

## “ERZÄHL DOCH MALI!” GERMAN SPEAKING PRACTICE USING DIGITAL LEARNING TOOL VOCAROO

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**Abstract:** Vocaroo is a simple web-based learning medium for audio recording in a web browser. This website allows teachers or students to digitally record audio for use in all learning activities, especially foreign languages. Speaking skills, especially in German, are still very difficult for students. In addition, students get few opportunities to speak at each meeting. In this article, we will present the results of our research regarding the effectiveness of using vocaroo's digital learning tool. This research is included in the descriptive research, by conducting a survey of students of the German Department, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang. The data collection technique used a questionnaire with a sample of class B of 2021 students who attended Deutsch IV course in the 2022/2023 academic year consisting of five students and 11 female students. Based on the results of the study, it can be seen that 94% of respondents found it helpful to practice their speaking skills using vocaroo because this application is easy to use. In addition, they don't have to install this application on their cell phone which can reduce the storage capacity of the cellphone memory. 87% of respondents also stated that they could express their ideas both during monologues and dialogues without feeling embarrassed. 94% of respondents feel confident when they speak using vocaroo in comparison to speak directly in the classroom. The majority of respondents also paid great attention to grammar, pronunciation, intonation, tempo, and vocabulary when they recorded their voices using the vocaroo.

**Keywords:** vocaroo, German, speaking skills, Deutsch IV

### INTRODUCTION

The main goal of foreign language teaching is the ability to communicate or to develop communicative competence, which is achieved through linguistic interaction in the target language. More specifically for German as a foreign language is for learners to be able to communicate with native speakers in everyday situations and be able to convey information about themselves and their own culture using the target language. The students must therefore frequently be offered opportunities to express themselves in German.

According to a research conducted by Fischer it can be seen that the students of German as a foreign language achieve quite good levels in “reading, listening and writing”, but in “speaking”, especially in a conversation, they do not reach the same level (Fischer, 2005). Almost all of the students of German as a foreign language claim that grammar and vocabulary deficiencies play the most important role when they communicate in the target language they are learning. However, it can be recognized that speaking is a rather complicated and sometimes not at all easy process of translating a thought into a meaningful verbal utterance. Speaking is a productive language skill in addition to writing skills.

Currently, there are many methods and techniques of modern foreign language teaching. These methods and techniques are aimed at effective foreign language learning. Despite the use of different techniques, many foreign language learners often find it difficult to express themselves verbally in language classes. Fear of speaking prevents learners from communicating freely, participating in a discussion, asking a question, and expressing an opinion. Anxiety or inhibitions when using the foreign language can have a negative impact on the learning process and are a problem, especially with regard to oral competence. According to Clément (1980, 1986), anxiety is an aspect of self-confidence. If this is missing and anxiety about the use of the foreign language sets in, this can have a negative impact on the learning process. For the implementation to be successful, we need attention and concentration to organize and realize our contribution in the short time available, and we also need courage to open ourselves to the risk of failure and not be too hindered by fear of speaking out (Huneke & Steinig, 2010).

The ability to speak is considered to be the biggest problem when learning foreign languages and thus also the German language. Based on this problem we tried to find ways to train speaking skills while learning German. One way to do this is by using a digital tool like Vocaboo.

## **METODE**

For this study, we involved students from class B of 2021 who attended Deutsch IV course in the 2022/2023 academic year consisting of five students and 11 female students. The Deutsch IV course is offered in the fourth semester. This course is a continuation of the Deutsch I, II, and III courses that students have previously taken. The Deutsch IV course has six credits. After taking this course, students are expected to be able to master the theoretical concepts of German language skills and linguistic elements to communicate effectively, spontaneously and systematically in German, both formally and informally. In addition, the competence that this course wants to achieve is that students have knowledge and skills in spoken and written German equivalent to B1 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) with certain topics receptively and productively. The topics discussed include Germany's big cities, school and learning, climate and environment, generations, migration, Europe, and politics. In addition to listening, reading and writing skills, speaking skills in this course are trained, both in dialogue and monologue.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Language learning with digital media**

Digital media are having a huge impact on the whole world. They are used more and more in all areas of human life these days. Today, digitalization refers to the use of new electronic technologies in all areas of life (Kerres, 2012). Most knowledge is nowadays gained through digital media (De Florio-Hansen, 2020). Looking at the educational context, digital media can also be seen as digital tools to expand existing teaching methods and to implement various teaching and learning opportunities (Lachner et al., 2020).

