

Teaching German as a Foreign Language through integration of the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Aspekte 1 – Application Model

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A. Research project description

The Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) is a teaching method that is universal and can be applied in all education subjects, in all education activities and in all educational instances - from pre-school curricula up to the advanced university levels, in almost all types of both formal and informal education. The purpose of this research project was to provide an application model of SSEHV in teaching German as a foreign language on B1+ level (according to the Council of Europe Common Language Framework), using the classic teaching Method - Aspekte 1 (Klett/Langenscheidt).

The starting hypothesis of the research was: *The EHV-teaching methods are appropriate for teaching German as a foreign language and moreover they can increase the effectiveness of the conventional teaching methods.* In order to confirm or negate the main hypothesis, a project approach was used, as specified by the following steps: (1) Establishing a group of young adults on B1+ level; (2) Integration of the EHV-teaching system in the conventional education; (3) Conducting contrastive analysis of the conventional method and SSEHV-method and evaluation of the results.

(1) Theoretical background. The research project was built on the theoretical/philosophical foundation, laid down by the world's most famous sages and philosophers, as well as by the present-day pedagogue and philosopher Sathya Sai Baba. The wish to discover or define the truth or reality was the leading power of the development of the philosophy since early ages in ancient Greece and Rome. The questions like *Who am I? Where I am from?* and *Where am I going?* have been in the focus of the greatest thinkers and teachers throughout the centuries afterwards.

Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Kant or Hegel - they were all searching for the unchangeable good, which according to Sathya Sai is equal to unconditional **Love**. By replacing Plato's 'good' with 'real', Hegel was trying to get to the unchangeable reality - the **Truth**. Actions which are based on the fundamental principles of Love and Truth result in building a society of **Righteousness**, where justice and integrity prevail. The **Peace** as one of the highest goals of mankind can be achieved only through **Non-Violence**, an idea which found its expression in the revolutionary peaceful approach in the politics of Mahatma Ghandi. Dalai Lama, who still inspires non-violent resolution of conflicts reiterates the ideal of non-violence: *"Concern for others is not just a matter of religious practice; it's a practical step towards creating a happy society. If you have trouble with your neighbours, try to resolve it. It is*

possible to transform today's enemy into tomorrow's friend. Think about this, discuss it with your friends; try to put it into effect."

(2) Educare. The philosophical cornerstone of the Education in Human Values is the concept of Educare. The founder of the EHV educational system, Sathya Sai, makes a distinction between the 'traditional education' and what he refers to as 'Educare'. According to Sathya Sai, educationists who merely read books and pass on the contents to students are not fulfilling the goals of real education. Rather, *"real education is that which promotes unity, equality and peaceful co-existence with fellow human beings."* It *"flows from the heart, and is termed as 'Educare'"*.

The guiding principle of Educare is that the highest ideal of unconditional Love is present in all human beings as the hidden undercurrent of the other human values: Truth, Right Conduct, Peace and Non-violence. Educare means to take them out from within and translate them into action in daily life. The end of education is character, and character manifests itself as the unity of thought, word, and deed. Educare recognises that life is interdependent and highlights Unity in diversity.

(3) The five teaching techniques. The EHV educational system recommends five teaching techniques: *quotation, storytelling, silent sitting, group singing, and group activity*. The techniques themselves are not restricting; rather they are guiding principles in execution of the curricula. The teaching techniques can be enhanced and upgraded by the teacher's knowledge of values and creativity. *Storytelling* captures the imagination providing models of human behaviour and presents solutions to similar situations that the students experience in their everyday lives. A well chosen *quotation*, serves to inspire the students to think of noble ideals and to learn new mottos and guiding principles. The young adults are also very often music fans, so through the *music and singing* the gap between the 'old fashioned' school and the attractive music idols is bridged. Of course, the choice of songs should be done carefully, so that their messages are in line with the Values taught. Through *silent sitting* the students develop the capacity for concentration, intuition, creativity, and quietude. *Group activities* are designed to integrate the experience of the human values in thought, word, and deed. This is a moment, where the students learn how to directly interact with each other, how to solve misunderstandings, how to express themselves correctly and how to productively work in team.

All these techniques are practically used in the everyday school activities when teaching foreign languages. Since the language is a means of communication, through these activities the skills of listening comprehension, reading, creative writing and speaking are developed.

