Review article

Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in Germany: a personal overview of developments in research

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Introduction

There is an unavoidable dilemma in any attempt to put together an overview of the research results for one subject within a discipline. A subject area is either so small that the overview is straightforward but perhaps of interest to only a few, or the subject area is much wider – in which case there is the inevitable danger that the overview will be relatively subjective. This means that some activities may be disregarded while others are given more emphasis than another observer of the subject might have considered appropriate. For example, I have not included the teaching of literature, a complex subject with its own rich research tradition. Being fully aware of both the risks and the advantages of subjectivity, I present this very personal view of foreign language learning and teaching in Germany.

The developments sketched out in this paper refer almost exclusively to the "former Federal Republic of Germany". Re-unification in 1990 meant that two radically different research traditions came together. The development of the *Sprachlehrforschung* tradition in West Germany would not have been possible without reference to developments in the English-speaking countries, whereas the developments in methodology and didactics in the GDR followed those in the soviet countries. Developments in the former GDR are not described here because of lack of space. The same holds true for the developments in the other German-speaking countries.

In this paper I have decided to look at language teaching and learning as a whole. It would also have been possible to look at the individual didactic approaches in, for instance, German as a Foreign Language, English, French and so on, as a starting point for this overview. There are impulses common to the approaches but they are also partially ignorant of one another, and this would have necessitated an even more extensive analysis section than is already the case. For readers who are interested in subject-specific didactic developments relating to one particular foreign language and its learning and teaching, I would recommend the following single-language teaching methodologies: for German as a Foreign Language, Henrici & Riemer (1994), Rösler (1994), or Storch (1999); for English, Timm (1998) and for French, Leupold (2002). There are larger volumes dealing with the context under discussion: Bausch, Christ & Krumm (2004) *Handbuch Fremdsprachenunterricht* (Handbook of Foreign Language Teaching); Jung (2001) *Praktische Handreichung für Fremdsprachenlehrer* (Practical Aids for Foreign Language Teachers) and the two-volume international handbook *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* by Helbig, Götze, Henrici & Krumm (2001).

My overview will begin with a brief historical perspective and summarise the position of the research into the learning and teaching of foreign languages in Germany. Then I will pay special attention to some of the main points. In addition to the research activities which will be described in greater detail, there are numerous relevant research works in the fields of "foreign language policies" and "teacher training". For reasons of space, a detailed description cannot be given here. I would like to refer the interested reader to several publications, namely, Christ (1991), Meißner (1993), and Gnutzmann (2000) for the field of foreign language policies, and Zydatiß (1998), Königs (2001), Königs & Zoefgen (2002), and Bausch, Königs & Krumm (2003) for the field of teacher training. Here, too, other members of the research community might have emphasised different aspects. Finally, I will suggest perspectives for the further development of the research and for possible research topics.

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Historical review of the research

It would not be appropriate in this review to go back too far in history; nevertheless a consideration of the roots of some current trends will be helpful. At the turn of the 19th/20th century a fairly intensive scientific debate about foreign language teaching issues began; this was the time of the reform movement in foreign language teaching. Even before that,

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the history of foreign language teaching provides us with many and diverse documents which show that the debate about the learning and teaching of foreign languages was not new (c.f. the seven-volume documentation by Christ & Rang 1985: the documentation by Schröder in several volumes 1980ff). I will begin my brief historical review in the nineteen-seventies because this emphasises a clear break that occurred at that time.

With the publication by Corder and Selinker of the first works on error analysis and interlanguage, an important reorientation of both the content and structure of language teaching methodology began in Germany. Until that time, foreign language teaching and learning methodology could be characterised as a kind of prescription or recipe, i.e. teaching should be planned and guided on the basis of more or less firmly established experience. A decisive change in direction then took place, triggered by the publications already mentioned, and above all by the works of Corder (1967) and Selinker (1972): the focus of research was directed towards learning processes that until then had been considered inaccessible. Thus a research direction began to be established which sees as its basic task empirically based research into foreign language teaching and learning processes.

The methodological standard of this new discipline was expounded in conceptual papers (c.f. for example Bausch, 1974: Koordinierungsgremium, 1977: 1983). Its goal was not only to research foreign language teaching systematically and empirically but also to regard the processes taking place there as genuine and unique. In this tradition, the results and findings from research on second language acquisition outside the classroom are seen as having little relevance for foreign language teaching. There is a view of foreign language teaching as the crystallisation point where a multiplicity of factors come together and interact, thus forming the basis for this discrete field of research (Koordinierungsgremium, 1983; attempt to give a detailed list of the factors that constitute foreign language teaching, e.g., Königs, 1983).

In order to distinguish this research field from that of traditional foreign language teaching methodology, not only from the point of view of the concept but also of the terminology, the term *Sprachlehrforschung* was established. This term comes very close to the meaning of the British term "Applied Linguistics", understood as the chief contribution of linguistics to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. At the same time, however, structural changes were also put in place: the universities in Bochum and Hamburg offered courses in *Sprachlehrforschung* and gave students an intensive introduction to the research on language learning and teaching and provided topics for final dissertations (Magister, Doctorate) (c.f. an earlier overview Bausch, Königs & Kogelheide,1986). In other universities, too, many departmental chairs were given the title of *Sprachlehrforschung*, instead of the "old" *Fremdsprachendidaktik*.

The transition process from the traditional *Fremdsprachendidaktik* to the very differently oriented *Sprachlehrforschung* was anything but smooth (Königs, 2000 gives a comprehensive outline). It was influenced by the discussion which began at the end of the seventies/beginning of the eighties on the subject of pedagogical grammars. In Germany this discussion led to a decisive rejection of linguistics as the dominant influence on descriptions of grammar for school and teaching use (c.f. for instance the contributions in Bausch, 1979a). The point was not to completely negate the importance of linguistics for foreign language teaching but rather to emphasise the fact that linguistics was and is just one – if a very important one – research field from which important insights can be gained for the creation of an appropriate model for foreign language teaching and learning processes. This trend argues strongly against the unquestioning and unrevised adoption of linguistic descriptions in and for foreign language teaching and also argues quite understandably against models which modify linguistic descriptions by means of a didactic filter (c.f. Bausch, 1979b).

