

IMPLEMENTING THE PRISM MODEL IN TEACHING MACEDONIAN AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY AT “TEFEYYÜZ” ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN SKOPJE

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the effectiveness of Macedonian language instruction for Turkish-speaking fourth-grade students at *Tefeyyüz* Elementary School in Skopje through the lens of Collier and Thomas's (1997) Prism Model. The research investigates classroom climate, teaching methods, teacher roles, and the adequacy of current textbooks for students from other linguistic communities. Data were collected via Likert-scale questionnaires and a semi-structured focus group. Descriptive analysis revealed positive teacher-student relations but limited opportunities for active language use and differentiated instruction. Students valued the Macedonian textbook yet desired more visuals and contextualized activities. Findings highlight insufficient exposure to Macedonian and minimal curricular integration with other subjects. Aligning instruction with the Prism Model's four interdependent dimensions: linguistic, cognitive, academic, and sociocultural can foster more effective bilingual development. The paper concludes with recommendations for curriculum redesign and teacher training to promote additive bilingualism and inclusion in multilingual Macedonian schools.

Keywords: *second-language instruction, Macedonian language, Prism Model, multilingual education, classroom climate, textbook evaluation*

Introduction

In Macedonia's multilingual context, Macedonian is both the official and instructional language mandated for all students, including those whose primary language of schooling is Albanian, Turkish, Bosnian, and Serbian. At *Tefeyyüz* Elementary School in Skopje, where Turkish is the primary language of instruction, students begin formal Macedonian lessons only in the fourth grade, two periods per week, or 72 classes annually, without systematic cross-curricular reinforcement. Such limited exposure reduces opportunities for meaningful communication and hampers linguistic and cognitive growth.

This study examines the current state of Macedonian as a Second Language (MSL) instruction and explores how the **comprehensive Prism Model**(Collier & Thomas, 1997) can enhance both

practice and policy. By integrating the social, cognitive, and academic dimensions of language learning, the model provides a robust framework for equitable second-language development.

Theoretical Framework: The Prism Model

The Prism Model posits that successful bilingual development arises from balanced growth across four interrelated dimensions:

- 1. Sociocultural processes:** identity, motivation, and relationships supporting learning;
- 2. Linguistic development:** parallel advancement of first and second languages;
- 3. Academic development:** integration of content knowledge within language instruction; and
- 4. Cognitive development:** transfer of higher-order thinking skills across languages.

The Prism Model is backed by extensive international evidence, not just a theoretical concept. Two-Way Immersion programs in the U.S. (Collier & Thomas, 2002) and French Immersion in Canada (Genesee, 2004) are living proof that bilingual learners can achieve high proficiency and academic parity with monolingual peers. Recent European research (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; García & Wei, 2014; Cummins, 2021) further bolsters this, showing that additive bilingualism and translanguaging approaches can significantly enhance cognitive flexibility and academic success. This robust evidence should provide reassurance to educators, researchers, and policymakers regarding the effectiveness of the Prism Model.

Applying the Prism Model to Macedonian-language instruction emphasizes the need for:

- early and sustained exposure,
- integration of Macedonian across subjects,
- differentiated, communicative methodologies, and
- sociocultural affirmation of students' identities.

Methodology

Participants

Participants were fourth-grade students (aged 9–10) at *Tefeyyüz* Elementary School in Skopje. Data were collected anonymously through questionnaires, and qualitative insights were gathered from a focus group of six fifth-grade students with sufficient proficiency in Macedonian to articulate their views.

Instruments

Three Likert-scale questionnaires evaluated perceptions of (1) classroom climate and teacher role, (2) teaching methods, and (3) textbook quality. Items reflected national textbook evaluation criteria (Bureau for Development of Education, 2010) and didactic principles (Vilotijević, 2000). A semi-structured interview further explored themes emerging from the surveys.

a. Procedure

Data collection took place during regular classes, with permission from school authorities. Homeroom teachers and support staff administered questionnaires to ensure comfort and inclusion. The researcher maintained a non-intrusive presence to minimize response bias.

Findings and Discussions

b. Classroom Climate and Teachers’ Role

Overall, students described the classroom atmosphere as positive and respectful, with teachers being perceived as supportive (mean $\approx 4.7/5$). Nevertheless, the lowest ratings concerned the freedom to ask questions, signaling a need for greater learner autonomy and interaction, which is a core element of the **sociocultural** dimension of the Prism Model. Limited student agency restricts opportunities for meaningful practice and authentic communication, both of which are crucial for internalizing Macedonian structures.

Table 1. Results of the Likert Scale Survey regarding Classroom Climate and the Teacher’s Role.

Likert Scale on Classroom Climate and the Role of the Teacher		
	Statement	M
1	The teacher listens to me.	4,62
2	The teacher helps me when I ask for help.	4,85
3	I learn new things in class.	4,73
4	I know the rules in the classroom.	4,68
5	I can complete all the tasks the teacher gives me.	4,6
6	I feel free to ask questions during class.	4,21
7	The teacher helps me understand the tasks when I make mistakes.	4,8
8	My teacher helps me stay organized.	4,75
9	My teacher respects all the students in the classroom.	4,87
10	I feel happy during class.	4,78

c. Textbook Evaluation

Students expressed moderate satisfaction with the current Macedonian textbook (mean ≈ 4.3), noting clear organization and vocabulary support. However, they reported a strong desire for texts with more relatable contexts and abundant visuals, and they requested glossaries and more workbook-style exercises. These findings underscore the need for a **more engaging textbook**: materials tend to focus on form rather than function and rarely connect Macedonian use to daily life or other subjects. Such misalignment limits transfer of content knowledge, contradicting the **academic** component of the Prism Model.

