CULTURAL HERITAGE AS MEDIA-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This paper reports on a project realized at the European Archaeological Park of Bliesbruck-Reinheim which combines excavations and reconstructions of Celtic and Roman finds. Further project partners were the nearby local schools. The project's aim was to create a CD-Rom with information on the European Archaeological Park to be used by schools in preparation or revisal for visits there. In order to be interesting for the students, it was thought to be best if the material was produced by pupils themselves. It was thus prepared, made, and edited by the German and French pupils from both (German and French) partner schools – in part in web-based collaboration. Topics ranged from history and Roman and Celtic art to arms, from economy to ecology. The pupils produced texts, images and video films, showing for example their experiences with 'living archaeology'. Another aim was to make them learn how to organize information in a way interesting for themselves (and other pupils).

Keywords: Celtic excavations, *Europäischer Kulturpark Bliesbruck-Reinheim,*Roman excavations, *archaeologie experimentelle,*media-based learning

Introduction

This paper reports on a project realized at the European Archaeological Park of Bliesbruck-Reinheim, a cross-border project jointly operated by German and French institutions (Europäischer Kulturpark Bliesbruck-Reinheim, Parc archéologique européen de Bliesbruck-Reinheim, http://www.europaeischer-kulturpark.de; http://www.archeo57.com), which combines excavations and reconstructions of Celtic and Roman finds directly on top of and on both sides of the Franco-German border (GPS 49.130061, 7.182995) with exhibition and educational facilities. Further project partners were the nearby local schools of Gersheim (Germany) and Sarreguemines (France).

The project

The project's aim was to create a CD-Rom with information on the European Archaeological Park of Bliesbruck-Reinheim to be used by schools in preparation or revisal for visits there. In order to be interesting for the students, it was thought to be best if the material was produced not by adults but by pupils themselves.
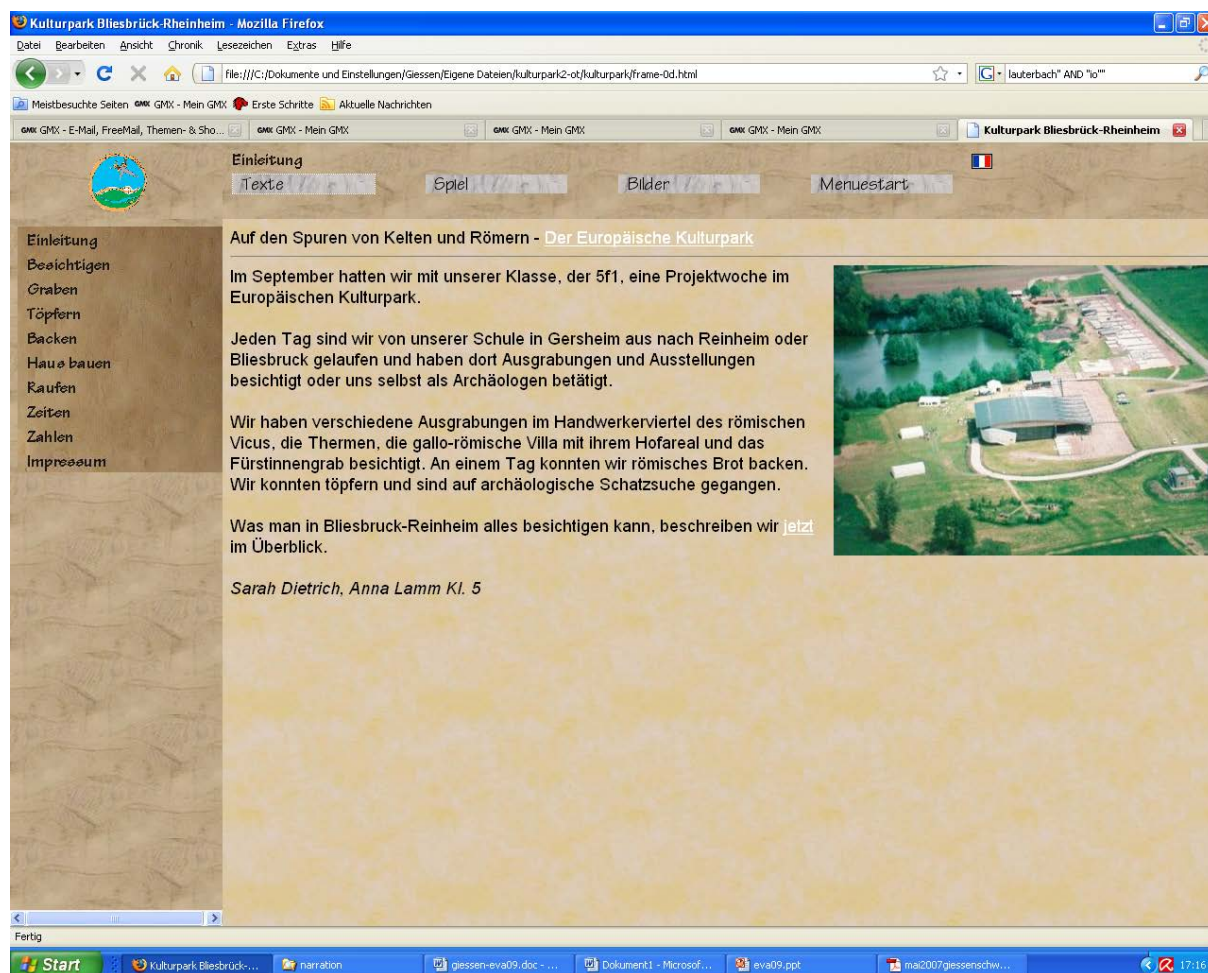
Pic 1: Introduction German 1