The friction created by opposing directions and currents nourishes defining processes such as those that *Sprachlehrforschung* has gone through since the middle of the 1970s. This opposing position developed – and this is particularly interesting – less from the traditional *Fremdsprachendidaktik* but rather from research into second language acquisition. This also experienced a boom in the 1970s, not least as a reaction to the language issues raised by the rapidly increasing number of foreign workers in Germany. Very soon the demand arose for the development of a (more) comprehensive theory of second language acquisition based on the German literature on the subject and the international discussions taking place at the same time. In other words, empirical findings formed the basis for an enormous range of theoretical approaches and fundamental principles: theoretical approaches were developed from the interpretation of the data on natural, i.e., outside the classroom, second and foreign language acquisition. These approaches were regarded as being valid for foreign language teaching, although the data for these interpretations were seldom or never obtained from foreign language teaching.

As examples of this kind of approach, the work of Felix (1982) can be cited. Felix based his work on, amongst others, the Morpheme Order Studies of Dulay and Burt, and working from the theoretical potential in the Studies, postulated a completely revised theory and practice of foreign language teaching which he thought should be based more on "natural" language acquisition. In view of the claims of *Sprachlehrforschung* mentioned above, the battle

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lines were thus drawn and led to sometimes polemical discussions (c.f. for *Sprachlehrforschung* Bausch & Königs, 1983; 1985: Hüllen, 1984: for second language acquisition Felix & Hahn, 1985; Wode, 1985: for a compilation of various lines of thought, Bausch & Königs 1986). These coincided with the reaction to Stephen Krashen's approach (1982; 1985): this reaction was quite critical (e.g. Königs, 1986) and took, even if not as comprehensively, the line taken by Ellis (1990), for example, or McLaughlin (1987). Looking back, we can clearly see that, as a result of the vehement discussion, the "adversaries" have modified and above all clarified their own positions and that their apparently irreconcilable standpoints do overlap at certain points, out of which have grown impulses for further research in individual areas (Königs' position statement, 1992).

For foreign language teaching research, then, there arose not only the desire to recognise this kind of foreign language acquisition as a genuine field of research with its own "laws", but also, as a consequence, to facilitate the development of a comprehensive theory of foreign language learning and teaching, based on a number of empirical findings which were still to be obtained. Thus the top-down theory approach of second language acquisition research was in direct opposition to the bottom-up approach of *Sprachlehrforschung*. For further research the result was a number of publications which were empirically based but also academically rigorous and which were expected to have a decisive influence on the learning and teaching of foreign languages in the classroom.

Against this background, a considerable proportion of the research activity from the 1990s onwards concentrated on research into learning processes. Process-based foreign language didactics (the title of the anthology by Multhaup & Wolff, 1992) is concerned with the question of what defining characteristics can be found in foreign language learning processes, both inside and outside the classroom, and sees these characteristics as the important pieces of the mosaic of a theory of foreign language teaching and learning in the classroom, a theory which must be empirically valid and methodologically well-thought-out.

The main emphases of German research in foreign language learning and teaching

If we want to delineate the focal points of a subject, it is natural that we do this according to our own personal perceptions of the academic discussion; I made this point above and it also holds true for the following summary of the focal points. These focal points can be deduced from the intensity of the research and publication activity, as well as from the importance of the various topics for the structuring of foreign language teaching. It is clearly impossible to consider each and every activity and area of research that is relevant to the learning and teaching of foreign languages. It is also true that the developments in the individual areas I have selected do not happen in isolation. Rather, these developments influence one another. That is the reason why the apparently strict separation between the focal points is artificial; it merely serves a greater clarity of description.

Methods of foreign language teaching

In the 1970s a compromise was reached in the discussion about teaching methods. The development of methods up to that point in the 20th century might be described as a reaction to the grammar-translation method. In spite of all the differences in the basic methodological concepts, the direct method, audio-lingual and audio-visual methods agree that there is no place for the mother tongue in the classroom and that the extent of consciousness raising is kept to a minimum. That means that these methods form a clear contrast to the grammar/translation method which encourages the learning of rules and where the mother tongue plays a prominent part.

The compromise was initiated in particular by methodological reflections such as those made by Wolfgang Butzkamm in 1973 for the German-speaking area. In his book "Aufgeklärte Einsprachigkeit" (Enlightened Monolingualism) he makes an enthusiastic case for bringing the mother tongue usefully into the classroom in a controlled and systematic fashion rather than shutting it out in an uncontrolled way. In particular, he bases his argument on specific teaching practice and also on Dodson (1967). He also makes a case for introducing phases of rule learning which will take the needs of learners into account, particularly in teaching phases relating to language structures. However his methodological concept does provide for the exclusive use of the foreign language in most of the teaching, particularly in the communicative sections where the focus is on content. With the increase in psycholinguistic research, above all in relation to foreign language acquisition, Butzkamm was able to refine his method and give it a firmer theoretical base (Butzkamm, 1989).

At this point, development of the so-called traditional methods more or less came to an end; at least no further complete methodologies were produced in the subsequent period. At the same time the adaptation and (further) development of alternative methods took place. In the discussion, the *total physical response* method and *suggestopaedia* attracted particular attention at first, while methods such as *the silent way* or *community language learning* were discussed much less and were seldom put into practice. Against the background of a "psychologising

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of society" at the end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s, which was also shown in the way the German language was used by its native speakers (Zimmer, 1988) and under the influence of intensive discussions in the English-speaking countries, the alternative methods attracted a considerable amount of attention. The systematic monographs of Larsen-Freeman (1986) and Richards & Rodgers (1986) intensified this attention, because there was no comprehensive methodological concept in the German-speaking countries until Ortner's publication (1998) which appeared a good deal later than its American predecessors.

