Innovative Approaches to Solving Key Problems in the Teaching of Slovak Language and Literature at the Primary Level

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Abstract:

Introduction: This paper examines the key problems teachers encounter when teaching Slovak language and literature in primary education, focusing on the core competences required for pupils' understanding and application of linguistic knowledge. Attention is also given to factors that contribute to the insufficient development of these competences.

Methods: A qualitative design was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth insights into teachers' experiences. The research identifies major problems and effective teaching methods in Slovak language and literary education. Data were collected in the Bratislava region of Slovakia.

Results: The findings show that insufficient communication skills have multifaceted origins, including limited family communication, passive digital lifestyles, and weak reading habits. Teachers emphasise the need to vary methods to support individual learning approaches and linguistic development.

Discussion: Teachers identified underdeveloped communication skills, weak reading comprehension, and declining ability to sustain attention to text as central issues in pupils' learning of Slovak language.

Limitations: The study is limited by its regional scope, the subjective nature of the responses, and the lack of quantitative data.

Conclusions: The research offers new insights into teaching strategies and highlights teachers' concerns about the negative influence of digital and multimedia environments on pupils' text comprehension and communication skills.

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Introduction

The current concept of mother tongue instruction is based on fundamental, mutually interrelated pillars. The first of these are thematic areas covering the content of education. These include communicative interaction, production (spoken, written and digital) and reception (Ligoš, 2024). These defined areas of knowledge acquisition have in principle replaced the three-component model used in the past, covering the basic areas of education: Slovak language, reading and literary education, and stylistic and communicative education. Although it may initially appear that each of the aforementioned components has its own specific and autonomous position within the subject, this is not entirely the case and the didactic concept of teaching Slovak is based on an integrative principle that links the individual components in a justified and meaningful way, thereby contributing to the development of the basic competences (Ferková & Zacharová, 2024) necessary for the use of the language and the text. Each of the key competences is essential for a pupil's existence in both school and out-of-school environments. Nevertheless, as noted by the participants in our research, achieving these competences at an adequate level is more difficult for pupils than it was in the past. Therefore, in the following section, we shall characterise their basic features of each of them.

1 Communicative and productive competence of the pupil and possibilities of its support Section heading

The development of a pupil's communicative competence presupposes its basic definition and the understanding that it represents "the ability to produce and receive semantically and grammatically correct utterances, but also to produce and receive appropriate utterances in relation to a specific situation and context" (Vaňko, 1999, p. 85). The ability to communicate coherently, meaningfully and correctly evolves and improves and is conditioned not only by the environment in which the pupil operates and their dispositions, but also by the ontogenesis of speech and its particular developmental stage (Vužňáková, 2015). However, it is undoubtedly also conditioned by communicative skills, which should be (purposefully) developed in the school environment. These are basically divided into two groups: "Receptive (related to decoding processes: listening and reading) and productive in nature (related to encoding processes: speaking and writing). The division into the aforementioned two groups is based on the model of the communicative event, which, besides the participants in communication

(the producer and the receiver) and their speech activity, also includes the text, i.e. the spoken or written communicative message, and the environment in which the communicative situation is realised." (Klimovič & Rusňák, 2011, p. 30)

