



German as Foreign Language Insight into the Teaching Units in Switzerland

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Language is the mode of identity and recognition. Summer learning programs are essential in helping children and young people interact and develop solid ethical bonds in different communities. The study aims to determine the effectiveness and applicability of the teaching model or approach adopted by the schools in Switzerland in teaching and learning German as a foreign language. The study adopts a case study approach to choose a summer language course program under the Swiss boarding School Montana. A qualitative approach has been employed to gauge the effectiveness of teaching German as a foreign language in the Swiss boarding school in Montana. Results: The study reviews Communicative Language Theory (CLT) and explores the designed curriculum for teaching German as a foreign language (GFL). It is revealed that the teachers developed their activities through the communicative activities described by CLT. The study concludes that adopting pre-communicative activities as a part of the teaching method is more effective in learning German as a foreign language.

Keywords: Communicative Language Theory, language immersion programs, foreign language, Swiss curricula, German teaching units, summer learning program

INTRODUCTION

Language is the most intellectual mode of communication in any country. Every country's state requires a different mode of communication according to its society (Stein et al., 2012, p.458-465). The concept of multilingualism in many countries has enriched the essence of learning and teaching in the world. Its significance can be validated by studying the connotation between language and education. Summer learning programs are essential in helping children and young people achieve better and desired outcomes—students who attended summer programs benefitted by performing well in their classes. There was much higher attendance in the second summer classes, in which they improved academically and socio-emotionally. Foreign language learning is characterized by aptitude, perseverance, and the ability to understand (Carroll, 1999,

Citation: Güntensperger, A., & Asali-van der Wal, R. (2024). German as foreign language insight into the teaching units in Switzerland. *International Journal of Instruction*, 17(2), 185-198. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2024.17211a>

p.337-388). According to the study (Rintaningrum, 2018), Carroll's model of Foreign Language is one of the significant projects.

Requirement of foreign language

Foreign language comprehension is associated with understanding the instructions and grasping the learning task (Rintaningrum, 2018). Many studies focused on learning foreign languages to value the importance of language. Ware et al. (2017, p.42) claim that learning a foreign language can help individuals improve their cognitive functioning. Moreover, Kousaie and Phillips (2017, p. 23-35) state that learning a foreign language helps to increase an individual's self-esteem and socialization. However (Bialystok et al., 2016, p.56-60) emphasize that intervention programs to learn a foreign language shall be arranged at all levels according to the individual's needs and help increase their self-esteem and confidence.

Language culture in Switzerland

Switzerland has encountered the co-existence of four linguistically diverse communities and has applied the principles of territoriality and subsidiarity to consolidate national cohesion (Lundberg, 2019, p.101244). However, the Swiss cultural identity is pride in linguistic pluralism and regional diversity. It resounds largely with advice (Bianco, 2017, pp. 31-48) that 'multilingualism should be centrally linked with shared communication, economic and civic betterment, and social cohesion. However, (Lundberg, 2020) assumes that if a political entity of a country, like Switzerland, is multilingual, then the population is also multilingual. Lundberg (2019) stated that multilingualism, capabilities in the registers of different linguistic codes, is a critical element of the Swiss national culture. It is also deep-seated in the national education system on an overt policy level. In reality, multilingualism in individuals is one of the principal objectives in current Swiss curricula for secondary and primary schooling, which is majorly achieved through learning and teaching a foreign language.

Language policy development

Language policy is never developed and implemented in a historical, social, or political vacuum (Kirsch, 2018, p. 444-476). The language policy landscape of the particular setting, in the present case of German-speaking Switzerland, needs to be explored. Learning and teaching language in a multilingual state like Switzerland are significant. Notably, four national languages have been constitutionally declared, i.e., Italian, German, French, and Romansh. The official languages are part of schooling. In Switzerland, education is a matter of cantonal competence.