The greatest interest was shown in suggestopaedia. Not only was Lozanov's programme reappraised and its theoretical basis critically examined, but there was also a development and empirical review of a German variation of this methodological procedure; this was known by the term *psychopaedia* (Baur, 1990) and places more emphasis on the systematic use of facial expression and gesture in the different phases of text presentation and also on the activation of the learner. In addition, the introduction of this method in foreign language teaching in schools was not simply considered or requested, but it really was introduced and empirically tested (Schiffler, 1989; Holtwisch, 1990). The findings confirm that this method is indeed successful compared to traditional methods, even if not all of the findings take the form of comparative studies. However this success is not as great in terms of quantity and quality as the vociferous supporters of *superlearning* would have had us believe. Even today, suggestopaedia is considered to be the alternative method which has not only been most consistently researched, but it is also the one most often to be found in the various educational establishments in Germany.

In this connection, there are three other programmes which deserve mention: in the 80s Jean-Pol Martin developed the method *learning through teaching* in which school pupils – in classes in foreign languages but also in other subjects – take over teaching functions and by working through a grammatical phenomenon, for instance, not only gain deeper insight into the structure of the foreign language but also contribute to method development by including the learner perspective (this is comprehensively substantiated and illustrated by Martin, 1994). The teacher supports the pupils' teaching activity with preparation and evaluation and gives assistance when problems arise. For this purpose Martin has built up a country-wide network of teachers who teach (or support their pupils' teaching) according to this programme: he has created a discussion forum which is intensively used and which provides numerous stimuli for teaching.

Bernard Dufeu, another Frenchman teaching in Germany, took a method originally designed for therapies and further developed it for foreign language teaching. He adapted, amongst other things, therapy techniques such as doubling, role exchange, problem definition and giving feedback, with the intention of giving learners the opportunity to recognise their own individuality, discuss it and utilise it fruitfully in the foreign language learning process. This method, which he called *psychodramaturgie* (Dufeu, 1996; Dufeu, Dufeu & Feldhendler, 1993), also comprises specifically targeted sensitisation exercises which help learners to relax and make a connection between rhythm and language and also to discover their own personality. This process is supported by a special "trainer language" which works with explanations, comments, pictures and metaphors with the purpose of developing, and then using, the process of subjective self-discovery in and through foreign language learning.

Finally we turn to drama pedagogy which is related to the above but which has a completely different basic concept. This method has been introduced to Germany and further developed by Manfred Schewe, a teacher in Ireland. Schewe (1995; Schewe & Shaw, 1993) has taken up the Anglo-Saxon tradition and argues for and practises a form of language teaching in which the learners do not confine themselves to the reproduction of dramatic texts but rather develop dramatic plots themselves and act them out according to their own requirements.

The latter methods are based on developments that took place, for the most part, in the 80s. All other methods have in common the desire for integrated learning as far as possible. Language learning does not only take place with and within the brain, but also with hand and heart, that is, through real action which is as authentic as possible – a fundamental principle that is not new in the teaching method reforms taking place outside language teaching. This is not the only illustration of the fact that foreign language didactics and language teaching research on the one hand and pedagogics or teaching studies on the other have not taken much notice of one another – a problem that still exists today, to a greater or lesser extent.

The process of development of new methods comes more or less to a stop at this point; new and comprehensive concepts, whether open or closed, have not been produced since that time. There are a number of reasons for this that I refer to in more detail in another paper (Königs, in press). One of the reasons is, without doubt, the fact that research has directed its focus towards mental processes. The results thus obtained make the closed-method concepts look less promising for a successful learning process. Instead they suggest teaching methods that take into account the many and varied individual learning processes and learning styles of the learners to a much greater extent than is possible in closed concepts. In the following section I will discuss these mental processes and the research into them.

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Mental processes

In the following section I will concentrate on the description of research activity. For the sake of clarity I will use four headings: Strategies, Autonomy, Multilingualism, and Constructivism. The range of research activities which deal with the mental processes of language learners is in reality much greater and I would like to emphasise again that this description is not, and cannot be, complete.

Strategies

As stated above, the concept of interlanguage was significant in teaching and learning research in Germany. Particularly relevant in this respect is Selinker's assumption that learner processes can be modelled as "strategies". This was the impulse that attracted research from different areas: I should particularly like to mention the work on pragmatic learner strategies which dealt with the strategic behaviour of language learners from a linguistic and pragmatic point of view (for example the work of two researchers in Hamburg, Willis Edmondson and Juliane House, 1981; House, 1986, 1996; also Kasper, 1995, 2000). This work made use of linguistic description methods in order to ascertain the strategic resources used by language learners.

Dechert and Raupach, on the other hand, based their learner language analyses on a wider strategic concept because they did not concentrate so much on a single linguistic aspect but were more interested in the conditions, and above all in the reasons, for learner language production (contributions in Dechert & Raupach, 1989). This was in order to obtain indications for the development of a foreign language production model and of the planning activities employed by language learners (Raupach, 2003).

The emergence of a new concept leads almost inevitably to attempts at empirical verification and thus to a consolidation. It is in this sense that we can interpret the work produced in the above-mentioned field: learner language data were obtained so that indications could be found of the strategic behaviour that formed the focus of the research. A further analysis of the concept on a meta-level often does not take place until a considerable time later. This process can also be observed in the case of the "strategies": the volume published by Rampillon and Zimmermann (1997) contained a series of essays which – almost inevitably each on its own empirical basis – had in view a basic analysis of the term and the concept of the "strategies". Zimmermann (1997) and Grotjahn (1997), amongst others, discovered that the everyday term "strategies" was used to mean different things – not least due to the frequent use of the term because of its topicality in research. They also discovered that the conceptual assumptions connected with the term – for instance the various aspects types and functions of "knowledge" – had not always been clearly deduced from the work of the authors cited.

At the same time, on the basis of the reception of internationally discussed publications such as O'Malley & Chamot (1990) or Oxford (1990) the way was cleared for strategy training that had been empirically tested (Tönshoff, 1997; Kleppin & Tönshoff 1998, 2000; Tönshoff 2000). In the initial, almost euphoric, phase of the preoccupation with the teaching of strategies, multi-language courses in strategies were considered that were to run parallel to the standard language courses. However, the idea that strategies should be used in close connection with the learning topic caught on very quickly, based on the evaluation of teaching trials. The road should lead from raising learners' awareness of their strategic behaviour, via the presentation and task-based testing of alternative strategic behaviour to an evaluation facilitated by the teacher.