Receptive skills, and particularly the deteriorating reading and reading comprehension levels of pupils, are influenced by a number of factors (Ligoš, 2016) that are not directly affected by school practice, although their reflection within this setting will be necessary in the future. In Slovakia, a declining interest in reading as a leisure activity among children has long been observed (Babiaková et al., 2020). Concurrently, there is a growing trend of shifting reading activities to digital platforms and a trend of "digital reading", which is gradually replacing the traditional process of text reception as we have known and used it until now (Aktas & Yilmaz, 2024). Macia and Aerila (2023) state that, for pupils who show no interest in reading traditional, physical texts, digital books, for example, represent a useful source of motivation as well as a means of increasing reading self-confidence, since they offer a more dynamic experience of reading a story. Regardless of the possibilities offered by the digitised reception of text, such as reading hypertexts and multimedia formats like Loop Readers, the development of reading competences in the school environment continues to focus on methods that require creative work with text as a fundamental semiotic structure and that develop basic literary competence and potentially also comprehension of both informative and literary texts. Among them we can include reading with prediction, creative completion of the story, completing the story with a picture, or the method of questions and extracts from the text (Borovská, 2015; Sieglová, 2019). Systematization of the knowledge text is deepened, for example, by mental mapping, brainstorming and brainwriting. The common feature of each of the given methods is the segmentation of the text into meaningfull units and the derivation of the main idea or focal information. At the same time, they fulfil the basic condition of each of the creative and activating methods, namely that such methods do not provide ready-made knowledge, but are based on the interconnection of different relationships, contexts and subjects (Kotrba & Lacina, 2011). All of these methods are beneficial for developing communicative and literary competences (Lagerová, 2021), provided they are implemented regularly and not merely as an occasional "diversification" of the teaching process. Suppose pedagogues repeatedly draw attention to the fact that pupils are deteriorating in the above-mentioned communicative skills, particularly in the quality and level of written expression. In that case, it is appropriate to ask how and whether this situation can be changed, and what support strategies and intervention possibilities are available. Written expression is inherently more demanding than the spoken word, and its demandingness does not lie only in following grammatical rules. When someone

writes, they intentionally construct their speech, searching for the right words and finding the best sentences (Kováčová, 2011).

Writing that results in a meaningful text ultimately represents a cognitively demanding process from multiple perspectives. The automatisation of grammatical rules is directly determined by the mental abilities of the child, but also by the teaching methods, where the demonstration of grammatical principles (Çakır & Kurnaz, 2022) should be grounded in examples and situations drawn from the child's immediate experience. A separate issue is the development ofpupils' productive textual competence, which is closely linked to stylistic education and the production of written communicative texts. There are techniques for developing productive textual competence that can be used in primary school, and their effectiveness is demonstrable. These include, for example, clustering, alliteration, creating a story from a picture, and others. They are based on the principle of free associative writing, recording thought processes that free the writer from adhering to strictly defined rules, schemes, and frameworks. Their common denominator is associativity - in both the sensory and empirical sense of the word. The techniques of associative writing are based on external and internal stimuli that the writer receives in the preparatory phase, before the actual creation of the text (Pillárová, 2014). At the same time, we are of the opinion that all these techniques and methods, which are purposely aimed at the development of creativity in writing, also contribute to the improvement of pupils' verbal communication skills, the ability to express themselves coherently and meaningfully and to formulate verbal statements.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research problem

Despite continuous innovations in the educational process and reforms in the school system, several problems related to teaching of Slovak language and literature persist in primary education. A crucial challenge is the effective development of pupils' linguistic competences, taking into account their individual abilities, interest in the subject, and the diversity of their learning needs. The question remains: Which methods and approaches can most effectively support the active acquisition of Slovak language and literature within primary education, while also eliminating existing learning barriers?

2.2 Research aim

The aim of this research is to identify key problems in teaching didactics of Slovak language and literature at the primary education level, based on the experiences of primary school teachers with at least seven years of teaching practice. At the same time, it focuses on the analysis of the professional attitudes

of teachers towards effective teaching methods and strategies that contribute to the development of pupils' language competences. The aim is also to explore how teachers' experience influences their choice of educational approaches and which innovative practices they consider most effective in eliminating the identified problems within the educational process.

Therefore, it is hypothesised as follows that:

2.3 Research questions

The research focuses on identifying the difficulties that primary education teachers encounter when teaching Slovak language and literature. The primary goal is to examine the specific problems that teachers perceive in relation to developing students' language skills, within the context of current curricular requirements, class dynamics, and the availability of pedagogical resources. Additional research questions aim to clarify other dimensions of the teaching process. The first of these is the identification of teaching methods and didactic approaches that teachers consider most effective in stimulating students' language development. Special attention is paid to the extent to which traditional methods are preferred and to what extent teachers tend towards modern, student-centered approaches to working with texts.

