

## **Didactics and Pedagogy: Keys to Innovation in University Teaching**

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### **Abstract**

This article explores the relationship between pedagogy and didactics in the teaching/learning process. Pedagogy focuses on classroom management and learner engagement, while didactics focuses on the specific transmission of knowledge. In this regard, the main question is how to reconcile these two disciplines in order to optimize learning. To reinforce our study, we suggest that an integration of pedagogical and didactic approaches could enhance learners' motivation as well as their cognitive understanding. The objective of this research is to analyze this complementarity and to propose strategies allowing the improvement of both practices while ensuring learner success. This experimentation revealed a notable improvement in students' level following the implementation of the pedagogical and didactic framework.

**Keywords:** Pedagogy, didactics, approach, motivation, strategy.

### **Introduction**

Teaching and learning are complex processes that rely on the articulation of different educational practices. Among these practices, pedagogy and didactics are two distinct disciplines that play essential roles in teaching and knowledge transmission. Their role is conceived differently and, sometimes, even oppositely. This is clearly manifested in their classification and their affiliation. Pedagogy, on one hand, focuses on the global approach to teaching, learner motivation, and classroom management in general, whereas didactics focuses on the specific teaching of content and the way knowledge is transmitted. This leads us to question: **how can pedagogy and didactics interact in a complementary way to promote optimal learning?**

The central problem of our reflection is therefore formulated as follows: **how to reconcile pedagogy and didactics to maximize the effectiveness of teaching and learning?** Indeed, while pedagogy is essential for generating interest and learner engagement, didactics, for its part, focuses primarily on understanding and transmitting knowledge. However, in the educational system, it is commonly observed that teachers often rely on one approach over the other or attempt to handle both without always achieving optimal synergy. This generates a tension between the relational and methodological aspect (pedagogy) and the cognitive and disciplinary aspect (didactics), which can sometimes harm the quality of teaching.

To address the questions raised at the beginning of this work, we propose the following hypothesis: **the complementarity between pedagogy and didactics constitutes a key factor in improving academic results and learner motivation.** In particular, a balanced integration

of pedagogical methods adapted to learners' profiles with didactic approaches specific to each discipline could enhance not only knowledge comprehension but also engagement and learner autonomy. This interaction would thus respond more effectively to current educational challenges.

The main objective of this research is therefore to understand and analyze how the combination of pedagogical and didactic approaches can promote more effective and successful learning. This article aims to identify tangible and clear strategies that enable teachers to reconcile these two domains in their daily practice and to evaluate their impact on learners' academic success, particularly in terms of knowledge comprehension, motivation, and engagement in learning. Finally, our research seeks to propose recommendations for a more integrated and coherent teacher training, in order to prepare educators to manage this complementarity effectively in their pedagogical practice.

Pedagogy and didactics, this tandem, reflect two close yet distinct concepts that play complementary roles in teaching. However, the emphasis on one or the other may vary according to context. Focusing on pedagogy at the expense of didactics raises the idea of a broader and often more general orientation of teaching, to the detriment of the specific aspects of teaching a particular discipline.

Regarding a specific definition of pedagogy, we cite the work *Education and Sociology (2006)* by Durkheim, which appears essential. He provides two types of distinction: between education and pedagogy, and between the science of education and pedagogy. According to Durkheim, education is a "continuous fact," whereas pedagogy is an "intermittent fact." He also suggests that "it is vain to believe that we can raise our children as we wish" (Durkheim, 2006, p. 45). Education represents a "social fact," while pedagogy is a "practical theory [...] [which] reflects in order to provide the educator's activity with guiding ideas" (ibid., p. 79).

### **1. Pedagogy vs. Didactics**

When discussing the "Pedagogy vs Didactics" tandem, we limit ourselves to the purely educational context, which encompasses a whole set of teaching and learning processes, as well as strategies and methods related to teaching/learning and classroom management. We therefore speak of *how to teach* on one hand, and everything concerning the learner on the other.

According to Philippe Perrenoud (2011):

"Becoming aware of the limits of the transfer of school learning, recognizing that students who succeed in the classroom are not necessarily able to mobilize the same knowledge in other situations, would, if one does not resign oneself to these observations, have considerable implications in terms of pedagogical contracts, didactic transposition, schoolwork, classroom management, but also, undoubtedly, professional cooperation, school operation, and the role of school authority. These are the questions raised by a competency-based approach, now included in the intentions of many educational systems. More than ever, it is therefore necessary to confront them."

It is essential to take into account teaching methods and their practical application.

### **2. Pedagogy and Didactics: Two Rival Sisters**

Pedagogy and didactics should be considered in their complementary relationship (Claude Germain, 2013). This is especially evident since teachers, in performing their profession,

accomplish two tasks: managing the curriculum on one hand, and the class group on the other (Emil Paun, 2006, pp. 3–13).

Pedagogy and didactics are often described as “rival sisters,” where each serves the other differently. This reflects a sometimes opposed or conflicting vision between the two disciplines, which, although closely related to the teaching field, are distinguished by their approaches, objectives, and methodologies.

### **3. Didactics at the Expense of Pedagogy**

However, it should be noted that this opposition is not necessarily irreconcilable. These two disciplines can complement each other: didactics provides the tools and strategies necessary for knowledge transmission, while pedagogy contributes the human and contextual dimension to teaching. In reality, effective education requires a combination of both: it is difficult to teach effectively without considering both teaching methodologies and individual learner needs.

