensive background in such terms and they have to be taught to the students in their online program. The students are asked to purchase a copy of the book for students learning German (Zorach & Melin, 1994 – available for several other world languages also) and are assigned various

chapters in the book that deal with the grammar concepts that they are currently studying. They are then required to be able to define these terms and provide examples in English or in the language under study. In a recent study Renate Schulz (2002, p. 20-21) determined that a greater understanding of metalinguistic terms led to better-written German test scores by the university students in the study. Students in the same study also reported that both ‘learning grammar’ and ‘error correction’ helped them in their study of the language. These results support the design of this course in which students do use metalinguistic terms to learn new grammar concepts in the language under study.

Perhaps the most critical and essential element of the online program is the set of computer programs¹ that the students use to learn both new vocabulary and to master new grammar concepts. These materials contain activities at differing cognitive levels and cover the vocabulary and grammar for four years of instruction. The software provides student-controlled options for handling incorrect answers; it moves rapidly from one item to the next when correct answers are given, and it provides a testing option. Currently, these materials are provided to the students for use on their computers at home. The focus of all the material here is on the core elements of the curriculum. The vocabulary that the students learn is first presented through bilingual lists that are available online. The students are expected to practice the spelling of the words using the computer programs and then complete a test of the words presented by the computer; they may practice as many times as they wish and they may take the randomly chosen word tests as often as they desire. Recent work by Keith Folse provides strong support for the heavy emphasis on vocabulary learning in these materials and for the use of bilingual word lists and extensive practice recalling the words that they are learning (Folse, 2004, p.3).

Providing sufficient listening practice of the world language under study is more difficult in an Internet-based program; with a fast Internet connection it is possible today to locate an ever-increasing variety of spoken material on the Internet, and some of this material is designed for beginning speakers of the language. The most appropriate listening materials for the level 1 students are rather short dialogs that contain a controlled and limited vocabulary dealing with high frequency topics. They should contain short declarative sentences, be only 10 to 15 minutes long, and have very little background or white noise. Initially, the dialogs should be spoken clearly and somewhat more slowly than in normal conversation. If the material is a video, it should be set in the country whose language is being studied. For the online program, students are encouraged to purchase the full course in the Pimsleur series (2002) and to listen to it as a way to establish the German language sounds and to internalize basic grammar structures. Very effective online listening materials for students from the second semester of the first level are available through the Deutsche Welle site. These include the four-part series entitled 'Warum Nicht?' for beginning and intermediate levels, the series 'Wieso Nicht?' for the intermediate to advanced levels, and 'Nachrichten' and 'Marktplatz' for advanced high school students.

For the online program the term ‘spontaneous language production’ (SLP) is more appropriate than the more widely used term ‘speaking’ which implies only face-to-face or telephone conversations. If one removes the physical aspect of producing the sounds of the language aloud, ‘speaking’ is, indeed, the spontaneous creation of meaningful language units without the opportunity of any serious editing or revising. SLP defined this way does not have to always be a face-to-face or telephone conversation; modern technology provides for other ways to achieve the same result: instant messaging, Chat rooms, use of web cams with audio, or other distance learning technologies. If the instructor meets on a regular basis with the students, fact-to-face SLP is possible and is preferred by the students. The author has experimented with telephone and instant message SLP.

Both of these modes are effective, but instant message SLP appears to take about three times as long as either the face-to-face or telephone conversations because the students are typing their answers rather than verbalizing them. A combination of several options for SLP other than face-to-face conversations do appear also to lead to effective skill development. The author has had experience with students who were unable to attend class in the correct period. If these students had acquired a solid grammar understanding and a good vocabulary through the use of the computer software and audio materials, they did not require intensive repetitive oral practice. Such students understand the structure of the language and are able to produce high quality spoken language by mentally constructing the sentences they wish to say. As was mentioned earlier in reference to the development of pronunciation patterns, there is insufficient class-contact time for students to develop the speaking skill primarily through in-class usage of the language. Level 1 students are required to participate in a verbal interview at the end of each of the 10 units at that level. Level 2 students must also complete an interview at the end of each of the 10 units in the curriculum and, in addition, they need to produce a few one-minute long summaries of a short story in the language under study. By level 3 the students produce 5 to 7 two-minute story summaries initially and by the end of the year a couple of four-minute summaries. Students in level 4 and beyond are asked to do at least 3 five-minute oral pieces with the instructor each semester; these may be summaries of stories or oral descriptions of trips or events in their lives. Even though the SLP elements are part of the grade, some students did quite a few of these and others avoided these elements as much as possible (which showed in their grade also).