Main research question are as follows:

What problems do primary education teachers identify in the teaching of Slovak language and literature?

Supplementary research questions:

Which teaching methods and didactic approaches do teachers consider the most effective in developing pupils' language competences?

How does the professional experience of teachers influence the choice of didactic strategies in the teaching of Slovak language and literature?

What impact does the use of innovative teaching methods have on pupils' motivation to read and actively acquire Slovak language?

2.4 Research method

Our research employs a qualitative research strategy. We chose a semi-structured interview as the research method. This type of interview allows for a combination of thematically thought-out questions with flexibility during the interaction, thus supporting the freedom of participants' responses (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and creating space for developing their own interpretations. The questions were formulated in such a way that they were thematically linked and enabled a more detailed examination of problem areas. The atmosphere of the interview was relaxed, open, and mostly friendly. The research was conducted with qualified primary education teachers who have at least ten years of pedagogical experience. The selection of participants chosen in this way

corresponds to the principle of purposeful selection (Patton, 2015). Long-term professional experience also increases the reliability of the statements provided, thus supporting the continuity of the pedagogical reflections examined.

2.5 Research sample

The research study involved 23 female primary education teachers from the Bratislava region. The research sample is of high quality, as we were able to conduct interviews with participants who possess extensive professional experience. The average length of their teaching practice was approximately 20 years, ranging from a minimum of 10 years to a maximum of 40 years. This fact ensures a high level of expertise. Additionally, it enables us to gather valuable information about long-term trends and transformations in the field of teaching Slovak language and literature in primary education. We conducted the interviews with the teachers in an open atmosphere in order to focus on the issues of our research. The research process yielded several interesting insights, attitudes, opinions, experiences, and reflections from primary education teachers. We recorded the interviews on a dictaphone.

2.6 Ethical issues in research

It was necessary to ensure that the research was conducted in accordance with ethical principles while protecting the rights and dignity of the participants. All participants were fully informed about the voluntary nature of their participation and had the option to withdraw from the research at any time. Written informed consent was obtained from the participants for both their participation in the research and the recording of interviews. To ensure the privacy and anonymity of the participants' personal data, their responses were processed in such a way that they could not be identified retrospectively. The participants' responses were subsequently interpreted objectively, without distortion or minimisation of research bias. During the interviews, respect and deference to the views and experiences of the female teachers was maintained. Questions were formulated in a way that did not disparage their professional expertise or personal attitudes.

3 Analysis and interpretation of research data

The method we chose for evaluating the collected data was open coding. Open coding is a fundamental analytical technique in qualitative research, often employed during the processing and interpretation of interviews. This method allows for the systematic identification, categorisation, and analysis of meaning units in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The process of open coding consists of dividing the text into smaller sections (words, sentences, thematic blocks), which are then marked with codes - words or phrases that capture their essence. These codes are later grouped into broader categories and concepts, allowing for

the identification of patterns and relationships between different phenomena within the problem under study (Charmaz, 2006). After conducting the interviews, it was necessary to transcribe them, resulting in several versions of the transcripts. As a coding unit, we set the meaning unit. Subsequently, we generated codes that were categorised and grouped according to common phenomena, thus creating individual categories. The meaning categories were further annotated, highlighted, and supplemented with codes reflecting different perspectives on the issue under study.

By analysing the obtained statements, we identified two categories of meaning: Focal Issues and Effective Methods in the Teaching of Slovak Language and Literature. These categories reflect the main challenges that teachers encounter in their teaching practice, as well as proven approaches that contribute to improving the teaching process. Within each category, we identified several codes that specify key areas of the issue under investigation in more detail. Teachers' statements are supplemented in the interpretation with authentic quotations that provide deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives.