The discussion about strategies has, unlike other themes in language teaching research, reached teaching quite quickly. That is not only due to the trialling in classes but also to two other factors. In the first place, strategies were integrated into new teaching texts; learners were encouraged to analyse their own strategic behaviour, so that the implementation of strategies follows almost inevitably. This process greatly influenced and optimised the production of teaching materials, with the result that developmental work in the last ten years has received an enormous boost, particularly for German as a foreign language. Not only that – innovative methods in this field were also thought out and implemented. Here I should like to mention the exemplary *Lernerhandbuch* (Learner's Handbook) which is provided, in addition to the standard student's book, for learners studying a foreign language/languages using *Eurolingua* materials. These materials are provided for German as a foreign language, English, French, Italian and Spanish. The Learner's Handbook contains detailed suggestions for learning strategies, which are then applied to the different language areas: syntax, morphology, phonetics, lexis and so on, and it also makes recommendations for the strategic behaviour of the learner in class. In the second place, the strategic discussion is directly linked to the discussion of autonomy, and I will consider this in the following section.

Autonomy

The discussion about autonomy that developed in Germany in the 80s goes back to the influential work of Holec (1981) and Little (1991). This happened at a time when the concept of autonomy was used very positively in everyday language and was therefore an obvious choice for use

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in pedagogic contexts as well. This interest was further encouraged by empirical research, which cast clear doubts on the validity of generalisations from second language acquisition findings. These described foreign language acquisition as subject, for the most part, to individual processes, which could not be generalised too much (the work of Riemer, 1997 and Klein Gunnewiek, 2000). Models influenced by cognition research do not only take such objections seriously, they have also pointed out more and more frequently in recent years that the acquisition of knowledge is only possible when the knowledge and the information potential already present can interact, that is, when the new information can be connected with what is already there, fundamentally and diversely. It is precisely this existing knowledge that makes the principle of the autonomy concept so interesting for language teaching research – this applies not only the information itself but also to the knowledge and the awareness of this information and the individual opportunities for connecting old and new information (see various contributions in Edelhoff & Weskamp, 1999). This leads to teaching methods which demand a series of strategic decisions from the learner for which s/he needs support from the teacher, not only as an imparter of knowledge but as a learning facilitator or advisor (an example of well-thought-out teaching methods which encourage autonomy and some of which make use of the new technologies can be found in Wolff, 1999; Legutke, 1993; 1999, and also in Rüschoff & Wolff, 1999, and Müller-Verweyen, 1997, 1999).

The most far-reaching change that the autonomy debate has effected is tandem learning. This method, which consists of speakers of different mother tongues teaching their respective languages to one another, places its central emphasis on autonomy in that the learners organise their own learning processes co-operatively. The "teacher" takes on the role of advisor (Kleppin, 2001), whose task is to help the tandem learners to take the strategic decisions which suit them best. Tandem learning is not so much a comprehensive methodological concept – and certainly not a closed one – rather it makes a didactic place and a didactic proposal available to the learner whose responsibility it then is to organise it him/herself (see the volume on the various forms of tandem learning, also including the new media and considering various institutions Brammerts & Kleppin, 2001). The findings in both the empirical and methodological studies on autonomous and tandem learning have led to the establishing of tandem networks in many locations, the largest of which can probably be found at the Ruhr University in Bochum (further information: http://www.slf.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/bochum-deu.html); this network is continuously and systematically updated.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, concepts such as "autonomy" are at risk of being diluted by their increasing use in everyday language. This is particularly true for the concept of autonomy because education planners and politicians – not completely incorrectly – connect it with self study, self-directed learning or self-organised learning, and may draw the conclusion that they can implement spending cuts because now most language learning can be carried out alone – a teacher is not necessary. This conclusion is, of course, quite wrong. It makes a differentiated analysis of the autonomy concept all the more necessary, and this can be found in the work of Schmelter (2003) for both the concept of autonomy and for tandem learning as a whole and the resulting advisory function of the teacher. Schmelter is able to show that the concept of autonomy is often used in a restricted way and thus leads to methods that are not coherent. Instead he makes a case for self-directed "expansive" learning that he deduces from the critical pedagogical theory of action and then tests empirically for tandem learning. In this way he arrives at differentiated demands that should be placed on a facilitator for tandem learning and that include a detailed analysis of the perceptions of learners. He provides empirical verification of a number of principles which influence the way learners deal with "problems of action". The work does not just give us insights into the (future) advisory functions of teachers (in tandem learning but also outside it) it also warns us to be somewhat careful about the too hasty use of the term autonomy.

Multilingualism

Multilingualism is a many-layered research field, which started to be of interest to the field of foreign language teaching and learning with the increase in psycholinguistic work. The current discussion in German language teaching research examines this aspect of mental processes from two perspectives.

In a – mainly – curricular respect, the term "bilingual teaching" is misleading. It implies, by analogy with, for instance, North-American immersion programmes, "real" bilingualism which is promoted by the education programmes in schools to a not inconsiderable degree. In fact the language policy situation in Germany is quite different.

Schools in Germany with a "bilingual section" have a very long tradition, going back to the Franco-German Friendship Treaty at the beginning of the 60s. Against this background, schools were established which provided some subjects (particularly history, geography, politics) in the foreign language from the third year onwards, as well as a greater number of classes in French as the first foreign language with an obligatory pupil exchange in the second year. This push in the development in

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French has been increasingly eclipsed over the last two decades or more by a comparable development in English (see the overview by Thürmann, 2000). The general public interest in schools of this type, as well as political statements requiring knowledge of at least two modern European languages, contributed to the development of the relevant schools and teacher training and also stimulated research to concern itself more with the opportunities, limitations and perspectives of "bilingual teaching".