Reading is an enormously important skill. Through reading students review vocabulary and learn new words. They view examples of the grammar elements they have learned, they see a variety of sentence structures, they learn new information, and they amuse themselves. Reading is required at all levels of the online program, but students are encouraged to read material that is within their comfort zone; that is, they should not read material that has too many new words or has language structures that are too complex for their skills. Students are asked to read a certain number of hours per semester and this amount increases somewhat with an increase in level. What also increases is the difficulty level of the material for more advanced students. Level 1 students should have stories that are short (about ½ of a page long), have new words glossed in the margins or through hyperlinks, have primarily short declarative sentences or questions in the present tense and contain no complex sentences. These students also need to be taught various reading skills. Stories can also be the content for some of the required question-answer sessions with the teacher in level 1. One good reader for the students in level 1 is the reader *'Beginner's German Reader'*. Stories for students at the second level should contain relatively short declarative sentences or questions in the present and narrative past tenses. Grammar complexity can increase as the students are exposed to a greater variety of structures through their grammar materials. New vocabulary should still be glossed and pre-reading vocabulary lists of words for the stories are helpful. Good story genres at this level include fables, folklore, legends and fairy tales that relate to the country whose language is under study. The five-part book entitled *Graded German Reader* is very effective at this level. Other readers for more skilled students would be German Easy Readers such as *'Gänsebraten und andere Geschichten'*. High-interest stories designed for non-natives who are starting to learn the language are often short and not too difficult and would be appropriate for very good level 2 students or for level 3 students.

Students beyond the second level exhibit much more variation in their ability to read and understand written material in the language and, therefore, they are no longer required to all read the same stories. Students now have a variety of books and stories at different levels of difficulty from which to select their reading materials. Students should be encouraged to select easier material first, read a

lot of this material rapidly, and then gradually move to more difficult items. The easier reading material can be used as a basis for oral story retelling and it certainly allows them to review vocabulary and structures that they have already learned. Many different levels of reading material have been available for the third and fourth level student so that these students can read at their comfort level and not be discouraged by texts that are too difficult. Level 4 students with a stronger background are encouraged to begin to read high interest novels and to find other material on the Internet. Some of the readers that the author employed are listed in the Appendix.

One of the tenets of my philosophy of teaching holds that paragraph writing is not essential during the ‘learning’ stages of an instructional program, but rather only necessary at the point when the program focus shifts to ‘using’ the language. Therefore, students in the first three levels of the program are asked to develop their repertoire of sentence structures and their skill in using these structures to respond to and ask questions that normally do not require extensive amounts of writing to answer. Occasionally, students will encounter assignments that contain more substantial writing, but this is not a focused activity until the fourth level. By the time students reach this level, they have already learned appropriate paragraph and essay formats through their English classes and can apply this knowledge and their skill with various types of sentence constructions to produce effective ‘writing pieces’. Thus writing is one of the ten categories available to the advanced students when they create their learning plan. A ‘writing piece’ is defined as a written composition of 150 words in length. Students must use a word processing program and submit the pieces to the instructor as an attachment via e-mail. Students who do not like to write but who wish to meet the default plan guidelines may submit one ‘writing piece’ per six-week period that is just 150 words and might describe their dog, for example. On the other hand, one of the two students who prepared for the AP exam during the first Internet-based class in 2001-2002 would write 600 or more words per chapter in a gripping mystery story that she created which eventually became a story of over 3000 words in excellent German (an unedited excerpt from this story is included in the end-notes²).

Essential Administrative Needs

Students who have no experience with independent, individualized learning may have great difficulty learning to function in a course with this kind of structure. There are certain essential administrative elements that must be in place in order for the program to run smoothly. Students must be able to easily find out:

- What comprises a semester’s worth of work and when are the various elements due
- What assignments make up a unit of work
- What the attendance procedures are
- What material has been turned in to the teacher and graded and what assignments are still incomplete for a particular grading period

The teacher must have online a semester plan which details all the required elements for the semester and when they must be submitted. Online are also separate links to each unit plan outline and further links to all the individual elements of the unit plan These include written explanatory material for new grammar concepts, a number of practice exercises with answers to practice the new material, lists of all vocabulary to be learned, and answers to any exercises from textbook or workbook activities.

During the first two years of the Internet-based class, all students were scheduled into the first period of the school day. The class was scheduled in this fashion so that students could work together, but also so that they could remain at home on the days when they did not need to see the teacher . The Internet-based class was quite unique in that the teacher held class only one or two

days a week and the students were not required to attend even those periods. In most high-school classes students must attend every day, so the question of attendance also had to be addressed. The solution to the question of how to consider attendance was to assume that the students were present if they attended their other classes during the school day whether or not they actually did attend the Internet-based class. Starting with the 2003-2004 school year the class has been a district-based class. Again, the students can come to the weekly meeting or not depending on whether they need to work with the instructor or not; an informal record of student attendance is maintained, but nothing is reported to the school or district.

