

Innovative Teaching Methods for Large Groups of Foreign Language Learners

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In modern society, foreign language acquisition has become an essential component of professional training. The University of Kelaniya plays a major role in enhancing foreign languages for both local and international students willing to study Japanese, French, German, Chinese, Korean and Russian. Due to the large enrolment of students for the first year language courses the urgency to implement innovative teaching methods to teach large group of foreign language learners are being discussed by the staff of the Department of Modern Languages. Ten questionnaires were distributed among the foreign language teachers on teaching large group of students to identify which difficulties are encountered by them when delivering lectures to large group of students and as well as 50 questionnaires for the students who are studying German Language in the first year. According to the data collected by the questionnaires it was revealed that it is not possible to give printed worksheets for each student due to one hundred student enrolment and lack of resources at the Department. It was also reported that students who are sitting at the back row of the classes have found it difficult to see what is written on the whiteboard and the classroom setting was not suitable for group works and interactive learning sessions. The teachers have to take excessive effort in delivering lectures and sometimes more than one teacher had to deliver the lectures dividing the class in to small groups as it is not possible to give individual attention to each student. Different types of learners with unique learning tempos and interests face on numerous disadvantages as teaching activities suitable according to their learning interests cannot be prepared individually. As suggestions for innovative teaching methods, it was proposed by the teachers to establish online learning platforms for the learners where online materials are being uploaded. The learners receive the benefit of accessing to the platform at any time they want and can complete the exercises according to their learning tempo. Classroom facilities with multimedia and internet access and interactive whiteboard facilities are needed to establish in order to project visual materials and video clips more effectively. It was also suggested to improve the classroom facilities and change the sitting arrangements of the students to implement student centered learning systems which is lacking when teaching a large group of students. The suggested teaching methodologies and arrangements are expected to implement in order to make the lesson more effective.

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