3.1 Focal issues

The primary objective of our research was to identify the key issues in the didactics of the Slovak language from the perspective of experienced teachers with extensive teaching experience. Through interviews, we gained deep insight into the issues, analysing not only the problems themselves, but also their causes and possible solutions. The direct experience of teachers enabled us to thoroughly examine the factors influencing the teaching of Slovak language and literature, to identify key challenges, and to discuss practical pedagogical approaches. The following sections include authentic statements from teachers who made a significant contribution to the quality of our research. Their reflections and pedagogical experience provide insights for the further development of the didactics of Slovak language and literature.

3.1.1 Insufficient communication skills of pupils

The teachers' statements indicate that pupils' insufficient communication skills are perceived as a serious issue, negatively affecting not only their verbal expression but also the overall process of acquiring Slovak language. The analysis of the statements highlights several key aspects that contribute to this phenomenon.

3.1.2 Poor verbal expression skills

Teachers point out that students have a limited ability to formulate continuous sentences, and their expression is often limited to single or double sentences (M23: "Expressing is a problem… simply, they cannot talk."). In addition, their

speech reveals the excessive use of vocabulary words ("that, that"), which indicates uncertainty and poor linguistic self-esteem.

3.1.3 The influence of the family environment on communication skills
An important factor influencing the level of pupils' communication skills is the family environment. Teachers point out the lack of communication within families, which leads to weakened speech abilities in children (C17: "Someone does not talk to children in the family at all... Education in the family is very important." The lack of language patterns and the passive approach of parents to the child's speech development result in children lacking sufficient vocabulary and problems with formulating ideas.

3.1.4 The dominance of digital technologies and the decline of reading habits
Another significant factor identified by teachers is the increased use of computers, mobile phones, and social networking at the expense of direct communication and reading (E11: "Children are less inclined to read, converse less with their parents, and are always on their computers or phones."). A lack of interaction with books and texts leads to a poor vocabulary, difficulties in understanding texts, and a limited ability to work with language.

3.1.5 The need for increased emphasis on communication education in school
The statements show that teachers perceive a need for more intensive development of communication skills within the teaching process. In addition to grammar and spelling, greater emphasis should be placed on practical work with language and interactive methods to support pupils' verbal expression (R19: "Perhaps there should be more communication, children need it.").
According to the statements of the teachers involved in our research, pupils' communication skills represent one of the most crucial problems. Teachers point out that pupils have limited expressive abilities, their speech is often incoherent, strays off topic, and lacks appropriate respect when communicating with teachers – they speak to teachers in the same way as they do to their peers. During the interviews, teachers reflected on the causes of this phenomenon. They agreed that a key factor is the family environment in which the pupil grows up. Based on their experience and observations, they concluded that many children spend a significant portion of their time alone, with their primary companion being a computer or other digital technologies. Altamura et al. (2023) confirm the so-called screen inferiority effect, which suggests that reading on a screen leads to shallower text processing and weaker comprehension compared to reading print. Digital reading is faster, but less reflective of the original text. Nag et al. (2024) found that high-quality HLE (shared reading and book availability) has a positive impact on language development, although the effect is small to medium in

magnitude. The most substantial impact is from interactive parental activities (reading, conversation), not passive sources.

3.2 Reading comprehension problems

According to teachers' accounts, reading comprehension is one of the most significant problems in the area of language acquisition. Teachers point out that pupils do not work with the text as a whole but perceive it only in fragments, which makes it difficult for them to understand.

3.2.1 Inability to process the read text

According to participant Ľ17, pupils often read only individual words or segments of sentences. They are unable to grasp the overall meaning: "Pupils read the sentence, but do not read the words and sentences in their entirety, just as individual fragments, resulting in a lack of understanding of how to express the meaning." When asked to interpret a text after reading it, they are unable to reproduce the essence of its content: "They are clueless when asked after three or four sentences what they actually read and what happened. They have to reread it, and some of them do not even know anything two or three, and then get tired of it."