Table 2. Results from the Likert scale survey concerning students' opinions on the used textbooks

Likert Scale for Expressing Opinions on Textbooks		
	Statement	M
1	I use the Macedonian language textbook for students from other communities.	4,29
2	I also use the digital version of the Macedonian language textbook for students from other communities.	2,89
3	I think the textbook is not necessary to learn Macedonian.	3,10
4	The textbook helps me learn what I expected to learn in the subject Macedonian language for students from different communities.	4,42
5	I find the textbook boring and useless.	2,64
6	I find it difficult to understand the texts in the textbook.	3,01
7	I find it difficult to understand the exercises in the textbook.	2,90
8	The textbook uses words that are difficult for me to understand.	3,12
9	I find it difficult to use the textbook independently.	3,09
10	I find it difficult to use the textbook at home without my parents' help.	2,88
11	The textbook should have more pictures.	3,89
12	The textbook should have a glossary with explanations of less familiar words and where/how they are used.	4,18
13	There should be additional teaching materials besides the textbook.	4,10
14	The textbook should reflect daily events/activities.	4,27
15	The textbook should include special pages for exercises similar to those in a workbook.	4,25
16	There should be a workbook in addition to the textbook.	4,24

d. Teaching Methods

Learners confirmed exposure to traditional second-language strategies such as translation, repetition, and memorization, with high satisfaction for vocabulary and pronunciation drills. However, activities involving creative expression, role-play, or storytelling received lower ratings (mean ≈ 3.6). This suggests that while grammar-translation methods dominate, there is a concerning underutilization of communicative and cognitive-developmental techniques. According to the **cognitive** and **academic** domains of the Prism Model, learning improves when students engage in language manipulation through problem-solving and conceptual reasoning, rather than relying on rote reproduction. Incorporating games, storytelling, and cross-subject projects could stimulate higher-order thinking and deeper language retention, motivating us to make a change.

Table 3. Results of the Likert scale survey regarding opinions on the teaching methods

Likert Scale on Expressing Opinions About Teaching Methods Used in Instruction		
	Statement	M
1	In Macedonian language classes, we orally translate from Turkish to Macedonian.	4,26
2	In Macedonian language classes, we orally translate from Macedonian to Turkish.	4,27
3	In Macedonian language classes, we learn how to memorize new words.	4,68
4	In Macedonian language classes, we learn and practice different dialogues.	4,14
5	In Macedonian language classes, we learn how to pronounce words correctly.	4,59
6	In Macedonian language classes, we learn the grammar rules of Macedonian through games.	3,64
7	In Macedonian language classes, we learn to tell stories using comic-strip images.	3,68
8	In Macedonian language classes, we act out different characters while speaking in Macedonian.	3,57

e. Qualitative Insights

Focus-group discussions revealed three recurring challenges:

1. Large, mixed-proficiency classes, which make differentiation difficult;
2. Behavioral disruptions reduce adequate instructional time; and
3. Limited exposure to Macedonian outside of class hinders the natural acquisition of the language.

Students proposed more interactive group work and digital materials. Their reflections underscore the need for a learning ecology that supports both linguistic growth and sociocultural inclusion, pillars of the Prism Model, which holds promise for our educational approach.

f. Integrative Interpretation

Synthesizing the quantitative and qualitative results reveals that while the learning environment is emotionally safe, it remains academically narrow and methodologically traditional. Teachers display a commitment, but they often lack systemic support, modern resources, and training in bilingual pedagogy. Implementing the Prism Model would require:

- Revising the curriculum to begin Macedonian earlier and increase weekly hours;
- embedding Macedonian in interdisciplinary projects;
- providing continuous professional development in bilingual and CLIL methodologies; and
- developing culturally responsive materials that connect Macedonian learning with students' lived experiences.

Conclusion and Implications

This study identifies persistent structural and pedagogical barriers in Macedonian-language instruction for students from other linguistic communities. Although teachers cultivate a respectful

atmosphere, instruction remains limited in duration, differentiation, and academic integration. The findings confirm the relevance of the Prism Model in guiding systemic reform.

Implementing its principles would:

- Foster **additive bilingualism**, enabling students to develop Macedonian without diminishing their first-language competence;
- The Prism Model significantly enhances **academic integration** by aligning Macedonian language instruction with content learning, thereby improving students' comprehension and retention of subject matter.
- Strengthen **cognitive development** through communicative, inquiry-based activities; and
- The Prism Model plays a crucial role in building **sociocultural inclusion** by affirming and celebrating students' multilingual identities, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Policy-makers should revise the national curriculum for non-native learners to ensure early and continuous exposure, as well as teacher training, aligned with bilingual education research. At the school level, the potential of the Prism Model to transform Macedonian-language classes from isolated grammar sessions into spaces of intercultural and intellectual growth is promising and warrants further exploration.

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