Of course the project's aims did not only lie in producing material for the Park (and thus in museums pedagogics, as in Hein 1998) but also in the enhancement of an active media competence in education and science (for example the competence to make them learn how to organize information and knowledge in a way interesting for themselves and other pupils, as in Giessen 2004) and in language acquisition (Giessen 2003). The CD-Rom thus was prepared, made, and edited by the German and French pupils from both (German and French) partner schools – in part in web-based collaboration (on the *Moodle* platform). Topics ranged from history to ancient cooking recipes, from Roman and Celtic art to arms, from economy to ecology. The pupils produced texts, images and video films, showing for example their experiences with 'living archaeology' – not only when excavating themselves

(of course with the assistance of an archaeologist), but also when, among others, cooking 'the Roman way', or when making pottery themselves. Another aim was to make them learn how to organize information and knowledge in a way interesting for themselves (and other pupils). A didactical aim was also to enable them to understand how moving pictures and sound effects become integrated in other means of modern computer and tele-communications.
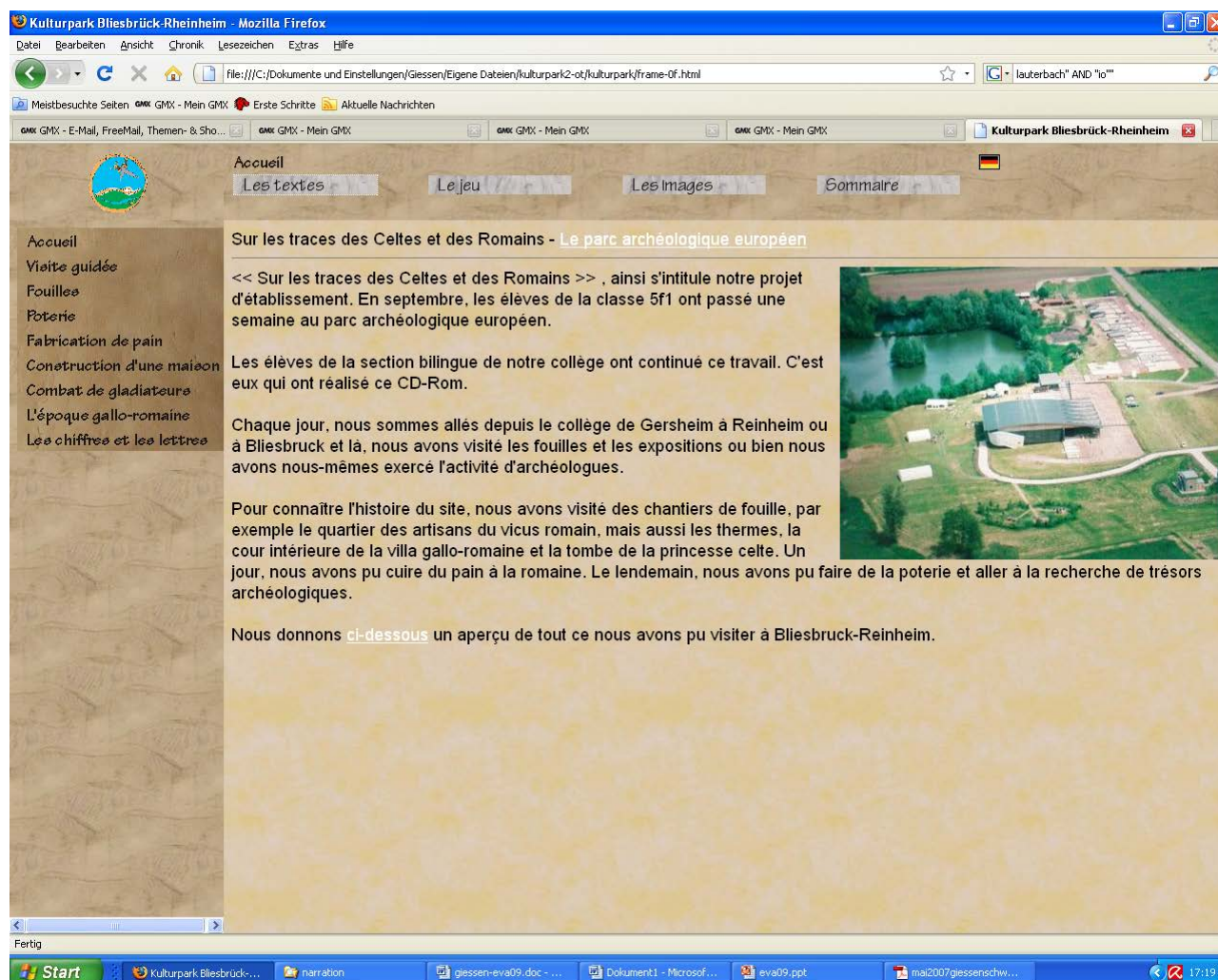
Pic 2: Introduction French 1

