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Department of English

S: Digital Culture in the EFL Classroom:

Text Types, Communication and Identity

- a TEFLhybrid Course

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**Adapting Education in the Digital Age:
Incorporating Podcasts in the EFLC
– A Teaching Unit on “The Blue Planet” -**

Comment: The first line is a bit grandiose, other than that, a perfectly adequate title

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Comment: If you use this type of capitalization in titles, you better know what you are doing. This is impeccable!

Comment: Excellent structure, from theory to practice, even a small section on terminology

1. Introduction

Over the last years, the educational system has been undergoing a profound transformation being faced with difficulties which challenged the traditional paradigms of foreign language teaching and learning. One factor which unveiled grievances of and accelerated rapid changes in the educational system was the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic forced an abrupt shift to remote, digital learning. Another factor that is discussed in the discipline of foreign language education is the question of obsolescence of the current educational system (cf. Steininger 2020; Prensky 2001). Along the same lines, Prensky argues that “[o]ur students have changed radically. Today’s students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach” (2001: 1).

With the bloom of developments in technology in today’s digital age and the constant contact or exposure to the internet as well as social media in all spheres of life, likewise in the educational sector a need arises to foster digital competences in both students and teachers. In the same vein, Németh and Csongor note that “[d]ue to fast developments in technology, digital competences are of major importance today for both students and teachers” (2019: 41). This view is supported by Prensky who emphasizes the role of today’s teachers in this process of transformation: “Today’s teachers have to learn to communicate in the language of their students [namely the language of digital natives]” (2001: 3). Therefore, the goal of this term paper is to cultivate awareness of the importance of developing skills and competences regarding technology and digital communication in the English as a foreign language classroom (henceforth EFLC). On that account, a theoretical approach is taken in the first section of this term paper by briefly laying out concepts and theories in relation to digital communication.

Additionally, this term paper aims to design a practical teaching unit which exemplary illustrates how teachers can incorporate digital tools into English foreign language teaching and foster technology-related skills and competences. In the foreign language classroom, podcasts have primarily been used to foster listening skills of learners (cf. Yeh et al. 2021: 1). However, few studies imply that the production of podcasts by students themselves can help foster the speaking skills of learners (cf. *ibid.*). Hence, in the second section of this term paper, the focus will be set on fostering students speaking skills with the help of a project in which the students – in groups – will create a podcast on their own.

Comment: Source not included in the bibliography! This, of course, shouldn’t happen.

Comment: Impressive technique – adding a few words in square brackets to ensure cohesion

Comment: Advance organizing at the end of the introduction – exemplary!

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Terminology and Definitions

While discussing theories and concepts on digital communication, it is necessary to clarify foundational terms that are important for the basic understanding of the topic and which will be used in the further course of the paper: In this context, the prevalent terms *digitisation* and *digitalisation* should be distinguished. Former refers to the “[...] process of transforming something into a digital format (e.g. scanning a worksheet) [...]” (Steininger 2020: 69). The concept of *digitalisation* refers to “the transformation of formerly analogue, physical signs into discrete digital signals and electronic bits whenever content is presented, represented, communicated ‘shared’ – one of the standard practices of digital communication” (Hallet 2018: 1). At the same time, *digitalisation* refers to “[...] a cause of, but also a result of, complex global economic, cultural and personal exchange processes [...]” (ibid.). When talking about digital communication in today’s digital age, frequently the terms *digital native* and *digital immigrant* arise. According to Prensky, the term „digital natives“ can be defined as “[...] ‘native speakers’ of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet” (Prensky 2001: 1). Whereas the term “digital immigrant” can be defined as a generation which was not born “into the digital world” but with the years have learned to handle technological tools (cf. Prensky 2001: 1).

Comment: One should add that these two terms are rather unacademic and even slightly polemical. They might also create a false dichotomy. Rather than stating that these terms “arise frequently”, one could simply attribute them to Prensky (2001), thereby avoiding the impression of them being ubiquitous in the academic discourse.

2.2. Digital Communication – Concepts and Theories

According to Tagg, the term *digital communication* refers to interaction between people mediated by technological tools such as desktop computers or mobile phones (cf. 2015). In the context of EFL teaching and learning, digital communication refers to the use of digital technologies and digital tools in order to facilitate communication and language learning of the English language. A wide range of digital text types can be encompassed in this concept, including podcasts, blog entries, forums et cetera (cf. Hallet 2018; Grünewald 2016). With each digital text type, distinctive cultural practices, norms, conventions and rules come to play (cf. Steininger 2023). Digital communication always reveals cultural practices of a speech community.

After having discussed that digital communication entails both digital text types and cultural practices another factor which is also of great importance and highly entangled in digital communication are technology-related competences both in teachers and students. These technology-related competences, digital text types and cultural practices are highly reliant on each other. Being online, or in other words operating in the digital realm and engaging in digital activities, is multimodal, multi-aspectual and in constant motion (cf. Ivo Steininger 2023).

