Target structure: German verb-preposition collocations

Target audience: English-speaking intermediate learners of German

Rationale: Some verbs subcategorize certain prepositions in many languages, including German and English. These verb-preposition collocations are notoriously difficult for learners because of form-meaning mapping mismatches between languages. For example, the English collocation to wait for is translated into German as warten auf and not für (a default translation of for). An additional difficulty with German is that either the verb or the preposition also assigns a specific case to the following noun phrase.

Goals:
1. The learners will become aware or reinforce their knowledge of selected German verb-preposition-case collocations.
2. The learners will use selected collocations in written sentences and in short oral partner exchanges about themselves.

Pedagogical sequence: The triple I approach: Illustration-Interaction-Induction (McCarthy & Carter, 1995). Learners will analyze corpus samples with selected collocations and, in interaction with a partner, induce what preposition and what case each verb is taking. During task monitoring and debriefing, the teacher makes sure that all learners have arrived at accurate collocation patterns.

Format: partner work, interactive

Materials: worksheet with corpus samples and directions


WORKSHEET

German verb-preposition collocations

Many German verbs require the use of fixed prepositions; these verb-preposition collocations are usually different from their English equivalents. For example: to wait for -> warten auf

Look at the following examples of such verb-preposition collocations. They come from a German corpus (a large electronic collection of German texts) – Das Digitale Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, or DWDS (www.dwds.de). The examples are organized in concordances – stacked lines of examples from different texts with the search words in the middle.

Work with a partner. In each line, underline the noun phrase immediately following the preposition: i.e., the personal pronoun or the noun with the article or adjective that modifies
it. Decide together with a partner what case the noun phrase is in (e.g., accusative, dative). NB: you do not need to translate the sentences. Then, write out the verb + preposition + case collocation. Finally, write an example sentence.

Example: to wait for

Verb-preposition-case collocation:  

Write an example sentence:

Tasks:

1. to think of

Verb-preposition-case collocation: 

Write your example sentence:

2. to be interested in

Verb-preposition-case collocation: 

Write your example sentence:

3. to occupy oneself with

Verb-preposition-case collocation: 

Write your example sentence:
Verb-preposition-case collocation: ______________________________ + __________ + __________

Write your example sentence: ______________________________________________________

4. to do without

Verb-preposition-case collocation: ____________________________ + __________ + __________

Write your example sentence: ______________________________________________________

5. to be annoyed about

Verb-preposition-case collocation: ______________________________ + __________ + __________

Write your example sentence: ______________________________________________________

6. Exchange questions and answers with a partner using the sentences you wrote. Correct each other if you notice article and case mistakes.

For example:

A. Ich warte auf die Sommerferien. Und du?
B. Ich warte auf das Basketballspiel.