

KIMETE CANAJ
University of Vienna, Austria

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH IN TEACHING GERMAN LANGUAGE IN LOWER AND HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KOSOVA

Abstract:

Foreignlanguage policy in Kosova is a complex task, which requires involvment of different stakeholders: parents, teachers multidimensional skills, to be involved in the teaching of foreignlanguages, students motivation and school infrastructure.

Teachers are responsible for teaching methodology and teaching different aspects oft the german culture and help students to better understand their perspective not only cultural, but also the view of the general german society. It is a fact that the teaching of the german as the foreign language is inseparable element intertwined with culture and learning as much knowledge of german cultures and social boost national awareness.

Teaching English in the first grade of elementary school, and second foreign language German or French from the sixth grade in the lower secondary schools is provided with Kosovo Curriculum as a subject binding. Teachers who teach English in the first grade, has different qualifications and training. A large number of Teachers are not trained on the methodological approach for the first grade or for the sixth grade.

The number of the Foreign Language Teachers are qualified but are not trained to methodological approach for working with this age of children and consequently burdening students in different learning situations. These aspects were part of this research.

The decission for this action research on methodological approaches with German teachers in lower und higher secondary schools in Kosova was made due to the high needs for professional, qualified and trained teachers and high demandes for the foreign language learning from the students. The idea for such an approach was concern about the methods used in teaching German as a second foreign language in lower and higher secondary Schools.

Especially based on the request of the New Kosovo Curriculum to be taught a first foreign language – English from the first grade and the second foreign language from the sixth grade in primary schools.

Study visits were conducted with German teachers, to which was introduced Action Research methodology, new approaches to teaching foreign language and discussed possibilities for piloting, some schools were selected which conducted research into action with their students in sixth and tenth grade .

From this research we got:A clear picture regarding the methodological approach to the teaching of German language in lower and higher secondary schools, sixth and tenth grade.Set up capacities of teachers in the methodological approach to teaching German.

3.□To promote the philosophy of Action Research in kosovan schools

Keywords:

Foreignlanguagepolicy, German as Foreign Language, German Teaching and Learning, Action Research, Foreignlanguage Teaching Practice,

JEL Classification: I28, I29

1. Introduction

This paper looks at the foreign language provision in primary and secondary schools in Kosovo. With a population of 1.815,60 and a geographical size of 10.887 square kilometers, Kosovo with youngest population in Europe, 75% under 35 years old and 50% younger than 25 years old has a clear European Perspective. From the outset it needs to be clear that the EU policy of “mother tongue plus two” is unnecessarily restrictive in its almost exclusive focus on European standard languages.

Foreign Language Policy is a priority of the Government of Kosovo with the vision of the Programme 2010-2014 “Kosovo – a knowledge society - offering equal opportunities for personal development to all its individual members, who in return contribute to a sustainable economic and social development. With the Mission: Building an inclusive education system that offers conditions for quality education and training for all individuals by promoting lifelong learning habits and values of democratic-citizenship“ and the Strategy on Preuniversity should make Kosovo one big house of learning; since only if all citizens of Kosovo get accustomed to lifelong learning will they be able to communicate, plan, think critically, **use two or more languages**, and use new techniques and technologies (82% of citizens in Prishtina use Information Technology (IT) and general 68% of all inhabitants in Kosovo are literate in IT)”

Only citizens in a continuous request for new and sustainable knowledge will be able to move, find new jobs, enjoy wellbeing, be happy, be useful for kosovan community, and will be able to help the development of kosovan society.

Based on these documents, strategies and the Curriculum Framework, this paper will provide with the information from the practice and the foreign language learning in the kosovan schools. The methodology of work and the assessment process which will have impact on the quality of teaching. The assessment for learning will support the education system and will have an impact on the human capacity building and in the economic development.

The first Curriculum Reforms started at 2002, and on 2005 started third grade with the first foreign language English, and then second foreign language as elective in sixth grade. Peffers/Reid a.o. (2005, 7).

In 2008 with the new Core Curriculum the students will start with English in the first grade of elementary school, and second foreign language German or French from the sixth grade in the lower secondary schools. The foreign languages are provided with Core Curriculum as a subject binding. Teachers¹ who teach English in the first grade, has different qualifications and training. A large number of Foreign Language Teachers are not trained on the new methodological approach for the first grade or for the sixth grade.

The Foreign Language Teachers are qualified in the professional field of language but are not trained to methodological approach for working with this age of children and consequently burdening students in different learning situations. These aspects were part of this research.