(a) CDIP-EDK: The Standing Conference of Cantonal Education Ministers (CDIP-EDK) repeatedly issues recommendations on numerous aspects of the educational and curriculum goals, including foreign language education, which are recognized by the 26 cantons. In line with Switzerland's decentralized and federalist structure, the organization of schools falls within the remit of the cantons, and a large amount of the autonomy is assigned to the municipalities. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) coordinates the work of the cantons through international agreements and recommendations. Before HamoS (EDK, 2007), the large-scale

innovation and harmonization process in national education came into effect on 1 August 2009.

(b) Education Curricula of Switzerland: There are 26 education curricula for each canton. However, some curricula are practically implemented

- Le plan d'études romand for western
- French-speaking Switzerland
- Il piano di studio for southern
- Italian-speaking Switzerland
- Lehrplan 21 for central and eastern
- German-speaking Switzerland

The benefit of teaching second-language

Many benefits were highlighted when the second language Programme was introduced to students to communicate on an expanding horizon, whether with another community within their country or outside. This opens up new frontiers to them and enables them to observe, explore, and investigate them. It helps them be prepared to work at a global level. This program comprises all the activities like reading, writing, listening, speaking, and mediation (Jonathan, 2022). It does not develop language competencies like a native speaker but aims to develop functional language skills. More specifically, Figure 1 exhibits various levels of language learning objectives that need to be coordinated and arranged based on the requirement.

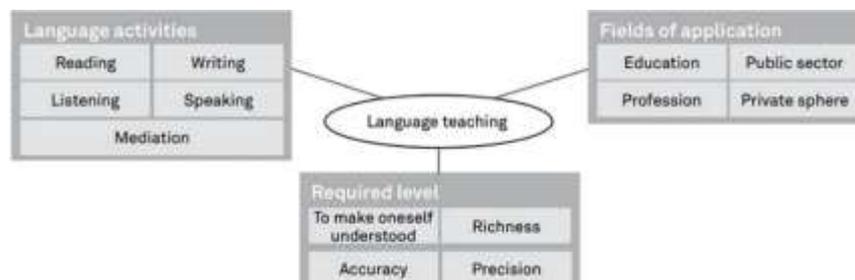


Figure 1
Objectives of learning a language that needs coordination and adjustment (Hutterli et al., 2012).

Swiss-German language expansion

The German language is spoken in 17 cantons of Switzerland, making this language the most spoken one there. The dialects used in Swiss German are used widely to communicate every day. It is widely used as a communication source in different parts of the world and is not confined to German nations. For example, in Eastern Europe, German has become the business language (Samardzic et al., 2016).

This study is the first to investigate the teaching methods adopted by schools in Switzerland to motivate children in heterogeneous groups to learn German as a foreign language. The study aims to determine the effectiveness and applicability of the teaching model or approach adopted by the schools in Switzerland in teaching and learning German as a foreign language. The study contributes to the knowledge about foreign language teaching and learning in Switzerland. Therefore, the study has developed two research questions.

Q1. How effective is Switzerland's teaching model or approach in teaching and learning German as a foreign language?

Q2. What is the applicability of Switzerland's teaching model or approach in teaching and learning German as a foreign language?

Literature Review

Communicative language theory

The Communicative Language Teaching method is one of the most essential and practical teaching and learning theories (Rahman, et al., 2018). Although many foreign language instructors aim to include the CLT technique as much as possible in their classrooms, many teachers still do not understand how to correctly manage and implement the strategy for their students (Dos Santos, 2020, p. 104-109). The CLT approach can be used in conjunction with a variety of classroom activities and tools, including discussion (Dos Santos, 2017, p. 255-265), group sharing (Sevy-Biloon, 2018), problem-based learning (Haliwanda, 2021), and even role-play learning (Haliwanda, 2021; Tweedie & Johnson, 2018). However, other scholars (Wotring, et al., 2021, p. 57-72) claim that instructors may utilize CLT to build and design curricula and syllabuses. For instance, many supported that social learning terms interpersonal and intercultural interactions were as important as learning grammar and vocabulary (Caligiuri, 2017).

