

A Dialogue Project Based on a Formative Method Using Social Media

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Abstract

The tool we have used is Ning, and that has proven to function very well for us. It gives the possibility to invite those concerned, it lets the pupils create their own page and it simplifies the use of other media in form of links that the pupils can follow.

Our project was at first meant to be used to develop and deepen the classroom discussion concerning subjects as xenophobia, human rights and equality, but we soon realized that this dialogue based forum was an extraordinary arena for language learning. In giving the pupils instant feedback, and, thus, instant possibilities to practise and develop their language skills, it is clearly a formative way of working. The teacher (or a pupil) decides on a topic for discussion, the pupils write in the forum and the teacher and other pupils give feedback and advice on how to evolve the text. We found that this method was very rewarding for the pupils as they could now use their newfound knowledge instantly, instead of doing it a month later as is often the case in school.

The possibilities are limitless when it comes to language learning. For instance, one could easily invite schools from other countries to participate in discussions when you are studying different cultures, and by doing so the goals set in the European Framework can more easily be obtained. This form of dialogue is also optimal for exchanges with universities and their language students. What better way to prepare to become a teacher than to interact with pupils in authentic situations ?

The discussions in the forum provide a good chance to develop the pupils capability to argue on different topics, to exercise criticism of the sources, to read analytically and to write coherently. And it's fun !