The decision for this action research on methodological approaches with German teachers in lower and higher secondary schools in Kosova was made due to the high needs for professional, qualified and trained teachers and high demands for the foreign language learning from the students. The idea for such an approach was concern about the methods used in teaching German as a second foreign language in lower and higher secondary Schools.

From this research we got: A clear picture regarding the methodological approach to the teaching of German language in sixth and tenth grade and set up capacities of teachers in the methodological approach to teaching German and to promote action research in kosovan schools.

2. Methodological Approach on Foreign Language Learning

The Study visits were conducted with German teachers, to which was introduced Action Research methodology, task based language learning and teaching, new approaches to teaching foreign language and discussed possibilities for piloting, some schools were selected which conducted research into action with their students in sixth and tenth grade.

¹ English Teachers for first grade are not trained with the new methodology and pedagogy for the children of age 6 and 7 but for the age group 11 to 18th, for low secondary and high secondary schools.

This research was based on the demand for better cognitive of foreign language learning, preferably in all scientific fields such as communication, literary and the language learning.

The students which are well educated with language knowledge, scientific skills and critical thinking, they can be completely without barriers in the global world.

In the area of digitalization and the development general of socio – economic in global level,

importance of the development of the educational system has taken an even more important than it had in the past and this role tends to rise continuously. A key factor in the establishment and development of a society is precisely the development of its educational system. The introduction of English from the first grade of elementary school is a priority of the Ministry of Education, articulated in the New Curriculum Framework and implemented from 2010.

Drawing on the object of study, we explore the teaching methodologies of German in sixth and tenth grade in four schools selected as sample areas of Kosovo, such as two low secondary schools and 2 higher secondary schools from Prishtina and Prizren two biggest cities in Kosovo. In the questionnaires have been involved students, teachers and directors of schools.

The integration of our country in to the family of European – Atlantic structures, preparation of kosovan citizens to be part of United Europe, necessarily requires a recognition and fruitful grasp of foreign languages, which should begin to be taught at an early age as new language.

Primary school is the level where the basic skills are taken for all that society olds as valuable to learn, there is space and time for learning a foreign language English, German and French.

Sensitization to small children learning foreign language is helpful and overall positive for students formation, its identity, it expands to the ability to distinguish the difference between cultures.

Through teaching foreign language, German and English in primary and secondary school for every child is given opportunity to sensitize the opportunity to learn other foreign languages, as well as learning in general.

The methods which are used in the kosovan schools are more classical grammar translations methods and frontal teaching than interactive and communicative

teaching method communication in groups, but according to the new curriculum framework and core curriculum, all subjects should be taught based on competences so the teachers are trained to offer a plan for presenting subject material or in our case the German language material to be learned and should be based on competences. The teacher should design an instructional system considering the competences which the students should acquire. They have to take in consideration the objectives of teaching and learning and how the content is selected and organized, the types of tasks to be performed and the roles of students and the roles of teachers should be taken in consideration during the teaching period.

During the history of language learning are developed different methods with their advantages and disadvantages:

Structural methods (grammar translation / audio-lingual method)

Functional methods (oral approach/ situational language teaching)

Interactive methods (communicative language teaching, natural approach, physical response, teaching proficiency through reading and literature...)

Theoretical and practical approaches and methods had developed different linguistics and psycholinguistics beginning from Humboldt, Berlitz, Chomsky, Schmidt and others. These have led to a wider variety of teaching methods ranging from the grammar-translation method to interactive and communication methods. With these methods, students generated original and meaningful sentences to gain a functional knowledge of the rules of grammar. Richards/Theodore & Rodgers (2001) describes different approaches, methods and the learning techniques in their book *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*.

This research is based on questioner and on the study visits at 4 schools. The author was present on classes and worked with students of sixth grade. She worked according to the well known Action Research Procedures (PLAN-ACT-OBSERVE-REFLECT) in the context of social planning.

The whole cycle can be described as planning, execution and findings of fact, and so on for each step. All social management is a spiral process steps where each of them is part of a circle of planning, action on which the finding of facts in relation to the

outcome of the action, represents the success of research into action (Lewin 1952 , pp. 462-463)

During one year field research in the schools, and analysing the results of questionnaire to the students and to the teacher and after the observation in several hours in

CURRICULUM	ISCED 0	ISCED 1	ISCED 2	ISCED 3
Language and Communication	38,10 %	33,33%	26,67%	20%/15,63%
Art	11,11%	9,25%	7,14%	6,67%/3,13%
Mathematik	22,22%	20,83%	17,86	13,33% /9,38%
Natural Sciences	5,56%	8,33%	14,29%	16,67%/6,25%
Social Studies and Civic Education	5,56%	8,33%	14,29%	16,67%/6,25%
Health and Welfare	11,11%	8,33%	7,14%	6,67%/6,25%
Life and Work	5,56%	4,17%	7,14%	6,67%/46,88%
Elective Subjects	5,56%	8,33%	7,14%	13,33%/6,25%

schools. The author envisaged which methods are used in the Language Learning Classes. If the teachers are familiar with the new curriculum and how they implement in different classes, which methods use the teacher to increase the motivation of students. Which learning and creative techniques are used in the teaching and learning processes.

