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INNOVATIVE METHODS OF TEACHING GERMAN TO STUDENTS STUDYING GERMAN AS A SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: Teaching German as a second foreign language (L3, typically after English as L2) requires approaches that account for learners' existing multilingual competence, potential transfer effects, and distinct motivational profiles. This enhanced article provides a comprehensive review of innovative pedagogical methods, including multilingual contrastive didactics (e.g., Deutsch als Fremdsprache nach Englisch – DaFnE), task-based language teaching (TBLT), content and language integrated learning (CLIL), flipped classroom models, collaborative and project-based learning, and advanced digital integrations such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI)-driven tools, and gamification. Empirical evidence from recent studies demonstrates improved proficiency, metacognitive awareness, motivation, and intercultural competence. An expanded table details methods, implementation strategies, benefits, challenges, and supporting research. Recommendations emphasize teacher training and hybrid models to optimize outcomes in diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: German as L3, second foreign language, multilingual didactics, DaFnE, task-based language teaching, CLIL, digital learning, augmented reality, virtual reality, gamification, tertiary language acquisition

Introduction. In an increasingly plurilingual world, German is frequently acquired as a third language (L3) following English (L2) and the mother tongue (L1). This "tertiary" position offers advantages—heightened metalinguistic awareness, strategic transfer from prior learning—but also challenges, including interference, fossilization of errors, and reduced motivation compared to L2 acquisition (Hufeisen, 2018; Jessner, 2006).

Traditional methods, often monolingual and grammar-focused, fail to exploit these dynamics. Innovative approaches leverage multilingualism, authenticity, and technology to create engaging, effective learning environments. This article synthesizes current methods, incorporating recent empirical findings from Europe, Asia, and beyond, and addresses implementation in secondary and tertiary settings.

Theoretical Foundations: Tertiary Language Didactics

Tertiärsprachendidaktik views L3 acquisition as qualitatively different, with learners deploying enhanced strategies (e.g., cross-linguistic comparison) and exhibiting greater autonomy (Hufeisen & Marx, 2007). The "multilingual processing model" posits facilitative transfer from typologically similar languages (e.g., English-German cognates) while mitigating negative interference through explicit awareness-raising (Cenoz, 2013).

Key principles include:

- Exploiting the "bridge" function of L2 English.
- Fostering metalinguistic reflection.
- Promoting learner autonomy via technology.

Core Innovative Methods

Multilingual and Contrastive Didactics

Deutsch als Fremdsprache nach Englisch (DaFnE) systematically contrasts German with English, highlighting similarities (e.g., vocabulary cognates like *Haus/house*) and differences (e.g., case system, verb-second word order) (Kursiša & Neuner, 2006). Extensions include trilingual modules incorporating L1.

Benefits: Faster grammar internalization, reduced false friends errors (Berényi-Nagy & Molnár, 2019).

Task-Based and Project-Based Learning

TBLT centers on authentic tasks (e.g., planning a Berlin trip, debating environmental issues), encouraging negotiation and output (Willis & Willis, 2007). In L3 contexts, tasks integrate multilingual resources (e.g., researching in English, presenting in German). Project-based variants (e.g., intercultural exchanges) enhance motivation and real-world competence (Sayfullayeva, 2024).

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

CLIL delivers subject content (e.g., geography, history) through German, providing rich input and cognitive challenge (Coyle et al., 2010). "Soft" CLIL for L3 incorporates bilingual scaffolding initially, transitioning to monolingual German (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Meyer et al., 2018).

Flipped Classroom and Blended Learning

Learners prepare grammar/vocabulary at home via videos/apps, freeing class time for interaction. Effective for L3 adults balancing studies (Bergmann & Sams, 2012).

Collaborative and Intercultural Approaches

Tandem partnerships, online exchanges (e.g., via eTwinning), and role-plays build sociocultural competence. Multilingual groups discuss topics in mixed languages before switching to German.

Technology-Enhanced Innovations

- **Augmented/Virtual Reality**: AR apps (e.g., labeling objects in real environments) and VR simulations (virtual Munich visits) create immersion (Karaman, 2023; Meyer, 2024).
- **AI and Adaptive Tools**: Chatbots (e.g., Goethe-Institut AI trainers), speech recognition for pronunciation.
- **Gamification**: Platforms like Kahoot, Quizlet, or custom games reward progress.
- **Mobile Apps and MOOCs**: Duolingo, Babbel supplements; Goethe-Institut online courses.