B. Project's implementation

The project was implemented in the course of one school year in a private school for learning foreign languages in Skopje (Republic of Macedonia) in a group, which consisted of 13 participants on B1+ level according to the Council of Europe methodology. The average age of the participants was 21 years, whereas the oldest participant at the start of the course was 36 and the youngest was 16. Seven of them (5 girls and 2 boys) completed the language course at the end of the school year. Only these seven students, who completed the education were included in the final evaluation of the research project.

In order to measure the effect of SSEHV during the first semester, the method Aspekto 1 was used without SSEHV integration, while in the second semester, SSEHV was integrated along with Aspekto 1. The effectiveness of learning German as a foreign language was measured by standardised tests of the Publisher Klett/Langenscheidt. A survey among the students was also conducted in order to measure the "personal attitude" of the students towards the "hybrid curriculum". Of course the teacher's observation was used also as a tool for evaluation of students' progress.

The Aspekto 1 methodology has an aim to bring the language skills of the students to an enhanced B1 level and prepare them for entering the next B2 level. Through reflecting on various topics of everyday and professional life by using photo, audio and video materials, the students are encouraged to practice speaking, reading and creative

writing for the most common situations. Since various types of communications are envisaged, the five SSEHV teaching techniques from the previous chapter suit very well to classic Aspekte 1 teaching methodology.

In order to show the impact of SSEHV implementation in the daily teaching routine, the first semester (90 lessons) Aspekte 1 teaching methodology was implemented with 5 from the 10 units, as instructed by the author of this methodology - the Langenscheidt without using SSEHV-methodology. During the second semester 2013 (90 lessons) an integrated methodology was implemented, including SSEHV in the standard Aspekte 1 methodology.

B. Project's Results and main findings

(1) Test results

In order to evaluate the knowledge of the German language at the end of each unit, a unified and standardised test was given to the students, according to the Aspekte 1 curriculum. In general an increase of students' knowledge could be detected in the second semester, when the SSEHV system was implemented. In total the students made 10 tests. In the table below the average of percentage achieved per student per semester is given:

<i>Student No.</i>	<i>1st Semester SSEHV NOT included</i>	<i>2nd Semester SSEHV included</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>81/100</i>	<i>89/100</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>77/100</i>	<i>86/100</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>73/100</i>	<i>82/100</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>68/100</i>	<i>74/100</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>66/100</i>	<i>73/100</i>
<i>6</i>	<i>64/100</i>	<i>73/100</i>
<i>7</i>	<i>62/100</i>	<i>71/100</i>

(2) Questionnaire results

In the questionnaire the students were asked to answer 8 questions. Since the students fill out questionnaires at the end of the school year, in which they evaluate the teacher, the teaching methods and the school facilities, it was decided to give the students a shorter questionnaire on evaluation of the SSEHV-education with no more than 8 questions. Out of these 8 questions, 6 were multiple-choice questions and to the other two they were asked to provide a reply of their choice.

The research data showed that the students have a positive personal attitude in regard to the hybrid curriculum, consisting of the classic methodology Aspekte 1 and SSEHV. On the question no. 1: *Compared to the classic system in the 1st semester, was it a better way to learn German through the SSEHV system, applied in the second semester?* all students replied with YES.

Since education's goal is the character transformation, the students were also asked to evaluate to what extent SSEHV has made them better persons. Question no. 5: *Do you agree and if yes - to what extent - with the ascertainment: "The integrated system of learning German language through the five human values has made me a better person"*.

The results showed that 83 per cent of the students feel they have become better persons, while 17 per cent haven't noticed any change.

C. Final conclusion

The research shows the readiness of the students for an improvement of the schooling system with introduction of SSEHV in the regular curricula, which bring positive effects in the learning process. The integrated methodology of teaching German language through a combination of Aspekte 1 and SSEHV is one more confirmation or evidence that the SSEHV is universal and can be applied to various curricula. Furthermore it showed that SSEHV is very close to the students, meaning that it can simplify abstract topics, so that the students can visualise and better grasp them. Through vivid practical examples and through playing certain hypothetical situations, the students have a chance to prepare themselves for the big world, equipped with a readymade inner guidance or as Kant would name it 'categorical imperative'. In this way, they have a better insight in life situations and make proper distinctions between what is right and what is not.

The five teaching techniques were implemented with an adaptation of the group singing, which suits more to younger children. However, the adapted model seemed to be pretty acceptable on the students' side.

The willingness of the students to continue to learn through SSEHV, showed their appreciation for this educational programme. This is a clear indication that similar pilot SSEHV projects can be implemented in the entire foreign language learning system, taking into consideration that the process of teaching foreign languages faces almost no limitations and there is plenty of room for teacher's creativity.