3. Foreign Language Learning Methods used in Kosovan Schools

The implementation of new curriculum and the new education reforms is a challenge for general education in Kosova. The new curriculum is based on competences with an introduction which explains their structure, rationale, aims and objectives and competences. The competences are very clear but „Subject Connection and Cross Curriculum Approach „ are not clearly described.

The percentage of curriculum for every stage is very clear, and the schools are free to decide which subject will select on elective subjects, the compulsory subjects are generally for schools and all kosovan education system.

Tab. 1. The Core Curriculum in Kosovan Curriculum Framework (2011,44)

From the visited schools just Loyola- Gymnasium is offering four to five hours per week German from the six grade till 12th grade, and in other schools they are offering differently from 1 to 3 hours per week.

From the visits in the schools we can conclude that in Loyola Gymnasium (Kosovan – German Classical Gymnasium) are used traditional and modern methods, and is the most successful school in Kosova in Foreign Language Learning, Science and Math. There are taught German, English, Latein and Albanian Language and the students have the possibility to get three diplomas, Kosovan Matura, Loyola – International Degree and the German Language Certificate (Deutsche Sprache Diploma I and Deutsche Sprachdiploma II - B1 and C1)

As the methodology of this study, was used collaborative action research. According to our Politics and based on New Curriculum Framework of Kosova (2011), German or French will be taught in Kosovos schools, from six grade, and this study will contribute on building capacities of german teachers in this new methodology in Kosova.

We analysed the plan and program of german teachers of six grades. Since 2005, German is taught from the six grade and was compared with the german textbook of six grade.

It was examined the literature, the knowledge of teacher on implementing the german curriculum for respective classes, the use of teaching techniques in class, the

motivation of students for involvement in learning and the quality of teaching German languages in schools, the use of different teaching materials for appropriate age group.

Methods proposed to be used in teaching class were more creative techniques, illustrations, animation and role play in different activities, depending on the learning unit based on curriculum.

The teachers should have in mind the handbook "Teaching and Learning" (Modul III, 2011). This document is mainly intended for day to day reference for classroom teachers to ensure that they... understand how their pupils will progress through the years at primary school and help them offer a balance between reading and writing and different kinds of texts...

The most important part of the Core Curriculum is described in the communication skills (and what is the literacy?). The five competences and skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking and understanding. The students can read and write with confidence, fluency and understand, they can plan, draft, revise and edit their own writing.

The methodology of working in the primary and secondary schools in Kosova should be improved based on research tasks and activities, the teachers should use more creative techniques animation depending on the learning unit based on curriculum. The students should be motivated and confident with the learning materials for example as Bredella informed the students:

„A part from a variety of text – types (songs, poems, short stories, expository texts....)

ENCOUNTERS contains tasks and activities:

- Which should help you to articulate what you already know about topic
- Which should initiate enjoyable interaction and group activities in the classroom
- Which are designed to stimulate your creativity and encourage you to write your texts.“ (Bredella 2005, 209)

This research activity is not used in public Kosovan schools, it should be used more lively German teaching and more communicative tasks and active projects for foreign language teaching and learning. The exception is Loyola Gymnasium where active language learning is based on research activities and task based language teaching

and learning in other public schools, teaching is more frontal and the work in group is difficult to be organised in the classroom with over 30 students.

For the motivation on foreign language learning plays a crucial role the school facilities, motivated and innovative teachers and the future perspective for the students. In Kosovo the parents and the general society is aware that without one foreign language the students are like illiterate, most parents invests in education and special on foreign language learning courses extra from the compulsory education on public schools.

The teachers should use innovative ideas to bring the classical methods, grammar – translation together with the interactive methods in classroom like Bredella says, that: “What we are saying is not German for communication but German through communication. Not learn German so that you will be able to do and say things later, but say and do things now so that as result you will learn German” Bredella (2005 210).