3.2.2 The impact of reading comprehension on other subjects

Reading comprehension affects not only the teaching of the Slovak language, but also other subjects, as emphasised by teacher B20: "It is present in every subject, including science, civilization, and mathematics, and children struggle with it." This problem also persists at the lower secondary level, where pupils are unable to interpret assignments correctly: "There is a problem reading the entry correctly because even now the monitors are ready to read the text and review the information…" M12 points out that even in Year 3 and above, pupils are often dependent on teachers, expecting the assignment to be explained to them instead of trying to understand it on their own. "These little children still expect the teacher to explain the assignment to them, and so they are waiting for what to happen."

3.2.3 Low ability to concentrate on the text being read

Z23 also identifies a problem with pupils' poor concentration and inability to listen to and analyze the text: "The main obstacles encourage pupils to concentrate on perceiving and understanding with precision." Many pupils are not accustomed to listening to text, even when it is read aloud, which becomes evident from an early age: "Many children are not accustomed to listening to or reading text or even recording it." Z23 also highlights the importance of pre-school education - children are not guided to listen to and engage with texts from

an early age, which later manifests itself at school: "This is not the fault of some system or themes, or something, but simply that those children from home are not taught to read or listen to something up to those 6 years."

Teachers clearly agree that insufficient reading comprehension is a serious problem, affecting not only Slovak language lessons but also learning in other subjects. The main factors contributing to this problem include fragmented reading without a complete understanding of the text, an inability to interpret the content read, waiting for the teacher's explanation instead of actively working with the text, poor concentration, and the habit of not analysing spoken or written speech, as well as insufficient guidance in reading and listening from the preschool age. These factors suggest that a possible solution could be more systematic guidance of pupils towards text comprehension, the development of their analytical skills, and greater emphasis on reading literacy from an early age. Current studies (Cadime et al., 2024) show that executive functions (attention, inhibition) significantly predict reading comprehension, which supports the "Active View of Reading" theory.

3.3 Poor written expression of pupils

Based on teachers' statements, it is clear that a low level of pupils' written expression is one of the most serious problems in teaching the Slovak language. Teachers agree that grammatical rules, especially the spelling of hard and soft 'i/y', represent a long-term challenge not only for younger pupils but also for older pupils in second grade.

Teacher I26 highlights the complexity of Slovak orthography and its difficulty to explain to young children: "Learning the Slovak language can be quite difficult at first, particularly when it comes to spelling. We teach children hard and soft consonants. (...) How do you explain to such a little other, why is there soft I, I read it hard?" A similar view is held by K23, who claims that the biggest problem for pupils is recognizing and using the correct forms of 'i and 'y correctly. She also points to the importance of regular spelling practice through dictation: "A serious problem is always i and y, that's clear. Writing dictations is problematic. I have this habit of doing a dictation for homework at least once a week; we introduced this rule in agreement with the parents. (...) With some, I can see a change. Still, mostly it's like this, that those who know how to write dictations, write them at home". Z17 describes in detail the difficulty of grammar rules in each year of primary education and points out that weaker pupils struggle to keep up with the pace of teaching: "The second year saw the flight of hard and soft consonants, ď, ť, ň, ľ, come, go, it, let. In the third year, there are selected words; it is quite difficult. Those who are skilled will immediately understand them, but the weaker ones will not be able to do so. In the fourth year, it is still being conquered, but has already accelerated." A40 summarises

the overall issue with spelling and emphasises that written expression remains a problem even at the secondary level: "You still need to practice the spelling, because they have the biggest problem with hard y, soft I – still. This is still the case in the next years at the second stage."

Teachers' responses indicate that students have long-term difficulties with grammar and spelling, which persist into later grades. This is consistent with research findings (e.g., Daffern, 2017) that show that poor spelling skills can lead to slower written production and a feeling of "stuckness" when writing, which has a long-term impact on text production skills in later grades. Teachers emphasize the need for systematic practice and repetition of spelling phenomena, which is supported by the literature recommending an explicit and deliberate approach to teaching grammar and spelling (Pawlak, 2024). Other research documents that spelling errors significantly hinder writing fluency and affect the quality of written expressions in the long term (Niolaki et al., 2023).