Digital literacy is one term which is frequently used when speaking of students' competences related to technology. Digital literacy, or more precisely skills related to using information technology, also called media competence, should be addressed in the EFLC (cf. Steininger 2020; Hessisches Kultusministerium 2022). There are diverse aspects to digital literacy such as information literacy, the ethical use of resources, reflecting on digital traces, the handling of digital communication and questioning data security (cf. Steininger 2020: 75). The *European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu)* is “[...] a framework for the development of educators’ digital competence in Europe” (Redecker 2017: 7). More precisely, the framework sees educators as “[...] role models for the next generation. It is therefore vital for them to be equipped with the digital competence all citizens need to be able to actively participate in a digital society” (Redecker 2017: 15). The DigCompEdu framework designed a model which divides digital competences into the following three sets of competences: firstly, educators’ professional competences - namely professional engagement, educators’ pedagogical competences, including digital resources, teaching and learning, assessment, and empowering learners and thirdly learners’ competences, namely facilitating learners’ digital competence (cf. Redecker 2017: 8).

Since the communicative turn which took place in late 1970s and in the beginning of the 1980s, media functioned as communicative tools in the field of EFL teaching (cf. Steininger 2020). In the beginnings of this communicative era, analogue multimedia systems were used whereas “[...] with the advent of the competence paradigm in the early 2000s” digital multimedia systems were more frequently used (Steininger 2020: 71; Grünewald 2016). In the digital age, a “development from *Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)* to *Mobile Assisted Language Learning or Language Use (MALL/ MALU)*” can be perceived (Steininger 2020: 73). This development might have

taken place for mobile devices, compared to desktop computers, are in a stronger position in regard to accessibility, learning environment as well as informal and formal learning (cf. Steininger 2020). Digital media can be described with the help of a descriptive framework in regard of their level of production and level of reception. Former describes the use of technological medium and the forms of information coding. Here, monocodal and multimodal information coding are distinguished (cf. Steininger 2020: 72). In terms of reception, the sensory modalities which are activated by the medium are described. Here, monomodal and multimodal sensory modalities are distinguished (cf. *ibid*). A song, for example, is monomodal and monomodal as the technological medium of an audio file is used to transfer the information coding and only the auditory sensors are receiving the information coding. In contrast, a YouTube video is multicodal and multimodal as audio files and pictures or a video are produced and the auditory and visual sensory modalities and being addressed by the medium.

Puentedura developed a model, namely the SAMR model, which aims to promote technology integration in the EFLC (Steininger 2020; Puentedura 2006). In this model, several technological levels of use can be distinguished and sorted into a scale: substitution, augmentation, modification and redefinition (cf. Puentedura 2006). These four levels can be sorted into two categories, namely enhancement (substitution and augmentation) and transformation (modification and redefinition). Steininger notes that the level of technological use does play a role in foreign language teaching:

For digital media to play a significant role in the digitisation of the English as a foreign language classroom (EFLC), the level of technological use must surpass technological enhancement (substitution and augmentation) and reach transformation in terms of modification or – preferably – redefinition of technology use. (Steininger 2020: 73)

2.3. Digital Communication in the EFLC

2.3.1. Why Should we Teach Digital Communication in the EFLC?

In the digital age, the average adolescent is highly familiar with the digital world. Adolescents, aged 12 to 19, spend an average of 241 minutes a day engaged in online activities (cf. JIM-study 2021: 32 & 70). Given this statistic, it appears plausible to integrate digital text types into the English as a foreign language classroom for there is a life world relevance in the subject matter of digital communication and digital literacy.

Comment: Section 2.2 is incredibly informed and well structured!

Comment: Well, I spoke too soon :) Pronouns must be capitalized.

Additionally, from a perspective of digitalisation, Hallet claims that our concept of communication has changed fundamentally due to digitalization and therefore, EFLC must teach and equip learners with digital competences and literacy (2018). Further he states that “[d]igitalization concerns fundamental cultural and communicative practices that must be integrated into language learning” (Hallet 2018: 2). Hallet argues that digital education must be seen as “[...] a part of a larger pedagogical framework that draws upon social, cultural and societal changes, processes, and conditions in which the younger generation live and which they must be able to actively design and create” (2018: 2).

2.3.2. How to Teach Digital Communication in the EFLC?

It has been established for foreign language teaching in schools that the usage of multimedia does not automatically increase the motivation of learners. However, when media usage is combined with suitable didactic models and positive attitudes, it can indeed enhance interest, arouse curiosity, or evoke emotional engagement in learners.¹ (Grünewald 2016: 464)

This quote shows that the mere implication of digital tools in the foreign language classroom is not enough in order to facilitate learning in students. In order to teach digital communication to digital natives in the digital age, teachers have to consider scientific proven methods and models of the discipline of foreign language teaching. Further, teachers have to educate themselves and build skills when implementing digital tools in the EFLC. Only then, can their students’ language learning process benefit.