Nowadays, digital media is most commonly seen in the classroom. Digital media is like an extension of the classroom, in the sense that many materials and exercises are available. With digital media, learners learn without realizing it and that is why they are desired in the classroom. There are many reasons for using media in the classroom. The use of digital media in schools offers the opportunity to individualize learning opportunities and to support teachers in realizing the complex task of supporting all students individually (Sonnenburg, 2020). Digital tools that can be easily integrated into foreign language lessons include: Kahoot!, Padlet, Mentimeter, Quizlet, Quizizz, Powtoon, Vocaboo, Slido etc. This research will

discuss the use of the digital tool Vocaroo in Deutsch IV course at the German Language Department of Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia.

Dräger and Müller-Eiselt (Dräger & Müller-Eiselt, 2015) have some proposals for digitalization in the academic field. In their opinion, in order to improve teaching, it is necessary to get used to new methods. Digital media are used more and more in the field of education today. The frequent use of digital media in the classroom has many advantages, but also some disadvantages. Habermann (Habermann, 2021) wonders whether learners need digital devices in education and whether this increases or decreases motivation. Digital tools have a positive effect on learning German. With the help of digital tools, German lesson can be made more interesting, playful, varied, entertaining, competitive and, most importantly, more motivating (Rodinger Kočila, 2022).

### **Vocaroo**

Vocaroo is a computer application that allows recording the voice and saving it in files in mp3 format. The files can be heard clearly with recorded voice, but are much smaller in size than recorded music files. This small file size makes it much easier to send or download, something that is essential when internet speed is not very good. Also, we don't need to install anything on the computer. With the additional that it is very easy to use and free.

Vocaroo's features allow this tool to be useful in education including for language teaching, especially for the development of listening and speaking skills. Among the fundamental properties of Vocaroo are the accessibility, the transmission of the message, the handling of the tool, the recording, and the listening of the voice text.

A study conducted by Bayas and Andrés shows that Vocaroo can be used to improve speaking skills (Bayas & Andrés, 2022). The purpose of their research is to see how peer feedback improves speaking skills. According to their study, students performed better after receiving peer feedback using Vocaroo after each speaking assignment. The participants could speak freely without fear of making mistakes because no one was watching them. Furthermore, the participants found the peer feedback very helpful as they learned to reflect on the answers given and were willing to make corrections on future tasks.

### **Speaking Skills**

Along with listening, reading and writing, speaking is one of the classic “four skills” that should be developed in language lessons (Steger et al., 2010). Speaking ability summarizes individual sub-competencies that the learner can achieve. He must be able to establish and maintain conversational contacts. He needs to know how to start a conversation on any subject, how to continue it appropriately, and how to end it correctly in the end. In communicative oriented foreign language teaching, we attach great importance to the development of the four or five language skills. These are listening, speaking, reading, writing, as well as hearing-seeing-comprehension (Schatz, 2006). The learners of the foreign language receive more linguistic resources receptively than they can use productively. Therefore, special attention should be paid to the acquisition of language skills such as speaking skills. Speaking skills are considered to be one of the most important skills. It often occurs together with listening, e.g. in a conversation, or with writing, when taking notes during a telephone conversation (Schatz, 2006). While speaking, we focus on different aspects of the language. Focusing on a specific structure and its correctness is what we call guided speech. New knowledge of vocabulary and grammar is gained by practicing controlled speaking. On the other hand, in free speech, both the structure and the situation of the conversation can be changed throughout the conversation (Dräger & Müller-Eiselt, 2015).

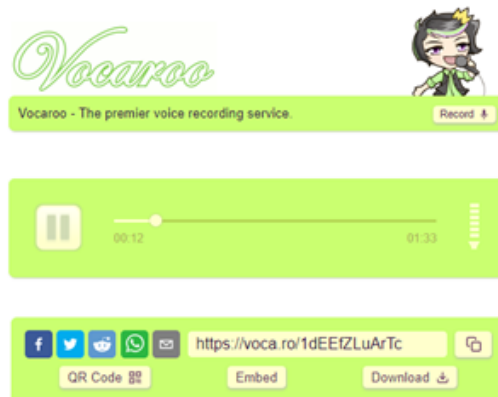
### **LITERATURE**

For this study, the lecturer who taught the Deutsch IV course gave students a project assignment called “Erzähl doch mal!” This project was carried out for one full semester,

namely the even semester in the 2022/2023 academic year. The students were given the task of practicing speaking either monologue or dialogue and then recording it. After that, they sent the links of the recording every week and a total of 16 weeks of meetings by embedding their Vocaroo links in the tables on Google Sheets (see table 1).