3.4 Effective methods in teaching Slovak language and literature

Experience from pedagogical practice often confirms that an appropriately chosen teaching method can significantly contribute to achieving the set educational goals. In this context, our research focuses on effective methods for teaching the Slovak language. As part of individual interviews, we asked teachers to identify the methods they considered particularly effective in teaching Slovak language, literature, or communication education. We focused on their empirical experiences and were interested in which practices they found most effective based on their own teaching practices. The following teacher accounts, the result of our research coding, provide concrete examples of effective teaching methods that have proven successful in practice. The following sections provide a detailed discussion of each code, drawing on teachers' authentic experiences and their direct accounts.

3.4.1 Demonstration in teaching

Based on teachers' statements, the demonstration method is widely regarded as one of the most effective teaching methods, particularly in primary education. Teachers emphasise that pupils need visual support to acquire new material, including abstract concepts such as parts of speech or letters. P16 states, "Effective is the method of clarity; they need to see everything. Sometimes I think we show them a lot. As if they did not perceive one ear, the clarity is important so that they can even imagine it when I tell them something. Visualisation and motivation are the most important". This opinion is also supported by the M20, which says: "The method of clarity, it is necessary to show those words, visually, to remember." This approach seems to be crucial, especially for younger students. S24 points out: "For the smallest students, the

opinion is important to see how the letters look. It is essential to have some tables with letters drawn up and wall paintings. They have to show it all, they can't imagine it." Another statement from V25 shows how demonstration also promotes pupils' active participation in the classroom: "First of all, demonstration. Pupils like to see everything on the board; they enjoy writing, feel monitored by the whole class, and become more diligent, checking each other's work."

3.4.2 Implementation of activating methods

Activating methods play a crucial role in the teaching of Slovak language and literature, as they enable pupils to understand the subject matter more deeply, retain it in the long term, and actively engage in the learning process. In contrast to the passive reception of information, these methods stimulate critical thinking, creative expression, and personal experience, thereby improving the acquisition of language skills. Based on teachers' accounts, it is evident that activating methods play a crucial role in teaching Slovak language and literature at the primary level of education and are used primarily in practice as a means of increasing pupils' motivation and supporting their active involvement in the learning process. Teachers emphasise the importance of playful forms of learning, the variation of methods, and an individual approach to pupils. Most teachers agree that effective teaching requires a combination of different methods. For example, M15 states: "The teacher should be able to alternate it at an appropriate level, not just methods, but also forms and everything that every child can find." This statement emphasizes the importance of differentiation in teaching, as each pupil may have a unique learning style. E36 also emphasizes the importance of varying methods, describing the use of didactic games as a means of helping children absorb the subject matter more effectively. A similar view is expressed by D21, who sees the role of the teacher as being able to respond appropriately to pupils' differing preferences: "Some prefer one thing, others something else." This approach reflects differentiated teaching, where pupils' individual learning styles are respected.

3.4.3 Playful forms as a means of activating pupils

Teachers agree that didactic games are an integral part of teaching, as pupils learn naturally and with greater enthusiasm through play. For example, K32 describes: "Didactic games are good, children enjoy competing. For example, when I was teaching selected words, in class I had paper attached to the board somewhere, and they would draw pictures for me, such as a plant, they glued, wrote, drew, and were rewarded with praise." Similarly, M20 emphasises that pupils still enjoy playing, and teaching should be adapted to their needs: "Play with them, because they still like to play. For example, we recently had

inflectable words, and so many times they were fidgeting in their desks because of the inflected words, so we somehow rotated and played." These statements highlight that incorporating movement into learning can help maintain pupils' attention and make it easier for them to absorb the material.

3.4.4 Peer learning and group work

Teachers also highlight the importance of cooperation between pupils. A19 describes using a domino game in Slovak language lessons, where pupils help one another: "They learn in a group, so peer learning works there, they teach each other, and I have found many times in such activities that they feel they are playing and learn a lot." This response suggests that pupils naturally acquire new knowledge and develop their social skills through games and group activities.