According to Hallet, concepts of teaching communication must be expanded towards the incorporation of diverse digital text types “including ‘new’ digitalized genres of oral communication like the explainer video or the podcast” (Hallet 2018: 4). Grünewald agrees with this, by formulating three functions of the internet which have been proven to be useful in the classroom context: Information and authentic material can easily be accessed through the internet. Additionally, a communicative function can be found by using forums, online chats, and social media platforms. The third function, namely presentation, refers to the active engagement of learners in creating digital text types such as blog entries or podcasts, to name but a few (cf. Grünewald 2016; Hallet

Comment: Excellent: translating German sources into English and including the original as a footnote

¹ All translations of the German original are by the author. The original reads: „Für den Fremdsprachenunterricht an Schulen ist belegt, dass durch die Verwendung von Multimedia nicht automatisch die Motivation der Lernenden gesteigert wird, durch den Medieneinsatz in Kombination mit geeigneten didaktischen Modellen und bei vorhandenen positiven Einstellungen allerdings das Interesse verstärkt, Neugier geweckt oder emotionale Beteiligung der Lernenden hervorgerufen werden kann.“

2018). In addition to this, teachers should discuss the downsides of engaging in cyber space with their students in class. A primary goal of teaching digital communication should be for the students to develop “ [...] the ability to reflect critically upon their own and others’ digital practices and ways of self-construction, social interaction and sociality” (Hallet 2018: 4).

3. Practical Teaching Unit

In this chapter, a practical teaching unit is presented which is designed to consider the aforementioned theories and concepts. More precisely, the topic of this particular teaching unit is “Let’s make a Podcast on ‘The Blue Planet’”. Therefore, the ultimate goal of this teaching unit for the students is to record a podcast on a subtopic, in groups. Further, following the productive phase of the creation of their podcasts, the students shall listen to the podcasts of their fellow students and provide feedback on the basis of specific criteria of a good structure of a podcast.

3.1. The Digital Text Type of *Podcasts*

A podcast can be defined as “ [...] a digital audio file, which can be downloaded from the internet and listened to on various digital devices” (BBC n.d.). They usually consist of a number of episodes on various subtopics. On a meta level, it can be noted that podcasts are usually monocodal and monomodal digital text types which have the codality of “audio files” and the modality “auditory”. More precisely, the information transmitted to the recipients is through audio files and the sensory modalities of the content of the podcast is auditory. One exception to this are video podcasts in which the producer film themselves while speaking. When classifying the digital text type of podcasts into the SAMR model, it can be seen as a technological tool which allows redefinition by creating new tasks, previously inconceivable (cf. Puentedura 2006) (see chapter 3.5.).

A podcast, like any other digital text type, has its own distinct cultural practices and conventions: With the help of podcasts, individuals receive an opportunity to publish and listen to podcasts on various topics. The communicative function of these podcasts is to inform or to explain a specific phenomenon, concept, or idea to the recipients. Additionally, podcasts can serve the function to appeal or to entertain to the audience. It is with the help of the digital text type of podcasts that many individuals share their

Comment: This subchapter would have fit better at the end of chapter 2, marking the transition from theory to the practical teaching unit. It is of course commendable that the podcast is analyzed as a digital text genre along the categories previously established.

personal experience and significant moments, as well as empirical findings. Commonly addressed topics which are dealt with on podcasts are “news, economy and politics”, “science and health”, “entertainment and comedy”, “society and family”, “music and culture”, as well as “leisure time and sports” (cf. Seven.One Media GmbH 2020). Hence, a broad variety of podcasts to a wide range of topics exist, most of which have a direct connection or relevance to the lifeworld of the broad **population**.

By having established that podcasts can be used in various fields, it must be noted that, likewise, podcasts have a positive impact in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. Podcasts can be perceived as authentic and contextualised material for the EFLC, as they provide texts which are produced and presented by native speakers of the target language, namely English (cf. Yeh et al., 2021: 2846 & Schmidt 2008: 186). An advantage of the usage of podcasts in the EFLC is that they can be stopped and rewound to make meaning of a sequence which was priorly not understood. The same applies to the recording of podcasts: speakers can easily re-record a passage of the podcast. Additionally, one can make a lot of preparations before recording their podcast. Students can exclusively concentrate on their speaking when recording their podcast. In contrast, when recording a video, the speaker must constantly consider their facial expressions or the media he or she incorporates, to name but a few.