**Table 1. Vocaroo link with the task of describing the picture**

No.	Name	link vocaroo
1	KAG	<a href="https://voca.ro/1iNf10k8LTN6">https://voca.ro/1iNf10k8LTN6</a>
2	RKW	<a href="https://voca.ro/13j3ArfBtAjs">https://voca.ro/13j3ArfBtAjs</a>
4	MNA	<a href="https://voca.ro/12I2lC5Z6hZZ">https://voca.ro/12I2lC5Z6hZZ</a>
5	MJO	<a href="https://voca.ro/1nEWB7PHE0k8">https://voca.ro/1nEWB7PHE0k8</a>
6	IAM	<a href="https://voca.ro/1kV8YibkSLUh">https://voca.ro/1kV8YibkSLUh</a>
8	PFL	<a href="https://voca.ro/1eyTdmIKZjxs">https://voca.ro/1eyTdmIKZjxs</a>
9	AIL	<a href="https://voca.ro/11zzOrFrM2I2">https://voca.ro/11zzOrFrM2I2</a>
10	DTL	<a href="https://voca.ro/1bu00u4CL01p">https://voca.ro/1bu00u4CL01p</a>
11	FRS	<a href="https://voca.ro/1dKjUSlwxx2A">https://voca.ro/1dKjUSlwxx2A</a>
12	ASP	<a href="https://voca.ro/15yRly1quwKA">https://voca.ro/15yRly1quwKA</a>
13	PRS	<a href="https://voca.ro/1c7bTgsFgrom">https://voca.ro/1c7bTgsFgrom</a>
14	FNH	<a href="https://voca.ro/1aot6OF2Cnps">https://voca.ro/1aot6OF2Cnps</a>
15	SAP	<a href="https://voca.ro/1cEo0yDmRfOF">https://voca.ro/1cEo0yDmRfOF</a>
16	SIH	<a href="https://voca.ro/1kPNXoLWIARn">https://voca.ro/1kPNXoLWIARn</a>



**Figure 1. The ready-to-listen recording**

In the display above, we can see that after the link has been sent by the students, we can listen to their voice recordings by clicking on the link, then pressing play. Apart from that, we can also download and save or display a QR Code to be scanned and then listened to. The following is an example of a recorded monologue from a student.

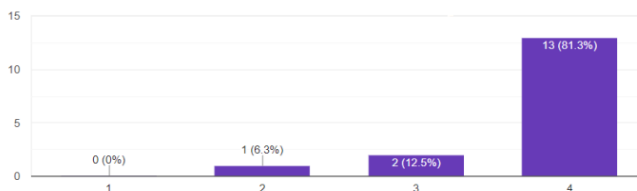


**Figure 2. QR Code containing one of the student's monologues**

After the project has been completed, we distributed questionnaires with structured questions about using Vocaroo to practice German. A total of 17 statements were transmitted to the respondents in the questionnaire.

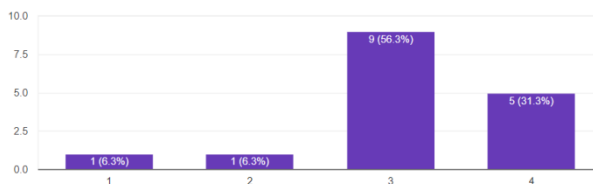
### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

They were 16 respondents, consisting of five male students and 11 female students, who participated in completing the research questionnaire. They were students of the German Department at Universitas Negeri Malang who took the German IV course.