CLT's essence is based on the consideration that learners are communicators capable of learning language naturally. The CLT approach provides a vast range of flexibilities and opportunities that both teachers and learners can exercise from time to time. It is not just a Western concept but also a 'universal effort that has found inspiration and direction in the interaction of initiative, both theoretical and applied in many different contexts (Chabert, 2020).

Blended learning program

Blended learning is implemented, which is not very different, particularly in the case of foreign language teaching/learning and particularly in the case of German Foreign Language (GFL), where pros and cons balance each other (Florin, 2015). In contrast, Pugliese (2016) states that blended learning arrangement in Italy shows higher degrees of learning success than traditional classroom learning, at least in vocabulary, grammar, reading, and listening comprehension. Moradimokhles and Hwang (2022) inspected the impact of blended learning in comparison with online learning in enhancing English language skills. The researcher divided the participants into three groups and assigned

instruction through a communicative approach, online, and blended learning techniques, respectively. The results show that the blended learning technique is more effective in comparison with the other two methods (Moradimokhles & Hwang, 2022). Ginaya et al. (2018) attempted to provide a comprehensive result of the effect of blended learning by using WebQuest. This application will modify the typical communicative or online approach to teaching English language skills. 51 participants were recruited to collect data. T-test and analysis of covariance was performed to determine any statistical significance of the blended teaching tactics on the language skills of students. The results revealed that English-speaking ability improved to a great extent as well as their learning motivation (Ginaya, 2018).

Compact course designing

The language course design has always been complex and compact for teachers who face difficulties communicating with children to learn a foreign language. A stimulating and age-appropriate learning environment must be created for the children. Moreover, motivating and competence-oriented tasks and forms of work must be developed for teaching children.

German as a foreign language

The pragmatic approaches received in German as a foreign language (GFL) were the goal of comprehensive written and oral communication skills in GFL didactics. One of the most recognized projects, "The Swiss Boarding School Montana" offers international training programs under "Learn, Grow, Move, and Meet." The students receive individual support and modern training in a familiar and international atmosphere. Summer schools for residents and foreigners are organized here every year.

This school aims to offer language immersion programs in German and English, with a wide range of activities, such as sports, music, cooking, creativity, arts, science and technology, business and leadership, culture nights, cultural visits, dine-out options, Community Games, Team Competitions and Comedian. The German course adapts to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. It focuses on the language use, reception, and production of texts and linguistic activities.

It also focuses on communicative language processes, declarative knowledge (savoir), socio-cultural knowledge, intercultural understanding, procedural knowledge (savoir-faire), personality-related competence (savoir-être), and ability to learn (savoir-apprendre). Didactic principles are devised, managed, and implemented to manage the aims efficiently in an educational setting. These principles are linked with specific tactical educational tasks in formative-informative correlations. It arouses students' involvement in learning, acquisition of knowledge, generating new skills, and self-actualization (Makhkamova & Amirkulov, 2020).

According to Moeller and Catalano (2015), teaching and learning foreign languages have changed from teacher-centered to student-centered with time. Modern times of educators have devised strategies to teach in environments. Now the students are fully involved and find their surrounding environment interactive and learn through interactively communicative tasks. This shift in the pedagogy of teaching foreign

languages has changed the role of a teacher from being authoritative to becoming a facilitator or a guide. The standard language is used in schools, and the use of traditional German is specified for writing. However, the German spoken in Switzerland is known as medial diglossia. The dialects of Swiss German are orally found. In addition, in Switzerland, as in Europe more generally, each citizen is authorized to learn two other languages in school alongside the local, national language according to the Switzerland Languages Act (EDK, 2007). This approach in Switzerland and Wider Europe is seen as a means to safeguarding and promoting linguistic and cultural diversity. However, knowing different languages helps in communicating with various language groups and enhances mutual understanding, fostering tolerance of other cultures.