In the foreign language classroom, podcasts have primarily been used to foster the listening skills of learners (cf. Yeh et al. 2021: 1). However, recent studies imply that the production of podcasts by students themselves can help foster speaking skills in learners (cf. *ibid.*). The presented teaching unit will focus the latter skill, namely speaking skills of the learners, as they are to produce their own podcast.

3.2. Subject Matter Analysis

3.2.1. Intellectual Challenges

The topic of the teaching unit presented is “Let’s make a Podcast on ‘The Blue Planet’”. The reasoning behind this choice of theme lies in its importance regarding environmental issues which are commonly discussed in today’s society. By choosing this topic, environmental awareness and critical thinking in students can be fostered. Additionally, the pupils shall learn about different actions individuals can take in order to save the environment by taking responsibility. Most students are familiar with topics of

Comment: Missed opportunity: Whenever discussing digital technologies, one may analyze how the technology in question differs from, or bears similarity to, more traditional types of media, in this case, for example, radio shows.

environmental issues for they are confronted with discussions and news on this particular topic on a daily basis while surfing through the Internet or social media. With recent developments in political discourse about environmental issues, such as the “Fridays for Future” movement, an increasing number of students are interested in a sustainable lifestyle and behaving in an environmentally friendly way. According to a study on the conceptions of undergraduate students on environmental issues conducted by Podesser, “[...] students most frequently see global warming as the most relevant problem. The extinction of species was a less important environmental problem for them” (Podesser 2021: 4).

3.2.2. Language Challenges

The ultimate communicative function of this teaching unit is for the students to inform and entertain one another through the production of their own content, after a phase of research and preparation. By doing research on podcasts which address environmental issues and possible solutions to these issues, there is a multitude of subtopics which the students might encounter: “Climate Change”, “The Pollution of Air and Oceans” or “The Destruction of Rainforests” and “Sustainability” are some possible examples. With these topics, many language challenges can arise. Firstly, unknown or advanced vocabulary pose potential challenges in dealing with the topic of environmental issues. Secondly, foreign or complex sentence structures and grammatical features can pose obstacles when listening to podcasts by native speakers.

The solution to these challenges lies in scaffolding provided by the teacher who needs to adapt the level of help according to needs of their students. The didactic implications taken in this teaching unit will be explained in chapter 3.4. Exemplary, an input video which will be shown at the beginning of the teaching unit will be analysed for its vocabulary use and sentence structure: In the video “How to Save Our Planet” by *WWF International*, a short overview of environmental issues as well as potential solutions to these issues are presented. The advantages of using this particular video in the teaching unit presented are the following: The language consists of short sentences which are spoken clearly to the audience. Additionally, many pauses are made in speaking which has the effect of reducing the overall speaking speed of the speaker. Many visual aids are given in the video as corresponding scenes are shown to the text spoken. The usage of fitting vocabulary suitable for the overall topic such as “Deforestation” and

Comment: Exceptional attention to detail

“Fossil Fuels” is detectable (WWF International 2019: 0:6:15; 0:5:47). Moreover, many collocations, stylistic devices and are used in the video: “The tables have turned, [...]” or “When you boil it down, [...]” (WWF International 2019: 0:1:47; 0:2:25) (see Appendix 2.1). Furthermore, several if-clauses and some subject-auxiliary inversions after the restrictive adverbial “only” can be found, like for example “Only at that point, will [...]” (WWF International 2019: 0:7:28) (see Appendix 2.1).

3.3. The Learner Group

“[...] Using digital tools is part of the daily routine of young people and an everyday occurrence” (Steininger 2020: 75). Listening to podcasts is no exception to this. Since 2016, the number of people from the age of sixteen listening to podcasts has increased significantly in Germany. While in 2016 only fourteen percent of the interviewees occasionally listened to podcasts, in 2022 the percentage increased to forty- three percent (Bitkom: 2022). Therefore, the incorporation of the digital text type of podcasts in the EFLC can address learners’ interest. Additionally, as has been mentioned in chapter 3.2.1, many students are interested in the topic of the teaching unit which supports the theory that most students will show an increased interest in dealing with and engaging in the teaching unit. Regarding the relevance of this approach for the learners, the following observations can be noted: The learners will have to actively engage themselves with podcasts which are recorded by native English speakers. Therefore, there exists an external need and hence an external motivation for the students in order to comprehend the material available and to produce their own podcast.

Comment: Kudos for researching these statistics

Comment: Yes, unless there is an overdose of it. One might mention that the topic is covered in various school subjects these days and that a quick look at the curriculum is recommended before embarking on this unit.