The student on sixth grade should learn more through games and the teacher should be motivated on this kind of teaching and in the 10th grade more academic ambitions using the literature in foreign language teaching.

The literature is very important in learning Foreign Language as Nussbaum mention in her book that without the literature texts our experience by others is very limited.

“It is for this reason that literature is so urgently important for the citizen, as an expansion of sympathies that real life cannot cultivate sufficiently. It is the political promise of literature that it can transport us, while remaining ourselves, into the life of another, revealing similarities but also profound differences between the life and thought of that other and myself and making them comprehensible, or at least more nearly comprehensible. Any stance toward criticism that denies that possibility seems to deny the very possibility of literary experience as a human social good. (Nussbaum 1998, 111)

From this research we can conclude that the classical method the structural view treats the language as a system, where the grammar is crucial and students learn through the grammar elements to the content of the language which is not very interesting and will not motivate the students (as the student said, OOO again grammar, it's boring!!!!) but without the concrete structure they cannot learn the

language in the correct form especially the German language. The grammar should be expressed through the functional view of language such as requesting something or expressing the different situation.

The last one, the interactive view sees language as a vehicle for the creation and maintenance of social relations, focusing on patterns of moves, acts, negotiation and interaction found in conversational exchanges. This approach is important but together with the classical method grammar would be more powerful and the language learning will be transferred to the life long learning.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations on National Level

Financing criteria and regulations are set and implemented which favor universal inclusion and equity in Education.

Children in Kosova needs a new education perspective and new horizon where they can be more innovative and get competences, knowledge and skills for next millenium.

Based on „The National Curriculum in Kosova a review of its first steps (2005,9) are two important assets which has to be taken in consideration in general education in Kosova:

1. The *high quality of the teaching force* is one of the two greatest assets and strengths of Kosovan Education. A great deal of evidence of this quality could be quoted from the teams observations and notes during the many classes they obseved and from its records of older students´expressions of respected and appreciation for their teachers.
2. The other huge asset is the remarkable unspoilt *enthusiasm and keenness to learn of the pupils* – at every age and level including those considered „difficult“ in many parts of Western Europe. For many students this keenness is now closely connected with their experience of the new methodology about which they are generally enthusiastic and quite often to the point of beeing critical and impatient regarding what they see as the slowness of some teachers to convert to it and the slow pace of the training programme (Peffer/Reid...2005,9)

These conclusions are from 2005 and in 2014 are different aspects which should be taken in consideration. From the questionnaire on 2014 the students will answer that they are high motivated to learn foreign language especially english and german. The german language is important for their future studies, for their carere and for their future in general. The choice of german as foreign language is suggested to be guided by a whole host of personal reasons stemming from individual or family background, emotional ties, professional interest, cultural preferences, intellectual curiosity etc.

Due to the result of this research the author's recommendations for the national authorities are:

1. to develop a „Kosovan Foreign Languages Strategy 2015-2025“ – a national document dealing with foreign language (formal teaching) policy as whole.
2. to start with „the model public school“ in addition to the foreign languages themselves, some other subjects should be taught in these languages (Content and Integrated Learning) which are related to the geography, history, culture, traditions and literature of the countries of the languages being studied.

The strategy document should examines issues related to foreign language learning in general, vocational and higher education, as well as adult education and various informal means of education. Issues related to the classification of language skills and accreditation of language studies should be examined. And the schools which will be bilingual can offer intensive study of English, German, French and other languages.

5. Final remarks

From this research as conclusion for the youngest population in Europe in Kosova, and as the answer to the youth, which requires a chance to develop in a spirit of understanding, esteem and respect. It needs the possibility of education in the democratic meaning of the word. All children have the right to a good primary school

education and an equal right to secondary education: education and learning are fundamental for development and are therefore the key to the future.

Kosovan Government should take in consideration the powerful sentence of Jean Monet (1888 - 1979), a major figure in providing the inspiration for and form a united Europe, once said: "If I had to begin all over again to build up Europe, I would put less emphasis on the economy and more on culture and education."

As result of this research the local authorities have to plan and to monitor the best implementation of the curricula for modern languages and to invest much more in education:

- The students have to learn and acquire the competences to communicate.
Standards are set in 2010 based on the European Framework of Reference for Languages (but they should be monitored how they are implemented) – Monitoring system should be functional .
- Public investment per student capita should be at the average level of investment in EU countries;

From this research we will propose additionally to the traditional methods more **interactive methods** where also the **inclusion** of all students can be done.