The particular aspects of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) as taught in the foreign language became the subject of research: what differentiates the teaching methods of monolingual and bilingual subject teaching? How are the argumentation processes and work with texts organised in this type of teaching? What role does the language component play in comparison to the content component? In this connection, what role does (meta-) language awareness play? How can the simultaneous acquisition of subject terminology in both languages be ensured? How do students construct meaning in the foreign language? How do they co-ordinate this with their mother tongue? To what extent do they fall back on existing knowledge – language-related and non-language-related? What materials are suitable for CLIL? What qualifications must or should teachers have to do this type of teaching? Questions of this kind are now being empirically investigated. Various research methods are being used so that classroom observations can be interpreted in a meaningful way for learners and teachers by means of introspective data (the comprehensive work of Helbig, 2001).

The second perspective, which is directed even more specifically at the mental processes of the learner, can be summarised under the term "multilingual didactics" (overview of contributions in Meissner & Reinfried, 1998). It is not only directed at an empirical analysis of the teaching already taking place but it also develops methods for the simultaneous acquisition of foreign language competence in several languages. The starting point is the observation that a language such as French can serve as a bridge to the learning of other romance languages. First the elements are established that, from a linguistic and psycholinguistic point of view, are important for the acquisition of related languages (in particular the approach in Klein & Stegmann, 2000 for the romance languages; there are also comparable projects for the Germanic and Slavic languages). In this way the so-called transfer bases can be obtained (Meissner, 2000). These form the basis for the learner to begin to build up competence in Spanish during French classes (Nieweler, 2002) and in so doing, to utilise his/her implicit and explicit knowledge about language(s).

This approach necessitates a different view of the learning psychology, the methods and the curricular requirements of foreign language teaching (Königs, 2002). In the same way, it necessitates the development of a framework based on foreign language teaching policies. This should be developed within the broader scope of a culturally integrating concept of foreign language teaching (Krumm, 2000; 2003) and of the systematic inclusion of the kind of thinking about language awareness that is also prevalent in Germany (Gnutzmann, 1997a;b). In this approach to multilanguage didactics the phenomenon of transfer is taken up again but not for its explanation potential. Rather it is described as a mental and productive process which can be used to facilitate the acquisition of (multi-) language competence.

Constructivism

The discussion about constructivism is taking place in a number of academic disciplines virtually simultaneously. This theme is not a new one. In this connection the learning theories of Piaget should be mentioned, as he gave a clear description of learning as a process of construction. It is fairly obvious that the various mental processes in foreign language learning would stimulate a debate in language teaching research about constructivism. In Germany this discussion was prompted – curiously enough – by a contribution from Dieter Wolff (1994) in which he strongly advocates that learner autonomy should be taken seriously and that foreign language teaching should include a variety of options, more than it has done so far: this means that the task of the teacher is to offer both a wide variety of foreign language texts and possible learning approaches in conjunction with teacher-led help for learning and learning tasks. I interpret Wolff's contribution as a plea for this type of learning, but without the extreme theoretical position, taken in particular by Radical Constructivism, that I will refer to later.

A short time after Wolff's paper appeared, Michael Wendt (1996) published a monograph in which he took a much closer position to Radical Constructivism for foreign language teaching than Wolff had done. In a later compilation (Wendt, 2000) he moves further in his thinking. At that time there was already critical opposition to Constructivism in general and to Radical Constructivism in particular (Bredella, 1998). The debate reaches a temporary peak in a further detailed publication by Wendt (2002) and in the replies to it from Bredella (2002), Edmondson (2002), Grotjahn (2002), Hu (2002) and Wolff (2002). What is the debate about? Constructivism, particularly in its radical form, assumes that people's construction activities are based upon a complex process which is hermetically sealed and is therefore almost impervious to outside influences. This means that teaching cannot control but can only provide "material" (in a broad sense).

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The learner then decides "autonomously" whether, how and with what consequences s/he takes up this "material" and uses it in her/his construction process.

In contrast to this, the critics emphasise – from my point of view quite rightly – the involvement of people in social and cultural systems and the basic fact that the processes of dealing with information are open to influence. In addition – as Wolff (2002) emphasises – those who subscribe to Radical Constructivism have to deal with the accusation that their premises and theories cannot really be unpacked and used in teaching. At present, any prediction about the future course of this sometimes very heated debate seems to me to be very problematic. However, I do tend to interpret it as an expression of the fact that we once again find ourselves at a point where completely opposing positions, sometimes in exaggerated form, face one another as "enemies" before the scientific community agrees on a "compromise".

If we look at it in this way, we can show that the revival of constructivist ideas during recent years has some of its roots in the intensive preoccupation with mental processes and in an apparent overemphasis of the cognitive aspects of learners and learning. Whenever the preoccupation with a particular aspect of a quite complex phenomenon becomes too disproportionate, there is always the danger of losing sight of the wider perspectives. As far as I can see this is also the reason for Schwerdtfeger's (1996, 1997, 2000, 2003) plea for a change of direction and for a greater emphasis on the emotional side of people and language. Her arguments oppose – sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly – the claim to exclusivity of the cognitive-based publications, and they can thus implicitly be interpreted as a vote against constructivism.

The whole debate about constructivism demonstrates how little we still know about the teaching and learning of foreign languages. The concentration on mental processes that resulted from the above-mentioned new dimension for foreign language didactics and language teaching research has opened up a wide field for research which is being intensively exploited. Only on very rare occasions has the claim been made that other facets of learning and teaching are less important or not important at all. From this point of view I can understand why Dieter Wolff (2002) does not want to be forced into the position of a radical constructivist, which, in my opinion, he certainly is not. At the same time, there is a lot to be said for not permitting any narrowing down of the scope of some concepts. The fact that you can also describe learner activity as a construction process does not have to instantly mean that you are therefore a (radical) constructivist, too. I wonder whether the concept of "construction" will, in these circumstances, continue to prove to be fruitful for research.