We emphasize a critical perspective on the tensions between technical and teaching aspects. Despite their complementarity, these two approaches can be perceived as opposed, since they generally focus on different dimensions of teaching/learning. However, their agreement and combination are essential for balanced and complete education.

Hence, pedagogy is fundamental for overall teaching, ensuring learner formation and motivation. Didactics, for its part, remains indispensable for effective knowledge transmission. One cannot function without the other; they go hand in hand, with pedagogy emphasizing the human and relational dimension of learning, which is essential for successful teaching (Meirieu, 2007).

## **Methodology**

### **Experimental Protocol**

We deemed it useful to explore the application of didactics and pedagogy in the university context, particularly for French as a Foreign Language (FLE). We observed that these approaches could allow a better understanding of how language teaching can be both structured (through didactics) and learner-centered (through pedagogy).

To conduct our experimentation:

#### **1. Objectives of the Experimentation**

It is important to define the specific objectives of our study:

**Didactic objectives:** learning specific grammatical structures, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

**Pedagogical objectives:** developing FLE students’ learning competencies, such as motivation, self-confidence, communication skills, and the ability to work collaboratively.

#### **2. Didactics in FLE**

FLE didactics focuses on methods and tools that allow for effective language teaching:

1. **Choice of materials:** using digital resources (applications, videos, etc.)
2. **Teaching strategies:** adopting methods that structure teaching, e.g., the communicative approach, aiming to promote oral interaction
3. **Learning progression:** organizing sessions that allow students to master foundational language points before approaching more complex lessons or topics

### 3. Pedagogy in FLE

We focused on classroom management, adaptation to students' needs, and creating a favorable learning environment. This includes:

- **Pedagogical differentiation:** adapting teaching to varied student levels, involving all learners despite heterogeneous proficiency
- **Learner-centered approach:** promoting motivation, active engagement, speaking, and group work
- **Interaction and feedback:** feedback is critical to improving comprehension and skills; we encourage peer interaction, both in pairs and groups
- **Contextualized learning:** programming oral expression activities, simulating real-life situations in which students interact in French

### 4. The Experiment

The study was conducted with third-year undergraduate FLE students at Mohamed-Cherif Messadia University. The research focused on the *Oral Comprehension and Expression* module for two groups.

Oral skills are central in learning a foreign language, involving lexical, syntactic, and phonetic mastery, as well as pragmatic and interactional dimensions. Using two groups allowed us to observe class dynamics, compare progress, and analyze the effects of the implemented framework.

To promote active and functional use of French, we integrated **contextualized communicative activities**, including simulations, role-plays, debates, thematic discussions, and listening exercises followed by interactive exchanges. This approach seeks to go beyond a purely transmissive model and promote action-oriented, learner-centered pedagogy.

#### 4.1 Implementation of Didactics

The didactic dimension involved a careful selection of content aligned with student needs. Prior analysis identified gaps in oral comprehension and expressive fluency.

Sequences were structured around validated themes and adapted to students' academic level. Each session included:

- Oral comprehension activities (listening to authentic materials, identifying information, analyzing discourse)
- Guided oral expression tasks, promoting idea structuring
- Free production activities, encouraging spontaneity and argumentation

Repetition and practice exercises consolidated linguistic acquisition, reinforced memorization, improved pronunciation, and developed verbal fluency. Progressive sequencing ensured coherence between objectives, activities, and targeted competencies.

#### 4.2 Implementation of Pedagogy

Beyond content organization, pedagogy focused on fostering collaboration, exchange, and collective reflection. Students were encouraged to work in groups, confront ideas, and practice self- and peer-correction. This collaborative dynamic enhanced engagement and autonomy, while the teacher acted as a facilitator.

#### 4.3 Evaluation

Evaluation occurred in two phases:

1. **Formative assessment:** questionnaire and open debate measuring gradual knowledge acquisition and student perception of methods
2. **Summative assessment:** individual oral presentations observing comprehension, discourse structuring, fluency, and communicative ease

### 5. Analysis and Discussion of Results

Comparative analysis before and after the implementation focused on:

- Quality of oral comprehension
- Relevance and coherence of oral expression
- Fluency and pronunciation
- Classroom participation

Open discussions with both groups revealed generally positive perceptions. Students emphasized the motivating nature of activities and opportunities for active participation. Initial difficulties in participation and oral management were mitigated by motivational and encouragement strategies. Final results showed notable improvements in oral production quality and student confidence.

However, analysis highlights the need for ongoing practice adjustments:

- Regularly reviewing and adapting teaching methods
- Diversifying pedagogical resources
- Maintaining interactive and contextualized approaches

### Conclusion

This research demonstrates that successful FLE teaching at the university level relies on a balanced articulation between didactics and pedagogy. Didactics provides structured knowledge organization and methodological coherence, while pedagogy shapes the learning climate and encourages active participation.

When combined, these dimensions significantly enhance learner progress, not only in linguistic competence but also in expressive confidence, argumentation skills, and communicative ease.

This study also shows that teaching effectiveness depends not only on content but on how it is delivered and experienced in class. A structured didactic framework supported by interactive, motivating pedagogy fosters deeper, more lasting learning. Students become engaged actors capable of constructing knowledge and applying it in real contexts.

Ultimately, the quality of university-level FLE instruction depends on the complementarity between theoretical reflection and pedagogical practice. Their interaction allows adaptation to learners' needs and ensures coherent, relevant, and professionally aligned language education.

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