The CD-Rom was to be produced in both languages, German and French. The underlying concept was that of a *pédagogie événementielle*, that is: a didactics that aims to enable the learners not only to know, but to be able to use their knowledge, to act. It is clear that the perception of foreign languages with the help of the media has positive results in language acquisition, both for the producing as well as for the consuming pupils, improving speech reception. However, media production in the foreign context is also able to support the pupils' ability of speech production.

All in all, the combination of utilizing the production of the CD-Rom as distributed *mass medium* as well as *self medium* seems to produce the best results in acquiring oral

competence in a foreign language, in learning about media production, and of course in experiencing the archaeological park.

| mass media (such as radio, tv, but also: simple research in books, internet …)	self media (media production as paedagogical tool)
in our project: native speakers	native speakers and (foreign) learners
in general: plurality of programms	own production
"one-way road"	feed-back
(passive) reception of language	interaction
perception of the other	perception not only of the other but also of oneself
dependance from offers of others	independance from offers of others
final version of product created by others	product as a result of (own) negociations

Table 1: "mass media" vs. "self media"

For the teachers as well as the curators of the park, the main problem seems to be found in the fact that they ignore the traditional separation between the theoretical approach, and the almost completely pragmatic constraints in the media sector.

Pic.3: digging up of the past, German

The autonomy of media production in respect to traditional school (and museum or Cultural Heritage) education expresses itself in the contents, as well as in the genres chosen. We can distinguish two main types: (1) the desire to show, report and explain reality, and (2) the desire to tell a story. In the first case, the genre chosen is that of a reportage or documentary video, and the pupils mainly have to act as reporters who interview and correspond. The second case makes them play different roles within the story that is represented. However, we feel that the difference between the two types is merely quantitative, as the interviewer in genre (1) can be seen as someone who also acts in a way that is different from his ordinary school role. This, for us, is the most important aspect of the pupils' training, as, in both cases, they have to be active within the whole process of media production (see Egan 2005, Schank 1990, Murray 1997).
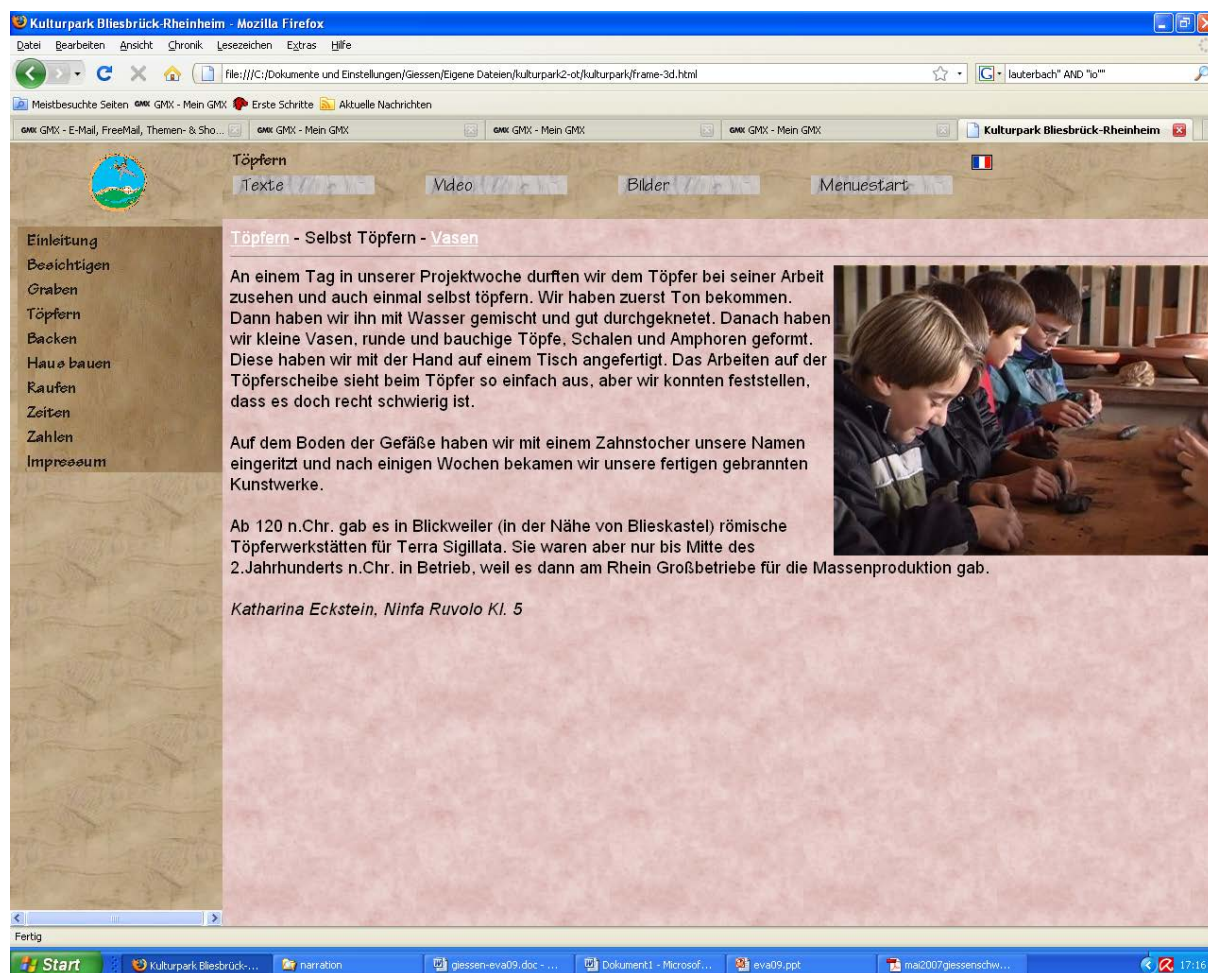

Pic 4: To make pottery, German 2

Participation (see Dillon 1994) thus has a double meaning: while producing with and for others, the pupils also produce for themselves. The fact that the students' video productions was indeed to be distributed to other pupils enables them to take part in public as well as in media discourse. There is no restriction to the school campus; rather, pupils have