**Figure 3. Respondents' opinions on the use of Vocaroo**

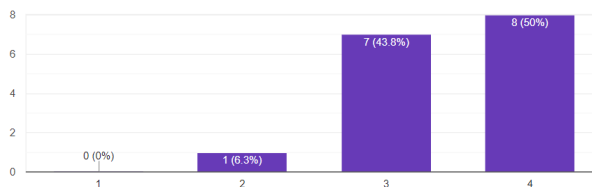
From the diagram above, we can conclude that the majority of respondents (93.8%) enjoyed practicing German speaking skills either in monologue or dialogue using Vocaroo. They considered that Vocaroo easy to access and did not require downloading an application on their cellphone. In addition, they did not have to download Vocaroo like other learning applications which can make their cellphone memory full or reduce memory storage on their cellphone. They revealed that they could convey ideas or thoughts when they spoke monologues. In addition, they could make dialogues with their partners without any embarrassment. Respondents usually prepared what they wanted to say before recording their voice. They practiced first.



**Figure 4. Voice recording intensity**

Most respondents indicated that they recorded their voice for their task more than twice. Respondents argued that they prepared or practiced what they would say before they recorded their voice, among other things, so they could minimize pronunciation, intonation, and grammatical mistakes. In addition, one of the respondents said he practiced beforehand so that when he pronounces words in German he is pronounced correctly and the listeners can hear his voice clearly. So far, pronunciation training has not played a major role in foreign language didactics. Until the beginning of the 20th century, the method of grammar

translation was the dominant trend. It attached importance to the linguistic structures, but not to the fact that the language learners deal with authentic texts. The language awareness of the students developed in the area of syntax and morphology, but not in the area of phonetics and phonology. They were only confronted with pronunciation when they had to read out their sentences. After that, the pronunciation training was pushed into the background again until it was rediscovered by the communicative method. In the early 1990s, textbooks containing tasks on both phonemes and prosody were published in German as a foreign language. Oral communication consists of two aspects - understanding and being understood by the interlocutor. Nevertheless, phonetics, the main subject of which is pronunciation, is referred to as the “stepchild of foreign language teaching” (Dräger & Müller-Eiselt, 2015), which illustrates its importance in German as a foreign language teaching. One of the tools of language is pronunciation. Most of the time we recognize someone who is not a native speaker by their pronunciation. In order to be able to communicate with other people, good pronunciation is important. In German as a foreign language, pronunciation should be practiced from the beginning. Meanwhile, fluency in speaking is more important than correctness, therefore the correction of the mistake is also seen in a new light and mistakes are now seen as unavoidable and natural (Habermann, 2021).



**Figure 5. Practice dialogues using Vocaroo**

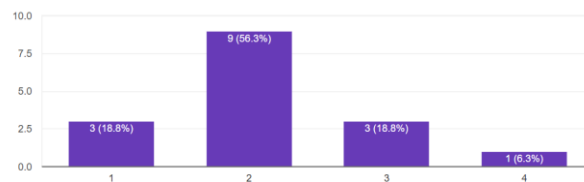
The diagram above informs that respondents did not feel ashamed to have dialogue with their partners. The interaction between the speaker and the listener is fundamental to communication. We talk about dialogue when the speaker and listener switch roles. Dialogue is divided into three types: informal everyday conversation, standardized factual conversation, and discussion as guided group conversation. We cannot fully prepare for the dialogue because the topics of communication are not predetermined and the interlocutors have to improvise. The listener must first listen carefully to their partner, understand what is being said, and immediately formulate a response that responds to what is being said.

Dialogic communication is about the exchange of information between at least two interlocutors whose roles are constantly changing during the interaction. The speaker becomes the listener and vice versa. When one speaks, the other must listen, understand and at the same time prepare his answer or reaction. Therefore, speech behaviour is usually spontaneous and the contribution to the conversation can only be prepared to a limited extent in terms of language and content (Heyd, 1997), (Schreiter, 2001).

However, if the participants in the communication do not change their roles while speaking, it is monologue speaking. It is about the transmission of information presented on a specific topic in the form of a lecture, narration, description, presentation etc. The speaker delivers a longer, coherent speech on a topic that is structured in terms of content (Heyd, 1997). The speaker can prepare well in advance for a monologue (ibid.).

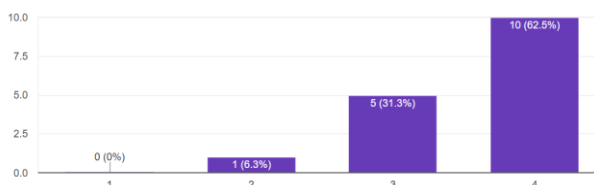
Heyd (ibid.) emphasizes that language learners should master both forms of oral communication. They should learn to formulate their own thoughts clearly and to use the language they have acquired in a way that is appropriate to the situation and functional. In dialogue, the learners should produce purposeful statements or understand what the other person has said and be able to react linguistically as quickly as possible. This requires active

verbal thinking. In the monologue, they should be able to understand or create longer, coherent statements on a topic, which requires a logical way of thinking. Therefore, the speaking exercises should aim to develop active speaking thinking and a logical way of thinking in the language learner.