3.4. Goals and Pedagogical Implications

The primary communicative function this teaching unit aims to cultivate is to encourage students to inform and entertain one another through the production of their own content, after a phase of research and preparation. The students are to record a podcast on a subtopic of the theme “The Blue Planet”. The overall learning objective of the teaching unit is the following: The students can orally comment on an environmental issue by employing the digital text type of a podcast. Moreover, with the help of the digital text type of podcasts, I would like to foster speaking and listening competences of the learners, fluency (cf. Council of Europe 2020: 28) as well as media literacy. The students

will engage with the digital text type of podcasts firstly, by analysing podcasts which are concerned with the topics “environment” or “sustainability”. Hence, competences in the field of Education for Sustainable Development are being addressed. Knowledge on the topics and classroom communication is accessed by the students with the collaborative creation of their very own digital communicational artefacts of podcasts in groups throughout the project (cf. Hallet 2018: 5). In relation to the core curriculum, the topic “The Blue Planet” can be classified in the following content area of eleventh grade: E.3. The Blue Planet. Relevant subtopics within this topic are “saving our planet”, “the environmental footprint” and “taking responsibility” (Hessisches Kultusministerium 2022: 36).

The usage of podcasts in the English as a foreign language classroom is highly beneficial for the students as it fosters the learners’ listening and speaking skills. Listening skills are being addressed while listening to podcasts and speaking skills can be fostered while recording it. This is supported by a study conducted by Yeh et al. who have found that there is a correlation between the creation of podcasts by language learners and a “[...] significant progress in speaking accuracy, fluency, and overall speaking performance [...]” (Yeh et al. 2021: 2861). Additionally, listening to podcasts enhances students listening comprehension (cf. Yeh et al., 2021: 2846). Another advantage of the implication of the production of podcasts in the EFLC is that according to Sze (2006), “[...] making and critiquing each other’s podcasts enabled students to learn collaboratively and yet at their own pace, as, for example, less confident learners could practice speaking without the pressure of vis-à-vis interaction” (Yeh et al., 2021: 2846).

Concerning digital literacy in this lesson plan, I want to foster information literacy and the handling of digital communication. The students will do research on podcasts which cover topics related to the themes of environment and sustainability. While doing so, they are supposed to critically evaluate the information provided in these podcasts as well as the sources they use. In this way, the students can think critically “about educational topics in conjunction with digital literacy and [...] about] how they use their applications, for what purposes they use them and how this affects cultural practices” (Steininger 2020: 75). Then, a general structure of “a good podcast” will be elaborated together in class which serves to support the students in the process of the creation of their own podcast in the next phase of the unit.

Comment: Such blanket statements are unnecessary. Luckily, a more nuanced discussion ensues.

Comment: Great!

When taking a closer look at teacher competences and digital expertise regarding this lesson plan, I selected and assessed the digital resource being the digital text type of podcasts (branch of digital resources of the DigCompEdu framework) (cf. Redecker 2017: 8). Additionally, I considered the specific learning objective, context, pedagogical approach and learner group in my choices for this teaching unit (cf. Punie 2017: 20). Regarding the branch of teaching and learning of the DigCompEdu framework, for the evaluating and feedback phase of the teaching unit I want to provide the students with a digital tool called *Flipgrid* which can be used by the students to upload their podcasts to and give each other feedback on their podcasts (cf. Redecker 2017: 8). According to Yeh et al., teachers also benefit highly from the implication of students' podcast creation in the EFLC as such projects produce actual products, namely the podcast episodes of the learners, which than can be analysed or graded by the teacher. Teachers can analyse the podcasts for the strengths and weaknesses of their students and “[...] provide immediate guidance to improve their performance” (Yeah et al. 2021: 2846).

Comment: Missing from the bibliography!

Throughout the practical realisation of this teaching unit in the classroom, the teacher has to support their student's learning process by scaffolding. Therefore, the following language pedagogical implications have been made: The project starts with a thematic introduction on the topic “The Blue Planet”. Suitable vocabulary is introduced with the help of an informative *YouTube* video which simultaneously shows scenes of environmental issues. During this phase, a transcript of the video can be provided by the teacher (see Appendix). Unknown vocabulary can be explained with the help of footnotes. Language use, grammatical constellations and stylistic devices are discussed in plenary. Moreover, a concept map is created together in class to sort topic related vocabulary into subtopics and build connections between the terms. During the preparation phase the students are supported by the collective creation of a “Checklist for a Good Podcast” (Appendix 2.3) in which the general structure of podcasts is discussed and written down.

Comment: The author exhibits stellar judgment on when to use direct quotes and when indirect quotes, this paragraph being one example.

Comment: Great!

If further support is needed, teachers could provide lists with suitable phrases and collocations, dictionaries, links of reliable and scientific internet sources which the students can use for research. Another challenge which needs to be considered concerns the production phase of the project. When several groups work together in one classroom, naturally the noise level rises. This can be particularly problematic as background noises must be held on a minimum while the podcasts are being recorded. The teacher should

Comment: A rare terminological error. It should be “grammatical structures”.

provide enough space for the groups to work in, for background noises have to be held on a minimum while the individual groups record their podcast.