Based on the analysis of teachers' responses, it is clear that active methods are perceived as important didactic practices to make teaching more effective, supported by research (Lantis et al., 2010), which demonstrates that active learning, including case studies, simulations and games, increases student engagement, motivation and sustainability of knowledge compared to traditional teaching (Li & Kangas, 2024). Teachers prefer playful forms of learning, involving movement and competition, which aligns with the literature, which shows that play-based learning supports cognitive, social, and physical skills and leads to better student engagement. At the same time, alternating methods and respecting individual student needs are important, as supported by research on active learning and its benefits for academic performance and interest in teaching. In addition, peer learning and group work are also important aspects, which support collaboration and facilitate student learning from each other. Group work leads to significant increases in academic performance (Tenenbaum & Winstone, 2020).

4   Discussion

Based on the analysis of teachers' responses and comparison with current international research, several key findings can be identified. Insufficient communication skills of students represent a serious problem, which is manifested by limited verbal expression and low language self-confidence. This trend corresponds to the results of the international PISA 2022 testing, which indicate a decline in reading literacy (OECD, 2023). The family environment also has a fundamental influence on the development of language skills. Lack of communication within the family and the absence of language models result in a limited vocabulary. Research confirms the positive effect of a high-quality home literary environment on children's language development (Silinskas & Davolyte, 2025). Similarly, the dominance of digital technologies and the decline in reading habits reduce students' ability to work with text. Meta-analyses indicate

the so-called 'screen inferiority effect', i.e., slightly worse comprehension of text on the screen compared to print (Salmerón et al., 2021). In addition, distracting stimuli when reading on devices have a negative impact on comprehension (Clinton-Lisell, 2019).

Effective teaching methods include clarity, visualization, and multimodality. Research confirms that visual organizers and image materials support critical thinking and text comprehension (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). Activating methods (alternation of forms, differentiation) are key. Meta-analyses show a medium to significant effect of cooperative learning on cognitive outcomes. Playful forms and gamification increase student motivation and engagement. Reviews confirm the positive impact of didactic games on vocabulary and willingness to communicate (Nurhayati & Fathurrohman, 2025). The above findings indicate the need for systematic communication education, support for family reading activities, thoughtful use of digital technologies, implementation of cooperative and playful methods, and a combination of visual and multimodal approaches in teaching the Slovak language.

Conclusions

Our study focused on identifying the key problems in the teaching of Slovak language and literature at the primary level of education and on researching effective didactic methods used by experienced teachers. The research was conducted through qualitative analysis, utilizing semi-structured interviews with primary teachers, with an emphasis on their experiences, attitudes, and recommendations for enhancing the quality of language education. The results of the research showed that the biggest challenges in teaching Slovak language include the varying language abilities of pupils, low motivation to read, and the need to use activating methods to support effective learning. Teachers emphasised the importance of combining traditional and innovative teaching methods, with didactic games, group activities, text dramatization, and the use of visual aids considered the most effective. From teachers' perspective, the Slovak language is challenging to master, as they are aware that its grammatical system can be confusing and complex for pupils. Therefore, they strive to adopt an empathetic and didactically thoughtful approach to teaching, making the process of acquiring language rules easier for the pupils. A key aspect of teaching is the opportunity to try out various learning methods, with the teacher's role being to provide pupils with a diverse range of educational strategies and to encourage their active engagement in the learning process.

An important finding was that teachers with many years of experience emphasise an individual approach to pupils and regard variability in didactic strategies as a key factor for success. It was also evident that teachers' expertise significantly influences their choice of teaching method, with those who are open to new

approaches more frequently incorporating modern technologies and gamification into their teaching. Overall, the study offers up-to-date insights into the learning of the Slovak language and literature at the primary level of education, highlighting the need for ongoing innovation in didactic approaches to enhance pupils' motivation and language competencies.

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