Based on the communicative learning theory, the above curriculum is designed for learning German as a foreign language in Switzerland schools. Therefore, the teachers can prepare plenty of pre-communicative activities, considering pupils have various cultural, religious, and age backgrounds.

The present study aims to analyze the suitability of employing a blended teaching method for motivating children to learn the German language in summer learning programs. The objective is to emphasize the idea of teaching German in Switzerland. Furthermore, the study comprises of qualitative case study, aiming to fill the theory with best practice techniques.

METHOD

Study design, sample, and setting

The study case approach content analysis in Summer Language Course Program under Swiss Boarding School Montana. The course enrolled pupils with different individual backgrounds and different origins (cultural, religious, level, and age-related) from different countries (Australia, Spain, Russia, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Hungary, USA, China, etc.) and who had no previous knowledge of German. The learners are aged between 10-15 years. The course aimed to promote the competencies, i.e., vocabulary, grammar, and phonetics, aspects of regional studies, intercultural aspects, free communication, discussion, etc. The learners were not only supported collectively in small groups but also individually. The summer school management included the parents' participation in the educational measures (Parents Welcome Day), as they attested to a positive impression and good Swissness at Montana. Quality management was ensured by "connectedness", "belongingness", "voice and choice", "competence", and "safety."

School climate

A good school climate is based on a culture of recognition and cooperation. The good relationships in summer school are essentially based on the feelings of everyone involved and how they are being taken seriously in what is important and meaningful to them. A sense of togetherness is a core dimension of a good relationship that makes life in an institution easier and promotes fulfilling its mission. At the end of the summer session, the group demonstrated a medium-level potential. It was given differentiated

assessment tasks (“inventing stories with the specified vocabulary,” “adding missing letters”) as well as essays on the topic “Montana - how I experienced you” or “Switzerland - my dream country.”

Study flow and its mapping

Course content

The summer language course covered various types of text (summaries, reports, dialogues), individual grammar topics relevant to the study (auxiliary verbs, complete verbs, present tense, future tense, articles, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, etc.), and various forms of oral communication (arguing and discussing).

In the language course, different subject areas were presented that allowed the participants to specifically improve their language skills in German, such as introduction, professions, activities, hobbies, favorite food, in the city, on the market, in the restaurant, in the hotel, in the course room, in German lessons, in Switzerland and why to learn German? The varied and active lessons emphasized the independent handling of spoken texts (authentic interviews, radio and TV programs, radio plays, literary scenes, films), also with written texts (e.g., newspaper articles, contributions, literary texts), as well as oral and written texts to train expression. The German lessons were structured and varied; the learning objectives were formulated.

Integration of participants

The projects were then lectured on or presented in the plenary session. On the first summer session, placement tests were conducted. After the placement test, the learners were divided into two groups: German for Beginners (“Toblerone”) and German Intermediate (“Zuckerberg”). On the second day, the performance requirements were made clear. On the last day of the course, the participants wrote a dictation and a quiz as a self-learning control. The activity aimed to show them to what extent they had achieved the course objectives and what they should have continued to practice through reading, listening, and speaking strategies. Every day, at the end of the lesson, there was five-finger feedback (written or oral): “What was new in the lesson? What did I like? Why? What do I find interesting / not interesting? What do I want to do in the next lesson?” In addition, the pupils have put together a list of favorite words.

Interactive student–teacher session

The classrooms were appealing, language-enhancing, methodologically instructive, and informative. The teachers and the “Head of Summer Session” provided the tools: basic materials, sources, aids, media, and teaching aids. Bilingual dictionaries were also integral to the teaching units (English, Russian, Spanish, and Arabic). In addition, basic things, such as name cards, class posters, praise cards, etc., could be prepared before the course. A mascot is chosen to establish the “we-feeling,” strengthen the team spirit, and promote belonging to a group.

Introduction of Mascot and Globi

The mascot promotes a clear separation of the mother tongue and the target language during the course. At the start of the course in Montana, the class mascot, Globi, was

introduced. A mascot usually describes a lucky charm for a group of people. Globi (see Figure 2) is the most successful Swiss children's book character who always accompanies the children in summer school. He is a parrot person with a blue body, yellow beak, beret, and red and black checked pants.