3.5. Description of the Teaching Unit and Methodological Approach

The ultimate communicative goal of this teaching unit is that, in groups, the students record a podcast on a subtopic concerning a specific environmental issue or solution for an environmental issue of their choice. Furthermore, following the productive phase of the creation of their podcast, the students shall listen to the podcasts of their fellow students and provide feedback on the basis of specific criteria of “a good structure of a podcast”. Throughout the teaching unit, a PowerPoint presentation will be used. It serves the functions to visualise a schedule of the individual phases of the project, working assignments and a template of the structure of a good podcast.

Regarding the sequence of tasks for this lesson plan, in the first lesson, namely the introductory phase of this teaching unit a *YouTube* video called “How to Save Our Planet” by WWF International will be shown to the class. Depending on the time available, several different exercises can be carried out by the students which are related to the video. Possible examples are video-related questions which either aim on testing the student’s comprehension of the overall gist of the information provided in the video or more detailed questions. Moreover, a “fill-in-the-blanks exercise” in form of a worksheet with the written transcript of the video could be done by the students while watching the video. Then, together in class, a digital concept map on the topic “The Blue Planet” is to be created with the help of the digital tool *Mindomo* to activate and collect the student’s prior knowledge and to sort the information into subtopics. Here, also the information provided in the introductory video can be of help to the students as it includes many different subtopics and suitable vocabulary. This concept map will then be uploaded to the school platform so that all students can have access to it.

In the second lesson, the teacher explains the project schedule of the teaching unit which is projected in the PowerPoint presentation via the digital projector. Additionally, the ultimate target tasks for the students will be presented by the teacher: “Together in groups, you will record a podcast on a subtopic of the theme “The Blue Planet” of your choice. At the end, you will present your recordings of the podcasts to the rest of the class and they will provide digital feedback to your podcast.” With this overall goal of the

Comment: Excellent decision to render key instructions verbatim

teaching unit, this teaching unit aims to encourage students to inform and entertain one another through the production of their own content, after a phase of research and preparation. Additionally, by providing feedback the students can reflect on their work and upload their improved podcasts to either the school intern platform or a digital tool called *Flipgrid*.

The initial assignment for the students is to come together in groups of four and further do research on podcasts which cover a subtopic related to the themes of environment and sustainability. The teacher should ensure that every student has access to a technical device with an internet connection by reserving a room with computers or by providing tablets or laptops, for example. In this phase the students foster their listening and speaking competences as they are constantly exchanging information within their group and as they are listening to authentic material, namely podcasts which were recorded by English native speakers. After this phase of gathering information, together in class a general structure of “a good podcasts” will be analysed and elaborated on. Together in class a “Checklist for a Good Podcast” (Appendix 2.3/ 2.4) will be worked out which serves to scaffold the students in creating their own podcast in the next phase of the unit. The text type of their podcasts should be in form of a dialog between the students of a group in order to ensure that all students foster their speaking skills.

In the next double lesson (third and fourth lesson), the production phase of their own podcasts follows. The students will have to negotiate roles in their group as they will be faced with several sub-tasks. After a phase of gathering information, they should write down the overall outline of their podcast either in form of notes or by writing out a full transcript of it. At the same time, the students should come up with a name for their podcast and a title picture of their topic which will be projected during the presentation phase. Then they will have to make themselves familiar with methods of recording the podcast, like for example with a mobile phone, a tablet, laptop etc. and eventually record it. Hence, the students do not only gain world knowledge on the topic of environmental issues and sustainability but also knowledge of the text type and ability for use. Hence, in the production phase an action-oriented approach was chosen by the author which provides the students with a need to use both spoken and written communication to fulfil the task. The students foster their speaking competences when talking to their group

Comment: Nice details

members and when they are recording the podcast. Their writing competences are being fostered while they work on the outline and dialog of the podcasts.

In presentation phase (fifth and sixth lesson of teaching unit), the podcasts which are about ten minutes long in total, will be played in class. Here, the students can foster their listening skills. A feedback session follows, in which the fellow students can ask questions or provide feedback. Then the students receive three minutes to provide digital feedback with the help of the school platform ILIAS. Here, the teacher prepares an online form which the students can simply fill out. The students then can access their individual group feedback online. Based on the feedback phase, a possible homework assignment could be for the students to write a reflection about what went well throughout the project as well as on what things to improve.

Comment: Very important! Whenever learners create a product, one must consider what happens with the product, both to honor the work and to evaluate.

