

PTAS FINAL REPORT (Annette Gotzkes, School of Languages, Literature and Culture)

German in the workplace: boosting employability and language skills

This project was run in 2013 and 2014 and as a consequence of enthusiastic student feedback will now become an integral part of our first year teaching

Project Aims

This project offers first-year students an opportunity to interview native German speakers working in Edinburgh, allowing them to practise their spoken and written German in a natural, realistic context. Besides boosting their linguistic skills, it provides them with a valuable insight into the workplace, assists them with career planning, and enhances their cultural awareness.

Project Implementation

The students carried out the project in small groups with a maximum of 4 people. They select an interview partner from a list on LEARN. They had to liaise with the other students from their group and contact their interview partner to arrange a time and place for a meeting and prepare and conduct an interview...The aim of the interview was to find out details about their partner's work life, skills, training, challenges and enquire how important language skills have been for their career. Every single aspect of this project was carried out in German.

Project Support and Project Partners

The German Consulates generously support the project both by facilitating contacts with the German-speaking community in Edinburgh, and by offering their own staff members as interview partner for the project.

With the help of the German consulate I selected partners from a wide spectrum of career choices in order to provide an experience which matches the students' degree combination and interest. This included lawyers, librarians, art curators, bankers, business people, teachers, journalists and professionals working in marketing and politics. The students carried out the project in small groups with a maximum of 4 people.

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Presentation Skills

After the interview students gave a presentation in the oral language practical and shared, evaluated and discussed their experience in class.

Learning Outcomes

The oral presentation was marked as part of the continuous formative assessment.

Students were also encouraged to reflect on their experience in their learning logs and to include the transcript of the interview in their dossiers. These “dossiers of evidence” are an important component of the European Language Portfolio for Adult and Vocational Learners.

Student Feedback (selection)

“Great opportunity to speak German and get an insight into a possible career in German. It was also a great chance to speak German and it made it more relevant.”

“Useful for improving your confidence speaking German and skills at holding a presentation.”

“It was a chance to talk German outside of university with a new person. I got an inside into what I would like to do after university.”

“Really inspiring to see what you can do with the German language. Good way to get some confidence speaking German.”

“Useful advice about learning languages and how to get into their profession. Working in a group independently of tutors was also a good experience.”

“It was very helpful – it really put into perspective the life of a journalist. It was an opportunity to really get to know what journalists did to get to their current position – I learned a lot and I still want to be a journalist!”

“It was a very useful, practical project that helped me to get some more information about the job I’m interested in and I liked that we had to speak only in German which made it very interesting...USING THE LANGUAGE VERY PRACTICALLY!”

“The experience of talking to a professional let us see what we can do with our degree.

Wider Impact and Dissemination

Selected interviews and work experience reports will be published on the DELC website to showcase our modern, motivating and skills-based language learning environment. This will aid recruitment to our Modern Languages programmes, and it will highlight the diversity of career options open to language graduates.

The results of the project will be communicated in a DELC Plenary to encourage take-up by other sections.

I introduced the project to German university teachers during a 1 week seminar, organised by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) in Dresden in July. The presentation will be put up on their website.

The project helped to establish a closer links between the University and the German-speaking community including the cultural institutes and consulates.

A few examples of spin-offs through the links with the German speaking community:

- I have become a member of the cross-party group on Germany in the Scottish Parliament (facilitating contacts and information on language teaching at Edinburgh University)
- I helped establish a link for an environmental project between a university in Germany and a contact at Edinburgh University
- I established a contact with the director of the language department in Tuebingen who invited me in May 2013 to learn about their implementation of the Common European Framework and who returned the visit in May 2014 to give a talk about the same topic to DELC
- The visit of our writer in residence featured in the German tourist brochure "Schottland"

Selection of pictures from students' interviews

Interview with correspondent from BBC Scotland



Interview with German vice-Consul



Interview with Chief Editor of "Schottland" magazine



Interview with Art Curator, National Museum of Scotland



Interview with Parliamentary Advisor and Researcher, The Scottish Parliament



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