TEACHING GLOBALISATION THROUGH PODCASTS TO PROMOTE ORAL PRODUCTION IN THE EFL CLASSROOM.

The German core curriculum for the advanced course in North Rhine Westphalia demands that students acquire certain competencies before graduating and further describes functional communicative competencies as one of the main goals of TEFL. Among them one may find oral production, listening and audio-visual comprehension and text and media competencies. But how can we concretely implement and foster these in the EFL classroom, and through which methods?

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INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE

After the closing of schools due to the pandemic and months of homeschooling, more interactive, cooperative, and creative tasks are required in the EFL classroom if students are to expand their communicative skills and more specifically practice their oral production. As they spent much time at home, communication in the target language was practiced less. Therefore, podcasts, as they can be used for a plethora of topics and in nearly all school subjects, present a perfect opportunity to enhance those skills while motivating students by working with a 'new' technology. Through a holistic approach, other competencies can also be targeted and enhanced.

The goal of this study was to evaluate whether podcasts are a viable and useful tool to be used in the EFL classroom to promote the oral production of students.

STATE OF THE ART

Researchers and studies agree that podcasts are a viable tool to distribute (additional) educational material outside of the school setting. This has been specifically used in higher education contexts such as the university.

However, less research has been conducted on podcasts which were produced by students themselves. Nevertheless, scholars agree that by creating podcasts, students are no longer passive consumers of information, but actually produce content and enhance their speaking skills and can improve their pronunciation and intonation by listening to themselves and re-record their podcasts. Moreover, creating podcasts engenders a sense of collaboration and teamwork, fosters argumentative and media skills as well as their autonomous learning habits. The chances of learner-centered and cooperative learning cannot be denied either.