the opportunity to speak to all the viewers in the region, thus taking part in a greater many-sided context together with the other professional products. For the pupils, seeing and recognizing themselves on air seems to give this process an implicit legitimation that is as important as conventional didactic means such as positive feedback. Thus the difference between *mass medium* and *self medium* vanishes. This participatory character has proved to be of crucial importance.
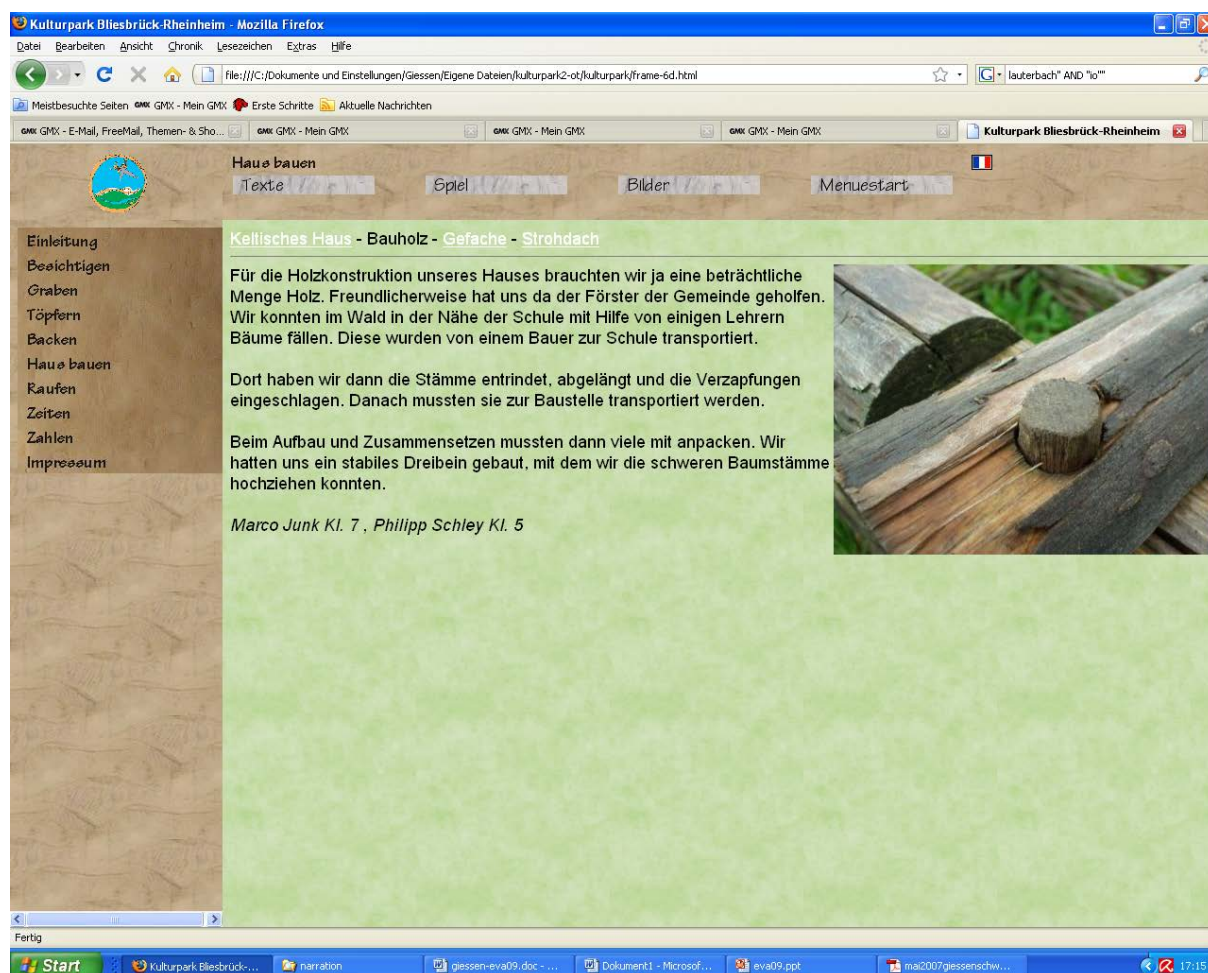
Pic 5: Construction of a building 2: construction timber, German