New Media

It is impossible to ignore the functional change that the media have gone through in connection with foreign language learning. The new communication technologies are opening up all kinds of possibilities which are considerably more than a simple "means of transport" for learning content. In addition to this media concept there is a new learning concept (see above), and it is now necessary to co-ordinate them. It is clear that the simple transfer of available knowledge and the adoption from other media connections or other learning contexts are unsuitable for the opening up of the real potential of the New Media. The new technologies have changed the communication habits and needs in society in general, and in foreign language teaching in particular (the analysis by Rüschoff & Wolff, 1999).

After a first phase in which the potential of the new technologies was interpreted as the transfer of the contents of a traditional teaching book onto a record or a CD, we have now progressed a lot further – as regards both the developmental work and the evaluation of the contribution the New Media can make. They are embedded in a learning theory framework which leans towards constructivism and they thus contribute to an authentic and rich learning context (the theoretical argumentation in Rüschoff, 1999; Tschirner, 1999; and concrete teaching proposals Rüschoff 1994, 1997; Donath & Volkmer, 1997; Müller-Hartmann, 1999; Tamme & Rösler, 1999 and several contributions in Legutke & Rösler, 2003). At the same time the development of programmes is being driven forward that (should) take into account the needs of the learner for specially-prepared learner-specific media materials. These programmes are being developed either as a supplement to traditional printed materials (*English Coach 2000*) or they claim to facilitate self-study – for instance in self-study centres. Projects run by the Goethe Institutes are examples for the latter, but there are also programmes (e.g., *Tell me more, Telos*) and projects run by commercial publishers. Here we should include the widening of tandem learning to include email tandem learning, where the tandem partners no longer negotiate and give support to their learning process face to face but through the medium of emails.

This represents not only a recent change in the learning and teaching situation, but it is also the case that the participants in this form of learning face new and broader tasks, as do the administrators and facilitators (Brammerts & Hedderich, 2001 and Tamme & Rösler, 1999). It seems to me that – in addition to the development of learning support programmes – we are facing special challenges. The didactically appropriate handling of the new technologies and the ability to select the "right" materials for the specific needs of a particular learner

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group must have a place in the training and in-service training of teachers. In this context the principle of learning through research must also be given a place.

Legutke, Müller-Hartmann & Schocker v. Ditfurth (2002) and Legutke (2003) provide important impulses: they propose that language learning through the new media should be integrated into everyday teaching to a greater extent than is the case today. A masters degree in "Language Technology and Foreign Language Didactics" is being introduced in the winter semester 2003/2004 at the University of Giessen and should play an important role in these developments.

In our subject, predicting future developments is not without problems. Nevertheless I venture to predict that the traditional teaching text will not be superseded by the New Media. The continuing intensive production of new, and a new type of, foreign language teaching texts for the German market underpins my assertion. Many publishers rely on the combination of traditional printed materials with complementing CD-Roms and other computer-supported programmes. The intensive developmental work was given an additional boost by German unification which necessitated the revision of teaching materials for German as a Foreign Language. This branch of teaching materials development had already been particularly innovative and productive. This was probably due to the fact that such teaching materials do not have to make the long and expensive journey through the departments of the federal state ministries. German as a Foreign Language is not a school subject in most of the federal states and so the sovereignty of the ministers of culture has no relevance, or very little. The teaching materials for this subject are therefore able to utilise the newer trends in foreign language teaching research comparatively quickly. That applies to autonomous learning as well as for strategies or meta-cognitive aspects in general.

Besides this, the English language teaching materials developed in Germany have a stronger base in the Anglo-Saxon, interactive teaching traditions. The materials for the Romance languages were more "reticent" for a long time but are now taking up the challenge in their more recent publications. Many questions in connection with teaching materials are, however, still open (Bausch, Christ, Königs & Krumm, 1999). The most urgent requirement seems to me to be research into the effectiveness of teaching materials. We still do not really know what teaching materials mean for the foreign language learning process, mainly because there is little empirical research in this area, whereas there is at least some research into the new media, probably because there has been some critical discussion of their advantages and possible disadvantages for the development of learners and learning (Mayer, 1999).

Interculturality and Foreign Language Teaching

This concept includes the recognition of the fact that learning processes – especially foreign language ones – should not refer to one single culture or be seen from the perspective of one culture. It represents a further development of the traditional regional studies concept, but in some respects goes beyond it. Its development in Germany is connected, amongst other things, with the co-existence of various ethnic groups, their integration into the education institutions and also with their desire for integration into the host society. The old concept of regional studies ("Landeskunde"), which implied a normative attitude to the foreign culture, was replaced by the aim of understanding the foreign culture while becoming aware of the roots and central characteristics of the host culture. Thus a wider cultural concept became necessary, which distances itself from too far-reaching normative ideas and prejudices and has enough openness that no insurmountable barriers are set up that would impede or even prevent access to a foreign culture (Krumm, 1998b). It is no coincidence that the realisation of such aims has been propelled by developments in the field of German as a Foreign Language and German as a Second Language.

At the beginning of the nineties the first teaching materials appeared that consistently took this intercultural orientation on board and attempted to focus in equal measure on the host and the foreign cultures and to raise awareness in the learners. This development was made possible by publications in general teaching studies which aimed not to enable the assimilation of foreign pupils, but rather to facilitate the reciprocal learning of host and foreign learners. The analysis of stereotypes in the classroom and also in research therefore became a very important element. Important components of intercultural language didactics can be found in Roche (2001) who prepares them for use in class. A number of studies have brought out aspects that are essential for intercultural learning. The study done by Hu (1996), for instance, deals with the connection between cultural identity and foreign language learning and their significance for the learning process in the foreign culture. There is also a number of innovative papers from the graduate school in Giessen that deal with the "didactics of understanding other cultures". Selections of these papers can be found in Bredella & Christ (1995), Bredella & Delanoy (1999), Bredella, Christ & Legutke (1997; 2000) and Bredella, Meissner, Nünning & Rösler (2000). In his publication, Barkowski (1998a), presents examples of intercultural attitudes and projects from a number of countries in the context of German as a Foreign Language and analyses them for their "cultural sedimentation" (1998b:8).