Figure 2
The summer school mascot named Globi

The course participants have put together the “rules of sound” list with administrative measures as socio-organizational goals to ensure the lessons run smoothly. If these rules were not observed, “yellow cards” (with grammatical exercises) were given. Following were the laws of the class:

1. The primacy of the word “respect”: priority!
2. Do not disturb or shout in class, but show decent behavior toward others
3. Learn to handle the furniture quietly and adequately
4. Take care of school materials and facilities.

At the end of the lesson, help tidy up or put the classroom in order, supply your materials and dictionaries, leave the table clean, and apologize (for delay or other disruptions).

FINDINGS

The data was gathered and analyzed through the document analysis method. The documents were extracted from the summer language course which includes, summaries, reports, dialogues, as well as individual grammar topics relevant to the study such as auxiliary verbs, complete verbs, present tense, future tense, articles, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, etc., and various forms of oral communication such as arguing and discussing. Such documents have been a significant source for conducting qualitative studies. Several studies, reports, and articles have mentioned document analysis as a part of the methodology (Kayesa & Shung-King, 2021). Documents are substitutes for things researchers cannot observe directly (Azungah, 2018).

Syllabus for the study of the German language

The syllabus of the German language comprises a set of instructions. Complete freedom is allowed for opting for teaching material. The competence level has been categorized

into two parts parallel to the two education sections at the secondary level. Two levels of the German language are:

The first level of knowledge of German - A1

The aim of teaching and learning German as a second foreign language is determined by four basic skills:

1. **Reading:** In this learning phase, people learn to read different types of text, i.e., dialogue, advertisement, interviews, television and radio programs, folder pages of books, notices, cassettes, CDS, lexica, and articles in a dictionary. It also includes forms for reading, short stories, poems, menus, pictures, novels, personal and email letters, newspaper columns, and authentic texts carrying information.
2. **Listening:** People comprehend multiple texts in the German language globally via direct or indirect sources. Mainly, the information is related to tourism, such as travel agencies, post offices, railways, airports, etc. Activities are organized, aiming to acquire the skill of listening. People are tasked to grasp the instructor's questions and directions. During this phase, students can understand the image's link with the text. They also comprehend the authentic dialogues between two or more persons.
3. **Speaking:** Students have acquired such levels of understanding, which enable them to realize the speaking ways mentioned above in the content. Students have to regenerate the patterns of phonics and intonation correctly. They enquire about each other related to the themes and phenomena they have already dealt with. Short announcements are made under discussion. They demonstrate various behavioral patterns such as body language, distancing, mimics, and gestures amid interactions.
4. **Writing:** Students are required to use suitable keywords to fill in the texts that have been read or heard by the student before. They have to fill out the form, write on greeting cards, and inscribe brief personal announcements. Vocabulary cards are provided, and people are asked to write authentic photos and images.

The second level of knowledge of German - A2

The aims and objectives of German as a foreign language have been established based on four fundamental skills.

1. **Reading:** The act of training the comprehension of global text is continued. Reading of selected content is advanced through the emphasis on specific areas. The texts books are increased in the form of complexity. Students understand the roles and standards of communication of various kinds of text and are asked to identify the relation between text and image. Moreover, the task of correlating the title and main ideas of the text is assigned. Additionally, a hypothesis is built and further examined by the students.
2. **Listening:** Students are required to distinguish the communicative roles of different text types. The students take out the meaning of the specified information points in complicated types of texts, i.e., news, short reports, and interviews. The task of

recognizing the judgments and opinions is delegated, and the students are supposed to grasp the routine communication on topics like youth clubs and travel agencies.