4. Conclusion

When engaging in adapting education in the digital age, both theoretical dimensions and practical dimensions have to work hand in hand. The decisions teachers make in regard to their teaching methods must be based on scientifically proven methods of the discipline of foreign language teaching. In this light, this term paper was split into two sections – a theoretical framework and a practical teaching unit. Once again, the aim of this term paper was to cultivate awareness of the importance of developing skills and competences regarding technology and digital communication in the EFLC. On the basis of a brief overview given of theories and concepts related to digital communication, a proposal of a practical teaching on “The Blue planet” in favour of the implementation of digital tools in the EFLC was presented which includes the use of the digital text type of podcasts.

Working on this paper, one important finding is that the discipline of foreign language teaching is still in a state of change towards a digitalised EFLC that takes advantage of the various benefits of technology and digital media. The generation of digital natives has changed significantly in comparison to the digital immigrant generation. Therefore, the current school system and the concepts and methods used in language teaching have to adapt to the constantly evolving needs of this new generation. Teachers need to “learn the language of the digital native” and communicate in it. There are still many steps which need to be taken but with this paper and especially the teaching unit presented the author hopes to have made a small contribution to the long path ahead of the discipline of foreign language teaching in their task of teaching digital communication and literacy.

Having attended this course on the incorporation of digital tools in the EFLC, as a future language teacher I feel motivated to educate myself even more on the subject of digital communication and the implementation of various digital tools and technology in the foreign language classroom. This refreshing introduction into latest insights on this very subject matter and the exchange of a multitude of teaching proposals throughout this course have acted as a catalyst for new ideas.

Appendix

1. Lesson Plan on “Let’s make a Podcast on ‘The Blue Planet’”

Comment: Nice and short overview

Lesson(s)	Phase of the Teaching Unit	Concrete Situation & Students Behaviour
1.	Introduction	-introductory video shown -text work: language aspects discussed in class -designing a concept map on “The Blue Planet”
2.	Research Phase	-students choose subtopic & gather information -general structure of/ checklist for a "good" podcast
3. & 4.	Preparation & Production Phase	Students (in groups)... -...assign roles within group -...write down notes/ transcript of podcast -...record a podcast on a subtopic of their choice
5. & 6.	Presentation & Feedback Phase	Students... -...present their podcast -...listen to the podcasts of their fellow students -...provide feedback

2. Additional Material

Comment: The materials are well thought-out individually and in perfect support of the unit as a whole.

2.1. Transcript of the input video “How to Save Our Planet” by WWF

International:

Comment: Impressive pedagogic acumen and awareness of learners’ proficiency level

“How do we create a future in which both people and nature can **thrive**²? This is the biggest question of our times. In the next few decades, we need to do something **unprecedented**³: Achieve a sustainable existence on earth. But how do we do it? We can start by understanding how we got to this point. 20,000 years ago, humankind consisted of less than 1,000,000 **hunter-gatherers**⁴ across the globe. We lived within the resources on offer, in balance with nature. A strategy that could theoretically last forever, but it wasn't an easy life. Nature determined our survival. We used our unique minds to challenge that reality. We learned how to tame the wild, get more from the environment. Our population boomed as did our demands. Every time a new problem arose, we solved it, altering earth's entire surface in the process and now we have changed the world so

² **to thrive** - to become, and continue to be, successful, strong, healthy, etc. (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries (henceforth O.L.D.), n.d.)

³ **unprecedented** - that has never happened, been done or been known before (O.L.D. n.d.)

⁴ **hunter-gatherer** - a member of a group of people who do not live in one place but move around and live by hunting, fishing and gathering plants (O.L.D. n.d.)

Rashed

profoundly scientists have decided that earth has entered a new phase of its existence. Welcome, to the Anthropocene, the age of humans. **The tables have turned**, we now determine nature's survival. The planet is ours. There's just one problem! **We're** now totally **out of balance** with nature and unless we get our balance back, this age of humans is due to be short lived.

So, how do we deal with this problem? **When you boil it down**, there is one underlying big issue. Our planet is becoming less wild. Our species has cleared three trillion trees, cultivated half its fertile land and now fish is across most of the ocean. In the last 50 years, the populations of wild animals have reduced by 60%. We've replaced them with ourselves and our domesticated animals and plants. Today, we and the animals we raise account for 96% of the mass of **mammals**⁵ and 70% of the birds, on earth. There's very little wild left. This biodiversity loss **is not just a tragedy**, it's the single biggest problem we face. Without biodiversity the world as we know it doesn't work. Our planet needs its wild spaces. Everyone **is a component in the global machine**. **Only if they are** all healthy, can the planet **run smoothly**. A less wild world is less able to provide for our needs, less able to maintain dependable weather and seasons, less able to absorb our impact. Biodiversity equals stability and stability is what we need most of all. Can we **turn the situation around**? Can we rewild the world?