All student grades are available to the student and his/her parents online via a secure website – provided for a small fee by MicroGrade. Students can verify at this site what grade they received for work completed, that the instructor did indeed receive an assignment, and what is still missing for the current six-week grading period. The company sells software for the instructor's computer and maintains a website to which the instructor can upload student grades and individualized comments; other companies sell similar products³

The grading focus is somewhat different depending on the level of the student. Level 1 students in the high school are often in their first year of high school and are quite young. A graded 'DailyLog' sheet for the first-year student is completed and sent via e-mail once a week to the instructor to encourage students to work regularly and to learn how to communicate information to the instructor. Other elements of the grade for level 1 students include the unit packet with its summary sheet, computer test scores, and other practice material, as well as oral and written exams. While the level 2-3 students no longer must complete and turn in the DailyLog sheets, they have to record information about their outside reading and their listening activities and submit these records every six weeks as part of their grade. They must also complete an assignment consisting of a set of a dozen or more computer-based grammar review exercises individually designed for them based on their pretest at the start of the year. Generally there are some students who learned the previous year's work well-enough that they have few review exercises; these students are given frequency-based vocabulary lists so that all students end up with the same number of points for the semester-long assignment. Level 4 students⁴ submit a spreadsheet via e-mail to the instructor every six weeks that details the work they did to carry out the six-week plan that they had initially submitted to the teacher. Students at this level present work in seven of ten defined categories (see online: <http://www.chs.fuhisd.org/German/index.html>, then under 'German Program at CHS' and then under 'German 4'). Level 4 students who intend to take the AP exam must complete substantially more work during the year than the regular student⁵.

A different role for the master teacher

The teacher is no longer the source of all information, but rather he/she now must direct the student to the resources that the student can use to learn. That implies that this explanatory material must be more detailed and complete than was formerly the case. One interesting aspect of having these materials available on line is that color can be used effectively to emphasize and delineate important points or to make comparisons and similarities more obvious. The teacher must help the students learn where the resources are that they will use, how to use them effectively, how to use any elements of technology effectively, and how to know when the instructor will be at school and how to reach the teacher otherwise. The teacher must also be able to contact students (and their parents) via e-mail or by telephone to reinforce the need to regularly complete their work. He or she must provide the students with information on the new learning skills that they will have to use to be successful and work independently or with their peers. Finally, the teacher must be able to analyze student errors and suggest materials and resources to assist the students to know what to review and

what to consider in future work. This requires that the teacher know all the resources of the program well and be able to direct the students to them.

Student Achievement

Twenty-eight students entered the first Internet-based class in the fall of 2001. During the year 3 of 12 level 2 students dropped out of the class before the end of the first semester, 3 of 6 level 3 students dropped, 0 of 9 level 4 student dropped and the 1 level 5 student dropped. The dramatically changed structure from a traditional classroom to the Internet-based class and the very different set of student responsibilities did increase the dropout rate to some degree. All 20 students who completed the full year earned C grades or better⁶. Two of the level 4 students did complete the AP exam and obtained scores of 4 and 5 after only four years of instruction including one year through the Internet-based course.

All students took the National German Test administered through the American Association of Teachers of German in the first year of the Internet-based course. The range and average scores for each level was compared with the average scores of students in the same three levels for the preceding three years when the students were all in the regular school program. The average scores for the students in the Internet-based program was about 6 to 8 percentile points lower than for students in the regular program. This result is not surprising given that the students no longer had the daily contact with the teacher, that it was the first year of the program, and that the instructor had not had enough experience to make adjustments in the amount and kinds of listening and reading activities that should be required. In 2005 the three active students completed the National German Test. The German 2 student earned a score at the 50% level and the two German 3 students had scores at the 79 and 89 percentile level.

