Classroom Action Research Project Report:

What impact does introducing Do-Now tasks based on Gianfranco Conti's model at the beginning of each lesson (compared to traditional vocabulary tests) have on students' ability to apply vocabulary, build their confidence, and improve their fluency at sentence level?

1. Introduction

The Classroom Action Research Project is an initiative designed to foster evidence-based teaching practices through systematic reflection and inquiry. It enables teachers to investigate their own classroom strategies by posing a guiding research question, implementing targeted changes, and analyzing the outcomes. This process not only enhances pedagogical effectiveness but also promotes professional growth by linking theory with practice. Throughout the project, participants receive comprehensive support from the Goethe-Institut, including guidance in formulating research questions, implementing measures, evaluating results, and presenting findings.

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2. Teacher and School

Name: Nathaniel Smith

School: Box Hill High School

Grade/ Year Level: Year 9

Date: Term 2/ 2025

3. Research Question

What impact does introducing Do-Now tasks based on Gianfranco Conti's model at the beginning of each lesson (compared to traditional vocabulary tests) have on students' ability to apply vocabulary, build their confidence, and improve their fluency at sentence level?

4. Context and Rationale

In Year 9 at Box Hill High School, German is no longer a compulsory subject. With the decision to continue learning German, expectations also increase – especially regarding homework and vocabulary learning.

To support students in acquiring vocabulary and to regularly check their progress, I often start the lesson with a so-called Do-Now task.

These tasks help settle the class at the beginning of the lesson – they start as soon as the students enter the room. Do-Now tasks create clear routines, promote focused work, and provide a regular opportunity for formative feedback.

5. Approach

The students enter the room and start the task. Meanwhile, I give two students a whiteboard marker each. They then write one of their solutions on the board. After that, they may choose someone else and pass the marker on.

Contributions from others must not be erased. Writing is only allowed next to or as an addition. This way, it becomes visible how the group solves the problem, and everyone's contributions are treated with respect.

Finally, the quiz is discussed together and corrected by the students themselves. Misconceptions are specifically addressed. The students count their correct answers, and I then ask them to show how many points they achieved.

Instead of the ten quiz questions, I will create a new type of Do-Now task: a so-called placemat activity. When entering the classroom, students will work on four different tasks consisting of short exercises. All tasks will be based on current activities from the book *Language Teacher Toolkit* by Gianfranco Conti.

I will create a pool of tasks with different variations of these activities so that I can use them flexibly in class.

6. Data Collection

To collect results, I will conduct a survey in which students can assess their perception of the activities, their usefulness, and the perceived impact on their language learning.

A colleague will observe the beginning of the lesson.

After the Action Cycle, students will complete a written Common Assessment Task. I will compare students' written performance from two different learning phases.

7. Findings/Results

The results were very meaningful and not only improved my practice but also raised my students' awareness.

The formative tasks showed that students were able to increase their ability to use language in context and answer comprehension questions by about 20% on average.

At the same time, however, grammatical knowledge declined significantly – especially regarding gender and plural forms, which had previously been practiced regularly in traditional vocabulary quizzes. Students were able to clearly describe which activities helped improve their sentence-building or speaking skills, such as targeted practice of word order or filling in missing sentence parts.

8. Reflection

In the end, they also openly reported where the balance was still not quite right. In discussions, the distinction between 'fun but not very challenging' and 'challenging but less fun' often came up. This reflection helped us think together about meaningful variety and changes in lessons. Many students themselves suggested mixing or varying the types of tasks so that they are neither boring nor overwhelming.

My colleague's observation also confirmed that the four tasks in a placemat Do-Now activity often took 10 to 15 minutes, which doesn't always fit. The activities were overall very meaningful, but at the same time they provided an excellent opportunity to check students' understanding and address misconceptions in a targeted way.

The tasks were certainly valuable, but sometimes time-intensive during lessons.

9. Next Steps

I am aware that Conti-style tasks offer many advantages, but a balanced combination with structured grammar exercises (especially gender) remains necessary. In the survey, students concluded that a mix or alternating use of both types of tasks would be sensible.