What are the differences from traditional school education? Students don't prepare papers and presentations but first of all have to learn some social skills such as working with a team and accepting responsibility for a project. Those social side-effects seem to be (as far as a teacher can judge) almost as important as the project's concrete result, that is, the CD-Rom produced. The differences from traditional school education, leading to close relationships, stay in mind as something special. We have the feeling, therefore, that pupils liked the project, which of course is rewarding for teachers, too.
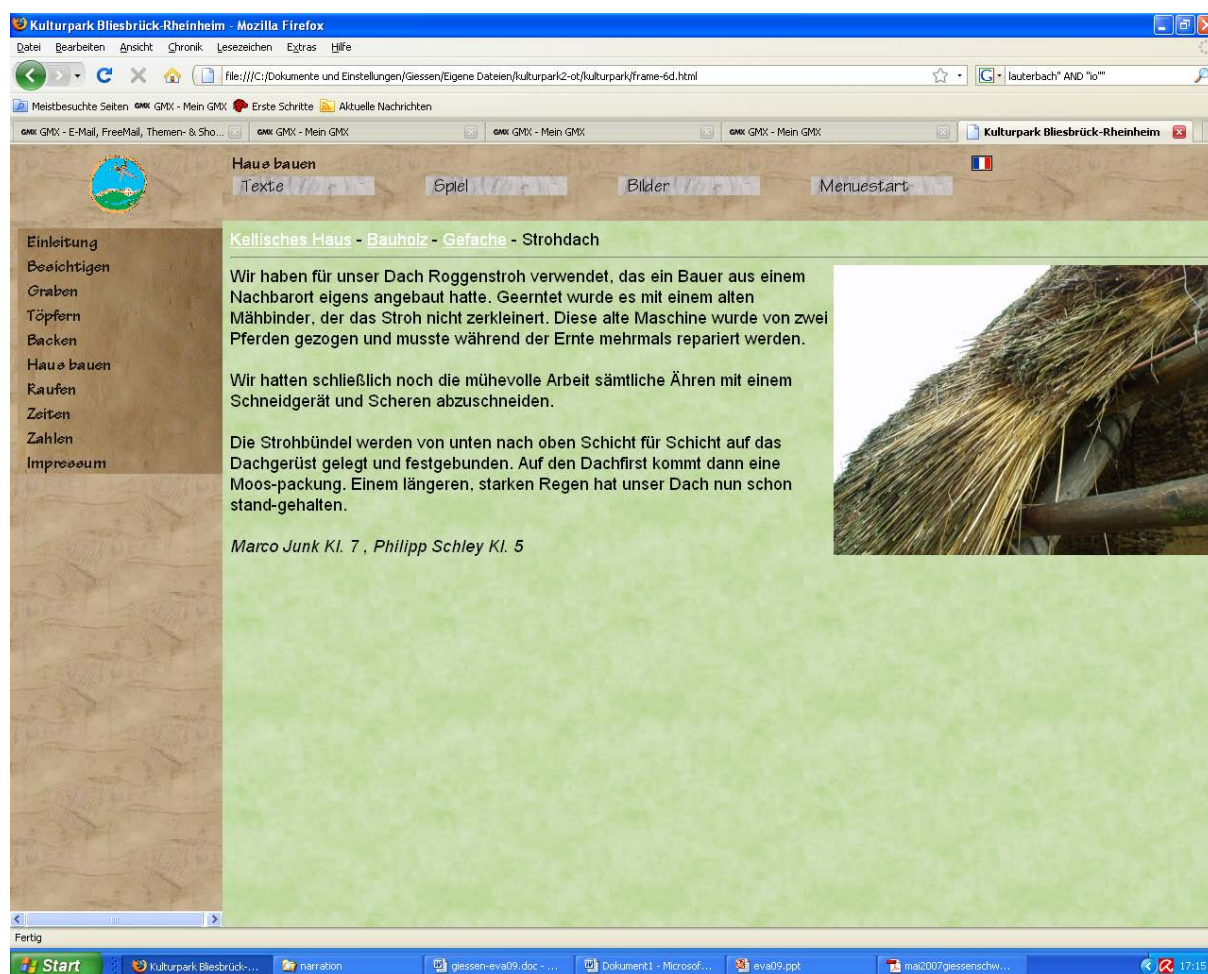
Pic 6: Construction of a building 4: thatched roof, German

Another point is that the different cultural, social as well as linguistic levels and competences on both sides of the border constitute a rich reservoir of experiences, stories, situations and styles to be filmed. Therefore it is important to be able to switch languages when producing the CD-Rom, utilizing French and German. As doing research, writing, and filming demands some professionalism, the pupils don't simply have to master the languages spoken in the region, but also the characteristics of the language of the medium, that is, a language written to be heard, a language supporting an image. This means the students have to master the laws of the medium, too, and have to gain competence in many fields, touching on psychology, semiology, or rhetoric (just to mention a few). Thus, the basic structure for verbalization in one or more given languages evolves.

	traditional (passive) forms of education	learning by producing 'self media'
language acquisition	important for getting knowledge in formal language acquisition (grammar, vocabulary), and in language reception	important for training language production
	correct material by native speakers (however created independently from the learner's level of knowledge)	limited control of correctness and quality of language production, however better possibilities to respond to the particular needs of the individual learner
inter-cultural competences	information on other cultures	information on how to deal with other cultures (inter-cultural competences)
media competences	needs further assistance through teachers	learning through one's own experience

Table 2: media-based learning

So (once again), the production was not 'simply' a means in the process of language learning or gaining media competence. On the contrary, our goal is a professional production, and the educational benefits were but an instrument, a supporting means within this production process.

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