At the end of the first year of the Internet-based class, all students completed a survey in which they were asked to compare their impressions of the Internet-based class with their previous experiences in the traditional language classroom. Below is a list of comments from the students:

- Freedom to work on what student wanted (G4)
- Sleep in/not every day in class (Class met about 2x per week first period, but students did not have to come to every class either)
- Learned about managing time and workload
- Could work when wanted
- Resources always available
- Teacher not always available
- Hard to be motivated and not procrastinate
- Lack of peers and classroom use of language
- No nightly homework or really firm due dates

Observations

The current online course evolved from the writer's experiences during the last 15 years of his regular teaching career. Regularly during these years, there were students who had class conflicts with other required subjects, but who wanted to continue learning German. In a small program it was always important to keep as many students in the program for as long as possible. With new methods and materials these students could come and study German when they could fit it into their schedule even if they were in the class while a different level of German or a different subject was being taught or even during a teacher's free period, and in the last few years at least 10% of the

author's students had to attend at a different time than their scheduled class due to conflicts. It was also common in these years to have a multi-level advanced class that often contained students with very diverse backgrounds. Below are some examples of the varied student backgrounds and student schedules:

- A few students had lived and gone to school in Germany, but they were not native Germans, and they wanted to continue the development of their German skills at a high level.
- An American student, who had spent a year in Germany but had had no formal training in the language before he arrived in Germany, had very good listening skills and a broad vocabulary, but his grammar knowledge was quite limited.
- One other time a student was out of school sick for a couple of months; the only class that she was able to continue in the regular school program was German because the program was very flexible and she could work when she was able (she did not complete a whole year, but she did get credit for what she had done).
- Another student was involved in a legal case for many weeks and was absent from school many days during the year; she completed the equivalent of one semester's work during the entire year and finished the following year.
- Advanced students needed to take courses at another location for several days of the week and thus missed those days in the German class; the students were able to use the in-class technology and the flexible structure to complete their projected learning plan.
- A number of students (particularly if they were sophomore or junior students) who exhibited a strong interest and a very high language learning aptitude as shown from the score on their Modern Language Aptitude Test (Carroll & Sapon, 1959) were able to complete two years of German study in one year, which they usually did very successfully.
- One young lady with substantial German experience outside of school took the German AP exam at the end of her ninth grade year and obtained a score of 4, but she wanted to do better, so she entered the advanced class to improve her grammar background. The next year she obtained a 5 on the AP exam, but she returned for two more years of German study in order to continue to expand her abilities.
- One very motivated senior student decided that she wanted to do twice the work of a normal level 4 student and completed two periods of German that year.

Obviously, it was not possible to create one single curriculum that would be suitable for all these students, but the student-designed curriculum for students beyond level 3 could be tailored to the needs of each student. This option is now even more viable with the resources that are online and the much broader range of materials available through the Internet.

Bringing Elements of Your Program to the Internet

Three different websites are used for this program. The first site – www.schoolnotes.com - is a site where any teacher can place daily or weekly assignments, information for substitute teachers, details for student projects, and links to other sites for student listening, reading or even grammatical practice. The site is easy to use and does not cost anything. When assignments are available on-line, one can expect students to have assignments even if they are absent and one can give assignments that students can complete even if substitute teachers are not qualified in the language being taught.

The second site is the online grading site – [visit www.chariot.com](http://www.chariot.com) - for one possibility. Online grading may be provided through one's school. A commercial online service will probably cost something to acquire the software and may require a use fee for website access. There are important advantages to the use of a secure, password-protected online site for grading. If you set up the user name and password to use something like the student's name and school student identification

number as a password, then the student AND the student's parent can have access to the grades. Students will have immediate access to cumulative grades and can see what additional assignments they must still complete, so they cannot complain at the end of a term that they did not know that they had not completed all the work. The grade is in black and white so there is no room for complaints about lack of fairness.

The third site is a dedicated school site⁷. Here one can establish the entire language curriculum for the students to use. To begin to develop an online site for students to use, one can start with required vocabulary lists provided as PDF files. One can add verb paradigms, reference materials such as lists of pronouns, prepositions, adjective endings, and so forth. Short stories with word glosses can be made available for the students to read. Later, one can add practice materials and answers, supplemental explanatory materials, and unit assignments provided as PDF files. It may be possible to reduce the amount of paper that you have to use to make copies, if you place your material on the school website and ask the students to either read it online or copy it at their home. You can also require that students begin to use various online resources or do as one teacher did and require that all students write e-mails in the language under study to other students and send a copy to the teacher to be part of the student's graded material.

Conclusion

The author's experiences in the regular program with many diverse students and their ability to use the computer, video, and text resources to learn successfully and with the students in the multi-level classes has indicated that a well-designed online course can indeed be effective and successful. Originally, the online course was implemented to allow the students to obtain one or two more years of language instruction in German during the phase out-period for German. With the inclusion of level 1 students, the program has a broader value and can be helpful in schools where the enrollment in a world language is too small to support a traditional class. A teacher who may know the language to some degree but not be highly qualified, could monitor students as they work through the curriculum and communicate with the master teacher who might be at an entirely different location. The program could also be helpful in schools which might have enough students for a level 1 class, but not for separate more advanced classes. The very flexible advanced program is particularly successful for the older students who are more mature and have better learning skills, and it can help maintain enrollment levels by providing instruction that meets the needs of these students.