10.   Attachments

1. Trapdoor Speaking	2. Sentence Unscramble
Instructions: Teacher reads aloud, and students write the missing word to complete a full sentence. • Ich bin im Sommer nach... gereist. • Meine Reise war... • In den Ferien gehe ich... • Das Meer war...	**Instructions: Put the words into correct order:** • Reise / meine / Berlin / war / fantastisch → • geschwommen / im / Ich / Meer / bin →

3. Speed Matching	4. Missing Letters
Instructions: Match the German phrases to their correct English translations.	**Instructions:** Fill in the missing letters to complete each sentence. • Ich b_n _m Sommer nach Spanien g_reist. • Meine R_se war fantastisch. • In den Ferien m_chte ich an den S_rand gehen. • Das _eer war _lar.

German	English
Ich bin nach Spanien gereist.	The ocean was clear.
Die Reise war fantastisch.	I go to the beach.
Ich gehe an den Strand.	The trip was fantast
Das Meer war klar.	I travelled to Spain

1. Pyramid Translation	2. Trapdoor Multiple Choice
Instructions: Translate the sentences step-by-step, adding more detail each time. • Ich bin gereist. • Ich bin im Sommer gereist. • Ich bin im Sommer nach Spanien gereist. • Ich bin im Sommer nach Spanien gereist und es war fantastisch.	**Instructions:** Choose an option each time to build a full sentence, say it aloud to your partner. • Ich gehe [an den Strand / in die Berge / ins Schwimmbad]. • Das Meer war [klar / trüb / kalt]. • Ich bin [im Meer / im Pool / im Fluss] geschwommen.

3. Quick Translation	4. Scaffolded Dialogue
Instructions: Translate the following sentences into English. • In den Ferien möchte ich an den Strand gehen. • Das Meer war klar und blau.	**Instructions:** Complete the mini-conversation with suitable words. A: Wo warst du in den Ferien? B: Ich _____ nach Spanien gereist. A: Und wie war es? B: Es war _____!

1. Sentence Stealer

Instructions: Teacher says a sentence. Repeat it and add a small detail (e.g., time, place, feeling).

Start: *Ich bin nach Fidschi gereist.*

Example:

- *Ich **bin im Sommer** nach Fidschi gereist.*
- *Ich **bin im Sommer** nach Fidschi gereist **und es war heiß**.*

2. Quick Translation

Instructions: Translate the following sentences into English.

- Ich bin im Urlaub im Meer geschwommen.
- Meine Reise nach Frankreich war wunderbar.

3. Scaffolded Dialogue Build

Instructions: Complete the dialogue with suitable words.

A: Wohin bist du gereist?
B: Ich bin nach _____ gereist.
A: Wie war das Meer?
B: Es war _____ und warm.

4. Speed Matching

Instructions: Match the German phrases to their English meanings.

German	English
Ich bin nach Japan gereist.	The beach was beautiful.
Der Strand war wunderschön.	I travelled to Japan.
Ich schwimme jeden Tag.	My trip was interesting
Meine Reise war interessant.	I swim every day.

1. Trapdoor Speaking

Instructions: Choose an option for each sentence and say it aloud to your partner. Then swap!

- Ich heiße [Pablo / Leila / Hiroshi].
- In den Ferien bin ich nach [Italien / Griechenland / Ägypten] gereist.
- Ich bin [am Strand / im Gebirge / im Park] geschwommen.
- Das Meer war [warm / kalt / stürmisch].

2. Sentence Unscramble

Instructions: Put the words into correct order.

- gereist / bin / Ich / nach / Griechenland →
- war / klar / und / Das / blau / Meer →

4. Missing Words

Instructions: Fill in the blanks with the correct vocabulary.

- Meine _____ nach Berlin war sehr spannend.
- Ich bin jeden Tag am _____ geschwommen.
- Ich _____ im Sommer nach Spanien gereist.

4. Quick Write

Instructions: Write 3–5 sentences describing your last holiday, using vocabulary like *reisen, Strand, Meer, schwimmen*.

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