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There is a tradition in German foreign language teaching that discusses the appropriacy of concepts that are potentially in danger of losing their meaning. It is therefore not surprising that the concept of "intercultural learning" was at the centre of such a discussion. Edmondson & House (1998) asked the stimulating question of whether we actually needed such a concept and whether we are not running the risk of applying a general, more pedagogical term to language learning research with the result that we lose sight of the specific goals and research topics.

At the same time they inveigh against the concepts used in intercultural learning, and from the conclusions they draw in their own publications in the field of discourse analysis, they consider that research on foreign language communication – using discourse analysis procedures – already has the tools to uncover all the information that is necessary for dealing with the phenomenon of interculturality. In her reply to Edmondson & House, Hu (1999) not only defends the perspectives taken, in the broader sense, by intercultural didactics, she also presents her critics with a narrative-constructivist concept of intercultural communication and intercultural learning. She develops this from the new ideas relating to the concepts of culture and identity which have arisen in connection with migration and multiculturalism.

Alongside the discussion I have outlined here on the theme of concepts, intercultural learning is put into practice – one could almost say, "of course it is" – and examined in everyday foreign language teaching. As an example for this, I should like to mention the various kinds of encounter situations that do not just relate to the conceptual discussion and sometimes influence it, but that are also scientifically analysed (part 2 of Bredella, Christ & Legutke, 2000). Krumm (1998a) argues that teachers have a particular responsibility when dealing with intercultural encounters, and Alix (1989) provides a comprehensive account.

Some Aspects of Interaction in Foreign Language Teaching

It would be presumptuous to try to unpack the concept of interaction in foreign language teaching to any great extent. The reasons for this are the complexity of the subject on the one hand and the heterogeneity of the research approaches (in relation to the latter see Bausch, Christ, Königs & Krumm 2000) on the other. Depending on how broadly we define the concept of "interaction", we can observe further dimensions in the research field of foreign language teaching. If we focus on the structures that can be described in (discourse) linguistic terms and look at their significance for the building up of meta-cognitive and foreign language competence (see House, 1998; and in more detail Henrici, 1995), we are bound to come across different aspects and findings than we would find in dealing solely with the phenomenon of "error" and its treatment in the classroom (see Henrici & Herlemann, 1986 for German as a Foreign Language; Kleppin & Königs, 1991 for teaching Italian and Spanish). And if we include the dimension "text" when we consider "interaction", this of necessity implies consideration of foreign language skills. For this field – in part due to the above-mentioned significance of psycholinguistics for language teaching research – there are numerous analyses that give rise to suggestions for models.

- For writing skills I should mention Börner (1989) who does not only use his analyses to modify existing models for writing, he also develops from them a reworking of the concept of task in foreign language teaching (Börner 1999).
- For listening comprehension there are many analyses based on psycholinguistics. These are the basis of recommendations made for foreign language teaching and the integration of relevant tasks and exercises in teaching texts (for theoretical background Wolff, 1990; contributions in Kühn, 1996).
- In the context of the more intensive, empirically-based preoccupation with the skills, the visual component has now been included as an element of the listening skills (Schwerdtfeger, 1989).
- Reading comprehension is now enjoying something of a renaissance on the basis of detailed conceptual and empirical analyses. This has resulted in suggestions for implementation in the classroom (Karcher, 1988; Ehlers, 1998).
- Translation is examined as a process and also in its mental relevance for foreign language acquisition. This leads to translation gaining a new place in foreign language teaching and to integrative translation exercises, intended on the one hand to encourage reflection and on the other hand to prepare and ensure a rudimentary competence in translation (Königs, 2001b and 2000b).

At the beginning of the 80s, on the basis of national and international debate about pedagogic grammar, there were already empirical publications in existence that examined grammatical explanations in teaching texts and in learner grammars for their degree of clarity. The purpose was to develop concrete suggestions for a learner-centred method of describing grammar. The pioneering work of Zimmermann (1984; and later, underpinned by a base in the psychology of knowledge, 1995) which had a lasting influence on a number of investigations and on the structuring of grammar teaching and grammar descriptions for teaching purposes (Gnutzmann & Königs, 1995; Düwell, Gnutzmann & Königs, 2000).

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Publications also emerged from work on models for language acquisition processes and foreign language production processes and on the role of memory in the learning process. In the widest sense, they can be put into the category of research on the mental lexicon. (Börner & Vogel, 1994 on the theoretical background of the mental lexicon; De Florio-Hansen, 1994). Publications of this kind form the basis of research on vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary work (Kühn, 2000; Scherfer, 1999) and connected research on proposals for methods of vocabulary teaching.

Assessment of proficiency, testing and quality assurance

While the measurement of "proficiency" aims to quantify achievement in relation to a defined standard, the concept of "testing" reflects the desire to define how a group of learners or testees organise their behaviour in a controlled environment (Vollmer, 2003). With these differentiations in mind, we can also see a different developmental tendency.

The measurement of performance is now further influenced by means of increased consideration of the criterion of self-evaluation. This is all the more relevant since we now have the European Framework of Reference for the Teaching and Learning of Foreign Languages.

The expanded role of evaluation and self-evaluation that is laid down in the Framework responds to the requirement for learner autonomy and makes this an important element of both teaching and testing. The result should be the strengthening of a tradition of self-evaluation, but this is not particularly strong in German teaching institutions. Its development will therefore depend on the development of learner evaluation, of methods of testing it and, if appropriate, its implementation. An important step has doubtless been taken with the preparation and the implementation of the European language Portfolio (Piepho, 1999; Bräuer, 2000; Segermann, 2001; Vogel, 2002).

In spite of the fact that German *Länder* (federal states) have based their curricula on the Framework, there are still valid criticisms that can be made of its standards and theoretical base (Bausch, Christ, Königs & Krumm 2003). It is also debatable whether it is appropriate that such a document should be permitted to interfere in language teaching in such a normative way, particularly as the criteria are not always reliable (Schwerdtfeger, 2003). One criticism is, for instance, aimed at the fact that this kind of determination of standards and profiles, this narrow scale of levels – even if it has been empirically tested – will create a kind of language teaching that would otherwise be quite different and perhaps would be closer to real learning needs and processes.