METHODOLOGY

For this study project, a mixed-methods approach was selected. Based on current research, a teaching unit and materials were designed and taught in class. The sequence was then evaluated and reflected upon by the researcher as well as the students through an anonymous questionnaire. Furthermore, the podcasts produced by the students were analysed and assessed in order to gain an insight into the functionality and success of the method and to enhance and develop further teaching sequences.
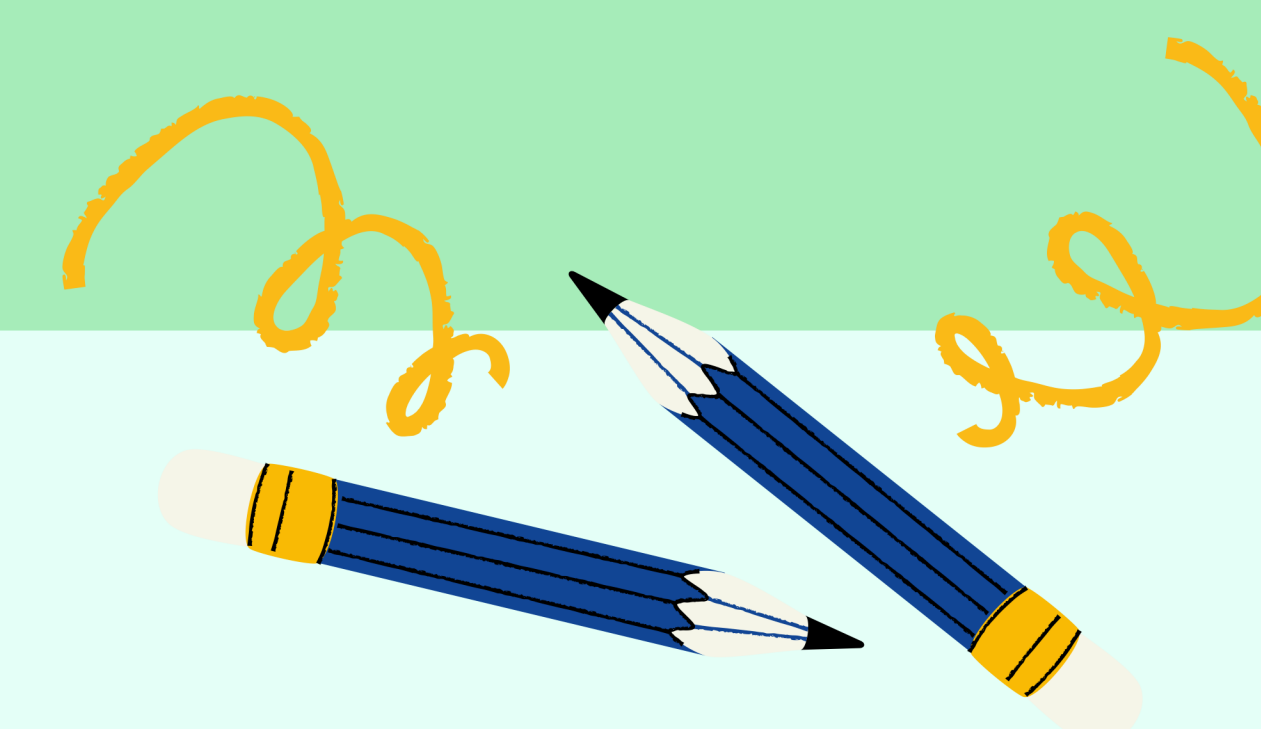
ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Only a selection of the results can be presented here. But overall, the results show that the use of podcasts is a viable tool to promote functional communicative competencies and more specifically speaking skills, as students believed the project to have enhanced their pronunciation, confidence in speaking, and their fluency. The questionnaire proved that oral production is important to students as they mentioned skills such as clarity of speech, (mis)pronunciation, comprehensibility, and fluency when evaluating each other's podcasts. They also asserted having a deeper understanding of the topic of globalisation than before and the majority enjoyed the group work as well as the podcast project in general. The quality of the podcasts was satisfactory.
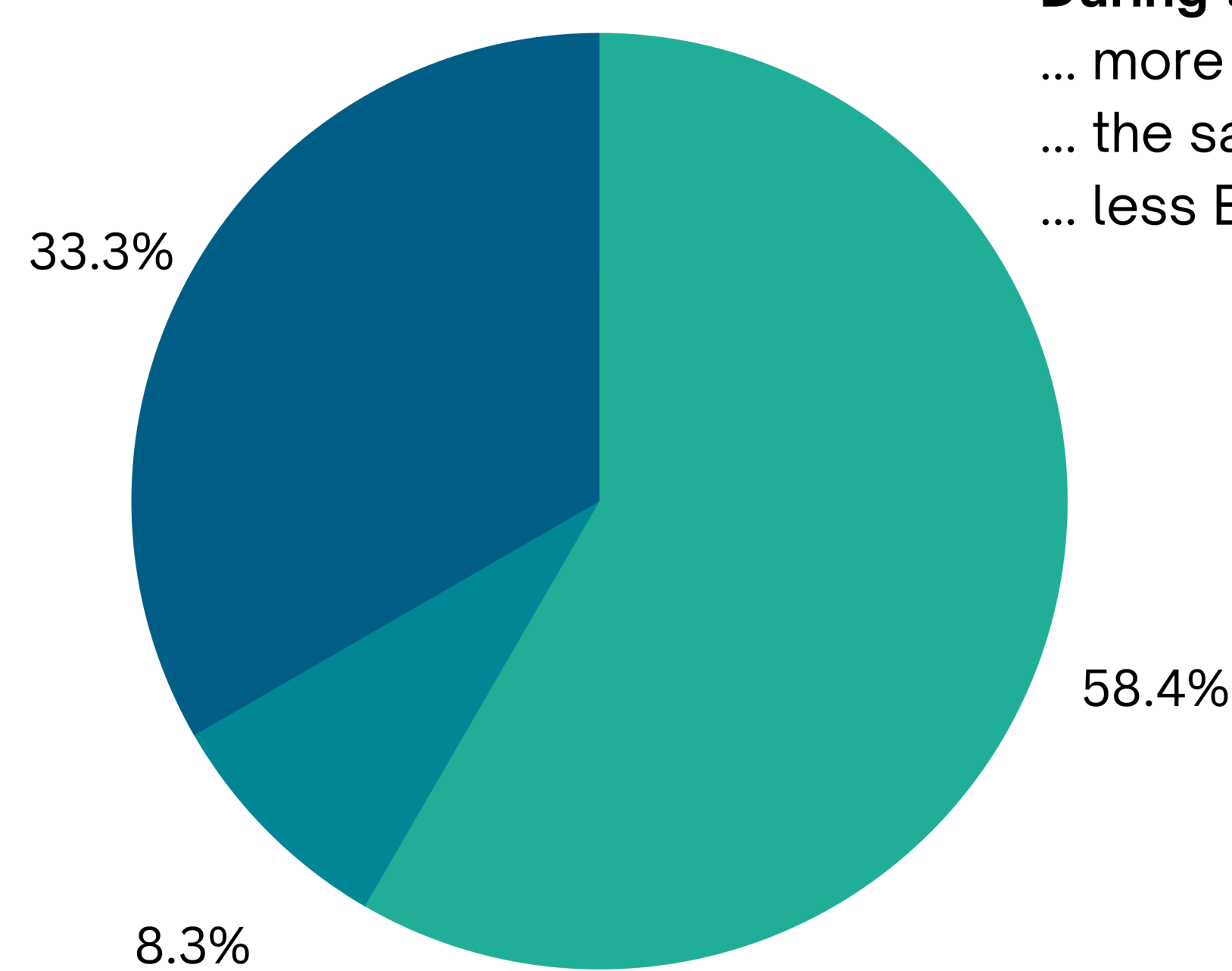
During the podcast project I spoke...
... more English in class than usually: 33.3 %
... the same amount of English in class than usually: 58.4 %
... less English in class than usually: 8.3 %

33.3%
58.4%
8.3%

"It helped me being more confident about my talking, and listening to it afterwards helped me to analyse my mistakes in pronunciation or grammar."
student feedback

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The podcasts created by students as well as their feedback and the observations during the teaching sequence all seem to prove that the podcast project was a success. The students asserted having expanded their speaking skills and gained in confidence while speaking and were able to gain a deeper knowledge of the topic. In the future, the use of podcasts could be explored in other school subjects as their use is not restricted to the foreign language classroom. More research could be conducted there and the amount of spoken contributions during class could be empirically evaluated as well in order to show whether students actually talk more during such a podcast project week.

Related literature

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