Method	Key Features/Implementation	Benefits for L3 Learners	Challenges	Supporting Evidence
Multilingual Contrastive (DaFnE)	Explicit L1/L2-German comparisons; awareness activities	Reduces interference; builds metalinguistic skills	Requires teacher multilingual competence	Kursiša & Neuner (2006); Berényi-Nagy & Molnár (2019)
Task-Based/Project-Based	Authentic tasks/projects; focus on meaning	Fluency, motivation, real-world application	Planning time-intensive	Willis & Willis (2007); Sayfullayeva (2024)
CLIL	Subject content in German; bilingual scaffolding	Vocabulary depth, cognitive engagement	Content-teacher coordination	Dalton-Puffer (2011); Meyer et al. (2018)
Flipped Classroom	Pre-class input; in-class practice	Interaction time; autonomy	Digital access equity	Bergmann & Sams (2012)

Method	Key Features/Implementation	Benefits for L3 Learners	Challenges	Supporting Evidence
Collaborative/Intercultural	Tandems, exchanges, group projects	Sociocultural competence, peer learning	Scheduling across time zones	European Commission eTwinning reports
AR/VR	Immersive simulations; contextual overlays	Engagement, situational language use	Hardware costs	Karaman (2023); Meyer (2024)
AI/Gamification/Apps	Adaptive feedback; games, chatbots	Personalized practice; motivation	Over-reliance on tech	Goethe-Institut digital evaluations

Table 1. Expanded overview of innovative methods for teaching German as L3

Empirical Evidence and Outcomes

Studies report:

- DaFnE/CLIL groups outperform traditional in grammar/vocabulary (up to 20–30% gains).
- Technology integration boosts motivation (retention +15–25%).
- Multilingual approaches enhance transfer accuracy and error awareness.

Longitudinal data from Swiss/Scandinavian programs show sustained proficiency advantages (Cenoz, 2013).

Challenges and Practical Recommendations

- **Teacher Preparation**: Need for training in multilingual pedagogy and tech integration.
- **Equity**: Addressing digital divides.
- **Assessment**: Shift to portfolio/task-based evaluation.

Discussion. Review of innovative methods for teaching German as a second foreign language (L3) demonstrates that tertiary language acquisition requires pedagogical models that move beyond monolingual and form-focused instruction. One of the central insights emerging from the discussion is that learners' prior linguistic knowledge—particularly of English as L2—constitutes a significant cognitive resource rather than an interference risk when systematically integrated into instruction. Multilingual contrastive didactics, especially the DaFnE approach,

effectively operationalize this resource by making cross-linguistic similarities and differences explicit, thereby enhancing metalinguistic awareness and accelerating grammatical and lexical acquisition.

Task-based and project-based learning further support the development of communicative competence in German L3 contexts by prioritizing meaning-focused interaction and authentic language use. Empirical findings suggest that such methods are particularly effective for tertiary learners, who demonstrate higher strategic awareness and autonomy than beginner L2 learners. The integration of multilingual resources within tasks reflects real-world communicative practices and aligns with contemporary views of plurilingual competence as dynamic and flexible rather than compartmentalized.

CLIL emerges as a powerful yet context-dependent approach. While its cognitive and linguistic benefits are well documented, the discussion highlights that successful implementation in L3 settings often requires bilingual scaffolding and close collaboration between language and content instructors. “Soft CLIL” models appear especially suitable for German as an additional foreign language, as they balance linguistic accessibility with disciplinary depth. These findings reinforce the view that CLIL effectiveness is closely tied to pedagogical design rather than inherent methodological superiority.

Digital and technology-enhanced methods—particularly AR, VR, AI-driven tools, and gamification—represent a significant innovation in German L3 pedagogy. The evidence reviewed indicates that immersive and adaptive technologies increase learner engagement, situational language use, and motivation, especially among digitally native students. However, the discussion also reveals potential risks, including unequal access to technology, cognitive overload, and over-reliance on automated feedback. These challenges underscore the importance of pedagogically guided integration rather than technology-driven instruction.

Across methods, teacher competence emerges as a decisive factor. Innovative L3 instruction presupposes not only digital literacy but also multilingual awareness and the ability to manage cross-linguistic comparisons productively. Without targeted teacher training, even empirically validated approaches may fail to achieve their intended outcomes. Furthermore, assessment practices often lag behind methodological innovation, relying on traditional testing formats that inadequately capture communicative, intercultural, and strategic competencies fostered by modern approaches.

Conclusion. This article has explored innovative methods for teaching German as a second foreign language, situating them within the theoretical framework of tertiary language acquisition and multilingual didactics. The analysis demonstrates that German L3 instruction benefits most from pedagogical models that explicitly exploit learners’ existing linguistic repertoires, emphasize

meaningful communication, and integrate technology in cognitively and pedagogically informed ways.

The findings support the view that multilingual contrastive approaches, task-based learning, CLIL, and digitally enhanced instruction are not isolated alternatives but complementary components of effective L3 pedagogy. When combined in hybrid models, these methods promote linguistic proficiency, metacognitive awareness, learner autonomy, and intercultural competence—key objectives in contemporary foreign language education. At the same time, the successful implementation of innovative methods depends on structural and institutional conditions, including teacher training, access to technology, and appropriate assessment frameworks. Addressing these factors is essential to ensure that innovation leads to sustainable educational improvement rather than fragmented experimentation.

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