Well, maybe, due to one key change: As societies develop, something is happening that has never happened before. People are having fewer children. Globally, since the year 2000, the number of people under 16 years old has hardly changed. The main reason our population is still rising is because people are living longer. If this continues our population may finally stop growing by the turn of the century. By investing in education and women's rights and raising people out of poverty we could bring about peak human even sooner. This changes everything. it gives us the opportunity we need to regain our balance.

The plan for our planet is remarkably simple: Reduce our impact by making sure that everything we do we can do forever. For the biggest gains, we could concentrate our efforts on four goals: Phasing out **fossil fuels**⁶ and replacing them with renewables. This

⁵ **mammals** - Säugetiere

⁶ **fossil fuel** - fuel such as coal or oil that was formed over millions of years from parts of dead animals or plants (O.L.D n.d.)

will not only slow the warming of the planet and the **acidification**⁷ of the ocean, but it will lead to clean air for all of us. Upgrading to efficient food production and reducing our consumption of meat will require far less space to provide for ourselves leaving more for grasslands, reducing **deforestation**⁸ and our demand for fresh water, and feeding more people with healthier more affordable food. Working together to properly manage our ocean. A global network of no fish zones and a **treaty**⁹ on the use of international waters would restore the health of the ocean so it actually produces more fish for us all to eat. Working hard to keep hold of the wild populations we still have encouraging nature wherever we can: in the ocean, on land we no longer need and even in our cities. If we make these changes, we'll be a long way to becoming a species in balance with nature, once again. We will have taken a remarkable journey from a million people struggling to survive to several billion living long healthy lives on a stable planet able to provide for all our needs. **Only at that point, will** the Anthropocene, the age of humans, be truly **underway**. At that point, we will be proud to call it our planet.

How do we create a future in which both people and nature can thrive? We open our eyes to this moment in history, think on a **planetary scale**¹⁰, embrace the challenge we face and do something we humans are very good at: Change the world!"¹¹ (WWF International 2019)

2.2. Research Phase: List of Possible Podcasts and Internet Sources:

- BBC (n.d.) „Podcasting: What do I need to know?“ *BBC*. BBC, n.d. Web. <<https://www.bbc.com/academy-guides/podcasting-what-do-i-need-to-know/>> (19th September 2023).
- Deutsche Welle (2023). “Living Planet”. *DW*. DW. Web. <<https://www.dw.com/en/living-planet/program-19028671>> (14 June 2023).
- Gimlet (o.D.) “How to Save a Planet.” *Spotify*. Spotify. Web. <<https://gimletmedia.com/shows/howtosaveaplanet#show-tab-picker>> (14 June 2023).
- Leonardo English (2022). “Plastic Recycling - Is It Worth It ?” *Leonardo English*. Leonardo English, 23 September 2023. Web. <<https://www.leonardoenglish.com/podcasts/plastic-recycling>>

⁷**acidification** - Versauerung

⁸**deforestation** - the act of cutting down or burning the trees in an area (O.L.D. n.d.)

⁹**treaty** - a formal agreement between two or more countries (O.L.D. n.d.)

¹⁰**planetary scale** – “weltumfassend”

¹¹ All transcriptions are by the author. All adaptations are made by the author.

Rashed

Leonardo English (2022). "A Brief History of Climate Change." *Leonardo English*. Leonardo English, 16 September 2022. Web. <<https://www.leonardoenglish.com/podcasts/history-climate-change>>
Robinson, Deena (2023). "22 Best Environmental Podcasts of 2023." *Earth.org*. Earth.org, 15 March 2023. Web. <<https://earth.org/top-environmental-podcasts/>> (14 June 2023).

2.3. Potential "Checklist for a Good Podcast":

Checklist for a Good Podcast



My topic:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



2.4. Example of Possible Student Answers - "Checklist for a Good Podcast":



Checklist for a Good Podcast 

My topic:
Sustainability

- appealing title
- intro, main part, conclusion
- speak directly to the audience
- preview of structure
- arguments include examples
- ...
-
-



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- Hallet, Wolfgang (2018). „What’s (in) a Digital Classroom? Levels of Digitalization in FL Learning and Teaching.“ *Language Learning Log*. 2 February 2018. Web. < https://languagelearninglog.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/180202_Hallet_Whats_a_digital_classroom-1.pdf > (8 June 2023).
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- Schmidt, J. (2008). „Podcasting as a Learning Tool: German Language and Culture Every Day.“ *Die Unterrichtspraxis/ Teaching German* 41.2: 186-194. Web.

Comment: Overall an impressive assortment of sources, from theory (e.g. Steinger 2020) to empirical research (e.g. Yeh et al. 2021) to highly relevant grey literature (e.g. JIM-Study, Statista, CEFR, etc.); slightly dubious item: Puentedura (2006) → obscure website

The bibliography is one of the first things we look at. This selection of sources gave us an immediate inkling that the term paper would be exceptionally informed.

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