After four years of working with students through the online course, the need for a few adjustments to the original assumptions is now much clearer. Due to the fact that there is no classroom practice with the language such as one finds in a traditional class, students must be exposed to much more audio material, either through Internet-based listening materials, CD's, streaming video materials, or materials acquired for home use. Students also need to read even more than had originally been planned. Both the listening and reading materials provide exposure to authentic language and give the students models of good language usage.

The online Internet-based language program described in this paper is a successful method of providing world language instruction when the traditional language class is no longer an option, due to small enrollment, lack of sufficient teachers, or for other reasons. Certain aspects of this program – such as online assignments, online grades, and online language resources - can be implemented on a gradual basis in any language program to provide students with access to materials outside of the regular classroom environment. Full implementation of an Internet-based program for students beyond level 3 is an effective way to address the varied needs of the advanced students and to

encourage them to continue their study of the world language. An Internet-based course allows students to study anywhere they can connect to the Internet; it allows them to work anytime they want, even during vacations or holidays, and they can work at whatever rate is appropriate for them.

Notes

1. In addition to generic level 1 German software (Morrey, 1994), and new generic software for levels 2 and 3, similar software for levels 4, and 5 developed specifically for the textbook of the course provides critical practice materials for these levels.

2. Unedited student sample of creative writing in German for a German 4 student preparing for the AP exam.

Erika hatte schnell gearbeitet. Schon hatte sie die Brücke präpariert, ihre Sachen eingerichtet und war um die Bank gegangen. Alles waren in Ordnung. Jetzt musste sie nur warten. Und denken. Aber sie wollte nicht denken, und ging zu der Mitte der Brücke, um das Wasser anzuschauen. Es sieht wie ein Spiegel aus; dunkle graue Wolken, der rote orange Himmel... und die schwarze Brücke mit ihrem kleinen Gesicht. Sie starrte ihre Augen minutenlang an. Dann stürzte ein starke Wind das Wasser und das Bild ihres Gesichts ging weg. Sie machte ihre Augen zu. Das Schweigen war absolut. Plötzlich klapfte jemand Erikas Schulter. "Was machst du, Süsse?"

3. Online grades for a sample class of one student can be viewed by going to <http://www.eclassinfo.com/home.asp?id=RMorr>; select the 'SampleGer2Class' and use '12345' for the Student ID and 'PASS' as the password.

4. L4 students have been the most successful students in this program probably because they are older, have more technical and learning skills and are primarily in the class to enjoy learning the language.

5. L4 students prepared six-week learning plans that varied greatly depending on what the student wished to emphasize. To view plans submitted by a student using the default plan and one preparing for the AP exam, refer to: <http://www.chs.fuhisd.org/German/index.html> and under 'German 4 Student work' look at --/BrianH D4-plan.xls and 'Carola'.

6. Please refer to both the article "Technology Plus the Internet to Redesign Advanced HS German Classes" under 'Conference_presentations' and to a representative sample of 'National German Test Scores' under 'German Program at CHS' for more information on student achievement.

7. The dedicated site containing all the language related material created by the author for his students is located at: <http://chs.fuhisd.org/German/index.html>

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Appendix – German reading materials used by the author

Readers that have been effective in third level and early fourth level are:

MD in den Alpen (part of Die Krimi Serie – no longer in print)

Die Aktentasche (part of Die Eisenbahn Serie – no longer in print)

Die Falsche Adresse (part of Die Strassenbahn Serie – no longer in print)

[I listed these three series because they were very effective and interesting short stories for students in the third and fourth levels and were often used as a basis for an oral discussion or retelling. The stories were a small format book, some five by eight inches, and about 15 pages long each.]

German Easy Readers – A Level

Wahre und Erfundene Geschichte

All readers from the first and second levels

12 Read-A-Long readers that were a set of 10 small books with a cassette tape

[While this particular set of stories does not appear to be available, many similar CD-based stories are for sale through the Internet]

More advanced students read some of the items listed below:

German Easy Readers – Levels B, C, D

Pack den Rucksack

Lektüre II

Deutsche Märchen und Sagen

Deutsche Sagen und Legenden

Emil und die Detektive

Kai aus der Kiste

Die Verschwundene Miniatur

A more complete list of the materials available to the students while the author was a full-time teacher and during the first two years as an Internet teacher are listed on the authors websites under 'Resources at CHS' (see note 7 above).