There are two main avenues in test development in Germany, on very different levels. At the end of the 80s the development of a modified Cloze Test resulted in the C Test which, although simple to administer and interpret, gives very reliable results. It compares very favourably with most other test types as regards reliability, validity and objectivity (Grotjahn, 1995; Grotjahn 1992, 1994, 1996, 2002).

Up to now, university students whose mother tongue is not German, have had to take a test that assessed their language level: the *Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulgang* (literally: German language test for university entrance: *DSH*) was the language hurdle that every international student had to jump before being accepted onto a German university course. The final form this test took was decided by the individual universities. However, another test has now taken its place: *TestDaF (Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, literally: Test in German as a Foreign Language) is a test that can be taken abroad and centrally assessed in Germany. It is similar to the *TOEFL Test* (Grotjahn/Kleppin, 2001) in that it integrates components to assess the various language skills and takes a good three hours to complete. The results are given in terms of the four skills with the help of descriptors, which are defined in words rather than numbers and are similar to the can-do statements in the European Framework of Reference. Altogether there are five levels and it is the subject or subject group who recommend the level they require for university entrance.

As well as aiming to comply with familiar testing criteria such as objectivity, reliability and validity, *TestDaF* is also intended to create greater transparency. Another intention is to ensure that academic language requirements are better integrated in the test format and that the test provides reliable information for the acceptance of international students onto university courses. It was fairly predictable that the existence of any language test for international students would cause enthusiastic and sometimes emotional conflict (Bickes, 1998; Wintermann, 1998). These conflicts have subsided in the meantime, not least because the findings of the empirical comparative studies cannot be interpreted as favouring one of the evaluated test procedures exclusively (Koreik & Schimmel, 2002; Krekeler, 2000) and because the *TestDaF* itself, in cooperation with testing centres, is still in the phase of continuous reworking and improvement.

The concept of "quality assurance" brings the principles of business management into educational institutions. Applied to the field of foreign languages, its concern is the protection and the development of standards and the processes that are, or should be, the foundation of these standards. Methods of quality assurance in foreign languages are, for instance, aimed at the areas of curriculum planning, the set-up of the

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whole department, the competence of the teaching team, their care and the care of the students, learning processes and feedback, information about the courses on offer and the organisation, structure and equipment of the department. They are also designed to measure the success of the aims and objectives, as demonstrated by effectiveness, efficiency, learner satisfaction and finally by the "quality assurance" measures themselves (Edelhoff, 2001; von der Handt, 2003). The use of these criteria from business management often leads to the assumption that evaluations in the field of education can be carried out in exactly the same way – since, after all, it is this evaluation that will be centrally relevant for the allocation of funding. This business management orientation is causing considerable unrest in the field of education, but such unrest is unlikely to prevent these criteria from taking an ever firmer hold. It remains to be seen to what extent the idea of quality assurance and quality management for foreign languages will be successful. It also remains to be seen whether these changes will be positive for the "clients".

The concept of action

The concept of action plays a twofold part in the research on learning and teaching. In connection with "action-oriented foreign language teaching", it stands for a teaching principle, according to which learners should have as frequent an opportunity as possible to transfer their foreign language knowledge and skills to real action in an authentic context and to try them out. The aim is to overcome the predominantly theory-driven orientation of traditional foreign language teaching, in favour of appropriate action (Bach & Timm, 1996).

The concept plays – to my mind – a more important role in connection with the concept of action research. In recent years, language teaching research has produced numerous publications which not only indicate an increased interest in methodological questions, but which also express a very differentiated methodological awareness within the discipline, and emphasise that the receptive character of the discipline has definitely been overcome (Arbeitsgruppe FremdsprachenerwerbBielefeld,1996;Grotjahn,1999; Aguado, 2000, Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-v. Ditfurth, 2001; Albert & Koster, 2002). A number of publications have recently concentrated on the inclusion of the performers of the action, in this case teachers and learners, in the research process. In this way, teachers' actions and attitudes are systematically investigated by the teachers themselves, sometimes in cooperation with other researchers. Also investigated is the significance of these actions and attitudes for the structuring of foreign language teaching and for teacher training (Kallenbach, 1996; Schocker-v. Ditfurth, 2001; Caspari, 2003; Schmelter, 2003).

The concept of "subjective theories" gains methodological significance on the basis of these publications (De Florio-Hansen, 1998). The aim is to connect the action as reliably as possible with scientific findings and with scientific procedures within the framework of action research. The intention is to achieve this by not only making research experiential in the classroom, but also by conveying to teachers and learners the way in which their findings can and will have positive results for the theory and practice of teaching and research. The publications referred to on the subject of action research show that the inclusion of qualitative procedures can contribute to an understanding of the action and to its incorporation in the intentions and convictions of both learners and teachers.

Future Perspectives

Research on foreign language learning and teaching has brought to light a considerable potential of activities and findings. A prognosis about further scientific developments is, in the nature of things, difficult, but certain tendencies can be summarised:

- The research on learning processes and mental events in foreign language learning will certainly go further. It will be additionally supplemented in the future by the structuring of models which will try to expand the cognitive aspect of the learning process by including emotional and affective elements to a greater extent than has been the case in recent years – and decades.
- The developments in the area of multilingualism and also in early language learning will probably be extended and accompanied by relevant empirical investigations. The development of method and didactics in relation to age and school level for these areas is still, for the most part, lacking. It must be further encouraged and given expression in detailed discussion papers.
- The suggestion has already been made above about research in the area of teaching materials. This applies to printed materials and for the programmes that are being developed in the context of the new media.
- Curricular changes in the sequencing of school programmes will become an increasing requirement, based on the scientific developments indicated above and accompanied by scientific investigation and evaluation.

The tasks I have indicated are considerable – lack of research material is not something that language teaching methodology suffers from. It is also to be hoped, that it will not suffer from lack of resourcing, either.

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