3. **Speaking:** In this phase, pupils can recognize their statements and how to speak based on the content that has been made available. The formulation of a short text is required to respond to a verbal or visual propensity. They also rephrase the tales, and through the images, they narrate self-created stories. Face-to-face and telephonic conversations are included in it. Interviews are taken while using anticipated non-verbal communication.
4. **Writing:** During this phase of learning, students are supposed to fill in complex forms and inscribe greetings and invitations, personal letters, telegrams, and emails. Moreover, personal letters carry critical types of information and concrete facts.

DISCUSSION

In Switzerland, every year, language immersion programs are offered by summer schools for the locals and foreigners that host language learning programs in English and German. The study found that these programs are designed to build competencies and persistence. According to the curriculum, the study found that enabling the students to handle spoken texts, interviews, TV and radio programs, literary scenes, and films are practical tools in teaching language in Switzerland. This finding aligns with Rintaningrum (2018) results, which state that learning a foreign language is characterized by aptitude, perseverance, and the ability to understand. Aptitude: The student acquires expertise and aptitude in a specific learning objective of the study. The students more likely to have more aptitude have a higher tendency to learn fast than those with low aptitude. Perseverance: The time desired by a student to contribute to mastery of a learning objective. Ability to understand: Interest and intellectual discipline are elements that help the student learn and earn.

This is in line with the goal and objective of ‘communicative language theory’ by Eisenring and Margana (2019), which states that pre-communicative activities should be designed to motivate the learners to produce a language that places less attention on conveying meaning. These kinds of activities are categorized as functional activities by CLT. Moreover, the analysis of the study also found that different subject matters are included to sharpen German language skills, i.e., introduction, activities, favorite foods, hobbies, etc. Reading comprehension, processing of texts, vocabulary discrepancies, and verbal and written summaries are part of integrated teaching. The courses are not confined to classroom activities; an environment is provided for the students to visit the medical library for research purposes.

The analysis of the findings this account these types of activities are termed as socially interactive as described by Lundberg (2019), which shows that actions that are planned outside the classroom help the learners to develop social interactions and share the information that is necessary to do while learning a foreign language. This finding is also in line with Maican and Cocorada’s (2021) blended method in second learning. The study found that one of the main features of language teaching in Switzerland is appealing, promotive, and systemic.

That is the classroom setting that has well-executed, devised standards and norms. The study's purpose was to determine the effectiveness and applicability of the teaching model or approach. Implementing communicative language theory in plurilingual settings where students from different cultures are included was evident. How the classrooms in Switzerland have been constructed also contributes to encouraging the children to participate actively. Students do not appreciate language learning through online platforms after COVID-19 (Maican & Cocorada, 2021). The study by Bailey (2022) recommended that if English as a foreign language instructors use learner-learner interactions, such interactions significantly influence course outcome beliefs when using videoconferencing tools effectively in the post-COVID-19 era. The classroom infrastructure is more appealing, interactive, and informative. Online medium of Instruction presents a new model to the instructors to recreate and modify the content, particularly in disciplines where instructors are hassled to provide an attractive learning experience for students in the subject of language.

LIMITATION

A qualitative approach has been employed to gauge the effectiveness of teaching German as a foreign language in the Swiss boarding school in Montana. Hence, it provided the model's efficacy but lacked the different insights and the ratio of successful language learner's, quantifiable data.

CONCLUSION

The study emphasized the improvement of language learning abilities in summer learning programs in Switzerland particularly in learning German. The language teaching programs in Switzerland are far more effective where an interactive and creative environment is provided to the students. There is a greater emphasis on vocabulary practice, general conversation, and formal communication. The instructors and teachers have been encouraged to use blended learning teaching techniques for improvement in the German language. However, the tactics presented in this study can be implemented diversely to learn other languages. The study concludes that adopting pre-communicative activities as a part of the teaching method is more effective in learning German as a foreign language. In future studies, the mixed method can be adopted as a holistic approach to explore and compare the success ratio of the language learners and their level of competency while adopting different teaching models like the didactic model, etc.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author declares no competing interest.

FUNDING

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author acknowledges all the associated personnel, who, in any reference contributed to the completion of this study.

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