

Weather, weather everywhere

Learning Scenario created by Sara Hoefler

Performance Range

Novice Low, leading students towards Novice High as the school year progresses

Targeted Standards

Communication. Students listen to and watch weather reports in the target language. Students describe and talk about the weather including what they like and dislike.

Connections. Students learn about the Celsius scale as a way to measure temperature.

Cultural Comparisons. Students make connections to how the weather of a region dictates how people live.

Targeted Language Learners

Elementary school students in a beginning German course.

Instructional Setting

Classroom, primarily during German language morning meeting time at the beginning of the year, branching off into “German class” time as the year goes on and students gain proficiency.

Learn-Practice-Assess

Weather is a natural part of the morning meeting routine for early elementary students. It naturally lends itself to other aspects of the morning meeting routine including Calendar. Students identify the date (day of the week as well), weather of the day, weather from yesterday. Eventually, as students gain proficiency in the language, they will be asked to make predictions about tomorrow’s weather. This is guided by pictures and a large calendar with large boxes for each date. A large abacus is used to count the school days as they progress.

A large thermometer (plastic, with a sliding red temperature gauge) is used to track temperatures. Later in the year, a second thermometer is brought out to introduce Celsius temperatures as well as Fahrenheit. A real thermometer is outside. Once students become proficient with numbers, students are taught to read the thermometer and show the temperature on the classroom “thermometers”. Students go outside as a group to hear teacher make observations about the weather. Once students are able to recognize and communicate simple weather words, volunteers open the classroom door to report on the weather in the target language. All observations are marked on the large calendar.

Students are introduced to making simple graphs by graphing the weather at the end of each week using the information on the large calendar. After learning basic “w” questions, they will be able to provide simple answers (including pointing at the novice low stage) to questions concerning the weather in other locations, dates, and weather descriptions (where, when, what).

Once students gain confidence and proficiency, volunteers orally report the weather to another speaker of the target language on a daily basis. This person eventually asks simple questions concerning weather as students gain in confidence and language ability.

Students are introduced to everyday objects dealing with weather including raincoat, rain boots, umbrella, scarf, mittens, gloves, sunglasses, sun hat, jacket, coat, etc. Besides using pictures of these items during morning meeting time, the classroom dress up box includes multiple pieces of each item. Students are asked to put on clothes appropriate for various types of weather in order to assess for understanding. Simple songs and finger plays typically sung/played by German children about the seasons and weather are introduced using props to facilitate understanding of non-weather related vocabulary.

Through the morning meeting, students will be naturally introduced to past tense when speaking about yesterday's and last week's and last month's weather. Students can also be introduced to the future tense when making predictions about tomorrow's weather. These predictions can be compared to the actual weather on a daily basis in morning meeting.

Adaptations to other ages/grades

Authentic weather related children's literature can be included to make content appropriate for early elementary as well as older learners. The morning meeting format is more appropriate for younger elementary students, however, having only the weather portion of morning meeting take place in upper elementary grades in the target language would be appropriate. Older students, who are comfortable with weather terminology, can expand their weather horizons by examining more sophisticated weather phenomena in the target language. For example, tornadoes and hurricanes could be explained at an Intermediate level using simple experiments.

Reflection

Weather is a topic that effects all students, regardless of motivation. The possibilities of the inclusion of target language online weather related sites are almost endless. The range of information in the target language extends from very child friendly (www.kinderwetter.com) to advanced (www.dwd.de). Incorporating graphs and information from these various levels makes it easier to differentiate instruction in a class of older, multi- level students.

When students demonstrate understanding of weather terminology at a NOVICE HIGH level and everyday objects related to the weather, students could be taken on a virtual shopping trip if access to a computer lab is available. Teacher first asks for items to be placed in carts, assessing students listening ability. Later, teacher describes the weather and students put necessary items into their shopping carts. Students print out their cart contents, and present orally to the class on one or two items they have bought. Differentiation: if students can describe their purchases in more detail, allow them to do so (color, length, price, etc.).