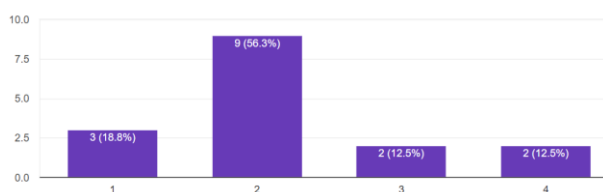
**Figure 6. Practice speaking: Live vs Vocaroo**

In one of the questions in the questionnaire we asked the respondents whether they prefer to practice speaking live in the classroom or record it first using Vocaroo and then send it to the lecturer (see figure 6). One respondent said that on the one hand he likes to speak directly in the classroom because when he makes mistakes such as grammatical mistakes there is someone who corrects him. On the other hand, he likes to use Vocaroo because he can prepare well the material he wants to convey. Besides, he also has to study and has to pay close attention to the grammar of the sentence. Another respondent said that he sometimes felt embarrassed if there was a mistake when he had to speak in front of the class. There were also respondents who easily forgot and were nervous if they had to speak in the classroom.



**Figure 7. Student's self-confidence using Vocaroo**

In the diagram above we can see that the majority of respondents feel confident when they practice speaking using Vocaroo. They assume that they can properly prepare what they are going to say before recording it. Furthermore, there were also respondents who said that they felt confident because many people did not hear them directly. According to Clément (1986), self-confidence is a combination of factors such as fear of speaking and self-assessment of one's own L2 competence as well as self-assessments of past L2 learning experiences (causal attributions) and task-specific skills (self-efficacy). Consistent with this opinion, Clément and Kruidenier (1983) find that students' self-confidence plays an undeniable role in motivation during foreign language learning (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Apart from that, MacIntyre et al. defined that L2 self-confidence is a combination of L2 self-perceptual competence and L2 anxiety (Clément & Kruidenier, 1983).



**Figure 8. Disadvantages of using Vocaroo**

However, one of the drawbacks of practicing speaking using Vocaroo is that most students speak by reading a text they have prepared beforehand, not based on key points or

improvising. According to Kurtz (2001), improvisation is a suitable strategy for practising speaking skills in a foreign language learning, because this spontaneous reaction is an indispensable basis for actually dealing with everyday realities (Jokiah et al., 2017). Improvisation is a task-related, target-language speaking opportunity during which the language should be used freely, appropriately and creatively. However, the respondents argued, if they speak without reading the text that has been prepared, they will lose the thread of what they are going to say. What the respondents have attempted, which is to combine written language with spoken language, is not a good practice. The reason is, fluency is more important than correct grammar for example. In addition, the limited vocabulary is one of the reasons why they speak with the help of text. However, expressing something in a foreign language requires not only knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, but also mental attitude. That is, learners must pay attention to both aspects of language acquisition and psychological aspects, as well as attention or courage to express themselves in another language, even though the possibility of making.

## CONCLUSION

German as a foreign language lessons are characterized by promoting communicative skills. Interaction plays a particularly important role here. Thanks to the sophistication of digital media, this can be easily achieved. Students, for example, are not only able to work on and edit texts using multimedia, especially through visual language approaches and by listening, but they can also interact directly with one another (Kurtz, 2001). With digital media, learners learn without realizing it and that is why they are desired in the classroom. Vocaroo is a technological tool capable of transmitting clear and good quality audio and the teacher can implement it in their teaching-learning process. This can be an alternative learning media, especially for speaking skills. A phenomenon that often occurs in a foreign language learning, especially German, is the lack of opportunities for students to practice speaking. By using Vocaroo all students get the same opportunity to express their ideas and opinions. However, Vocaroo as a digital tool for practicing German still has weaknesses: most respondents read the previously prepared text (read aloud) and they did not speak spontaneously or improvise as they would if they were in class. Nevertheless, given the many benefits of Vocaroo, teachers can use this digital tool to help their learners practice speaking in foreign language learning.

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