1. Teaching Activities with more motivated materials
2. Audiovisual methods
3. Communication interactive with grammar and literature
4. Attention and Noticing Method

Slabakova (2008) goes further, endorsing a return to explicit grammar practice in the language classroom, and suggesting that practicing inflectional morphology “should happen in meaningful, plausible sentences where the syntactic effects and the semantic import of the morphology is absolutely transparent and non-ambiguous” (p. 281).

(Baars 1997, 304) was very clear on his hypothesis that „paying attention – becoming conscious of some material – seems to be the sovereign remedy for learning anything ... It is the universal solvent of the mind”.

Than in the kosovan complex context we can add the attention and noticing method which is very crucial for the individual motivated learners as Schmidt noticed in his paper (2010,15) that,

„For Second Language Acquisition, the allocation of attention is the pivotal point at which learner external factors (including the complexity and distributional characteristics of input, the discursive and interactional context, instructional treatment, and task characteristics) and learner internal factors (including motivation, aptitude, learning styles and strategies, current foreign language knowledge and processing ability) come together“ (Schmidt 2010, 15).

Foreign Language learning includes the growth of and the development of fluency. Every student has different abilities and skills and uses different methods on foreign language learning.

Children in general are very curious and very motivated to learn and to discover new things. Learning the foreign language means learning the new culture and new world. The foreign language learning in the early stage is intuitive and natural, is the convenience and pleasure of the experience that can boost their confidence and their desire for new discoveries.

From this research we can conclude that there are still opportunities to improve the teaching methodology and the implementation of different teaching strategies in the teaching process.

Planning, interpretation and evaluation can provide useful resources to improve students' knowledge in the field of German language .

Public authorities responsible for primary and secondary education should ensure the existence of a sustainable well funded framework to support general education institutions efforts to improve the quality of foreign language teaching and learning.

All school leaving final objectives should be made as firmly clear and fixed as possible. In the first place by formulating the requirements to be met by school absolvents in as explicit terms as possible. Linking then all this with the Common European Framework Reference for Languages, and following the best example in Kosova „Loyola Gymnasium“.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrahamsson, N., & Hylltenstam, K. (2008). The Robustness of Aptitude Effects in Near-native Second Language Acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 30, 481-509.
- Atkinson, D. (2010). Extended, Embodied Cognition and Second Language Acquisition. *Applied Linguistics*, 31, 599-622.
- Baars, B. J. (1997). In the Theatre of Consciousness: Global Workspace Theory, a Rigorous Scientific Theory of Consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 4, 292-309.
- Bredella, Lothar (2005), Task- based Language Teaching and Learning- bei der Rezeption literarischer Texte. In Andreas Müller- Hartman & Marita Schocker-v. Dittfurth (Eds.) *Aufgabenorientierung im Fremdsprachenunterricht – Task-based Language Learning and Teaching* (pp 209-211).Tübingen: Gunther Narr.
- Byram, Michael (1999), Acquiring Intercultural Communicative Competence: Fieldwork and Experiential Learning. In. Lothar Bredella&Werner Delanoy (Eds.), *Interkultureller Fremdsprachenunterricht* (pp.358-417).Tübingen: Gunter Narr.
- Ellis Rod (2003), *Task - based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewin, Kurt (1952), Group Decision and Social Change, In G. E. Swanson, T. M. Newcomb and E.L. Hartley (eds) *Readings in Social Psychology*. New York: Holt.
- Nussbaum, Martha (1995), *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*. Boston, MA.: Beacon
- Nussbaum, Martha (1998), *Cultivation Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.
- Peffer, Jack & Reid, Euan a.o. (2005), *The National Curriculum in Kosova – a review of its first steps*. Institute of Education, London
- Richards, Jack C & Theodore S. Rodgers (2001), *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge, CUP
- Schmidt, Richard (2010), Attention, awareness, and individual differences in language learning. In W. M. Chan, S. Chi, K. N. Cin, J. Istanto, M. Nagami, J.W. Sew, T. Suthiwan, & I. Walker, *Proceedings of CLaSIC 2010*, Singapore, December 2-4 (pp. 721-737). Singapore: National University of Singapore, Centre for Language Studies. [wwwDocument]. <http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/PDFs/SCHMIDT%20Attention,%20awareness,%20and%20individual%20differences.pdf> [18.09.2014]
- Slabakova, Roumyana. (2008), *Meaning in the second language*. Studies on Language Acquisition (SOLA) 34, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Kosovan Curriculum Framework, Prishtine, August 2011. http://www.masht.gov.net/advCms/documents/Korniza_e_kurrikules11.pdf [19.09.2014]