

*La Didactique du français langue étrangère:  
tradition et innovation – from Theory to Practice  
in Teaching Foreign Languages*

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One of the most interesting and useful publications in the field of teaching foreign languages is *La Didactique du français langue étrangère: tradition et innovation*, published by Tiparg, in 2011. Its author, Corina-Amelia GEORGESCU, attempts at approaching a wide range of topics out of which most are suitable not only for French, but also for other foreign languages. The book mainly relies on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* which is at present the “authority” in the field of teaching and learning foreign languages.

The book is divided in ten consistent parts and it may serve to the teachers who are at the beginning of their career as well as to more experienced teachers who may find in it interesting suggestions to improve their work. Thus, the first chapter defines the frame of the task-oriented approach by explaining its key concepts. The author clearly states the objectives of the didactics and presents the importance of its relation with psychology as the act of teaching is influenced by factors such as: the learners’ age, motivation, cultural background, their objectives, needs and expectations and so on. The aspects regarded as

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having a greater impact on the quality of the teaching act are the relation between the learner's mother language and the foreign language and the one between the learner and the teacher.

The next chapter of the book is related to a highly debated topic lately: should we teach taking into account the learning objectives or the skills? There have been opinions for and against both of them; that is why, there has been some kind of confusion especially among the younger teachers. The author explains the importance of each approach as well as their way of interaction; it is made clear that in order to acquire a skill, one must have well-defined learning objectives. There are some useful examples on how a skill can be built dwelling on more different learning objectives. The chapter also includes a part about how foreign languages are included in the Romanian curricula, being a part of the Language and Communication Area where the mother language finds its place, too.

Considering lesson plan designing a very important step for the success of the teaching activity, the author decides to illustrate it in a very detailed way; beginning with the types of classes a teacher may use according to the main activity (teaching, practising, assessing), the chapter shows the relation between the planning documents and the way in which a teacher can organize his/her activity to obtain the best possible results. Planning is shown as a key factor for a successful teaching as well as a step facilitating the learners' acquiring different skills. In order to support these ideas, at the end of the book, the examples of lesson planning may help one create and design his/her lesson plans (See Annex no. 2).

The next two chapters (*The Teaching Aids* and *The Teaching Methods and Strategies*) are not specific to teaching French; they may apply to teaching any foreign language too. The chapter on teaching methods and strategies describes all the methods used along the time to teach languages (beginning with the traditional methods such as the grammar-translation approach to the latest ones). The author chooses an interesting manner of presenting different teaching strategies by showing both their advantages and their disadvantages in order to allow the reader make the best decision according to his/her objectives. In fact, this is one of the most stimulating ways to present different teaching aspects as the reader is invited to think of the material proposed by the author and make his/her own choices based on the information he/she is given. For instance, to facilitate the choice of a textbook, there is a guide on how to choose a good textbook taking into account different criteria, at the end of the book.

Chapter VI presents the user's/learner's skills and focuses on presenting them according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*; they are defined and classified into general versus communication skills (the latter falling into three different categories: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic). As far as the linguistic skills are concerned, the book includes distinct sub-chapters on how to develop, for instance, the vocabulary or the grammar skills. The explanations follow a certain logical framework as each section involves: general principles to teach a language area, for example vocabulary, some specific learning objectives and different types of activities enabling the development of each skill.

The following chapter deals with an overview of the communication techniques (both oral and written). They are seen from two points of view: listening and speaking on one hand and reading and writing on the other hand. In order to practise these types of skills, the work suggests, for instance, a specific way of approaching listening documents, as well as written texts. In order to maximize the results, a number of activities which may help acquire and develop the respective skill are included. A special section on games and how they may be used during the foreign language class is more than welcome nowadays when a teacher is supposed to adjust his/her teaching according to his/her students and game is a pleasant way to motivate almost everybody.

Chapter VIII focuses on how to teach the French culture and civilization taking into account different useful authentic documents; the examples chosen aim at presenting how magazine articles, songs or pictures may be used. The author considers important to show the relationship between intercultural facts and literature as well as the relationship between intercultural facts and identity. These are important issues in the nowadays globalizing context especially for France where there have been a number of problems lately and especially because the French contemporary culture lays stress on an intercultural mix. Literature is seen from two different perspectives: first and above all, it is a way of getting accustomed to the culture of the Other; secondly, it is a support for teaching as well as any other type of text or document. Teaching literature during the foreign language classes is warmly advised and even advocated.

*L'évaluation en classe de FLE (Assessing during the Class of French as a Foreign Language)* is a chapter focusing on concepts which are mostly used by pedagogy (types of assessment, functions of the evaluation, evaluation forms and strategies). In spite of the overview of everything evaluation means, a special emphasis is laid on the types of

evaluation proposed by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* by presenting their peculiarities - out of the means of evaluation, the Portfolio is regarded as a continuous activity, offering one a picture about the learner's progress.

The final chapter is appropriate for all those who are involved in research as it includes suggestions on how to achieve a work on a given topic. There is also a section on how to design option courses especially by taking into account different factors such as the learners' age or motivation.

At the end of the book, there are a number of helpful documents on diverse topics such as Romanian official documents on teaching, a writing guide, a questionnaire on learners' attitudes towards French, criteria to take into account when choosing textbooks for foreign languages.

By the way it is structured, by the richness of its information as well as by the precision of the examples, Corina-Amelia Georgescu's book *La Didactique du français langue étrangère: tradition et innovation* becomes an easy reading facilitating teachers' best results in their teaching career.

