

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Greenwich
Unit of Assessment: (UoA 28) - Modern Languages and Linguistics
Title of case study: Language learning and teaching in Macedonia: policy and delivery
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Inter-ethnic communication was identified as key to building social stability in Macedonia after the political turmoil of 1999-2001. But the three main ethnic groups – Serbian, Macedonian and Albanian – had only a low level knowledge of each other’s languages. Professor Benati was able to apply his pioneering research on how best to help people learn a second language to provide the basis for (a) a fundamental change in the country’s language education policy and (b) a significant improvement in grammar teaching methodology throughout Macedonia.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The Macedonian project was based on studies of Input Processing and Processing Instruction. Professor Benati was one of a small international team who started the theoretical framework on this field of Second Language Acquisition in the mid-1990s. Input Processing argues that second language learners will process information available to them from the language’s surface structure more effectively if their attention can be drawn to those items of the language which carry grammatical significance. The normal tendency of learners is to pay attention to lexical items as they carry most meaning but in order to learn the syntax, ways must be found of making the grammatical items more salient for them. Learners can be taught to note the grammar, often without resorting to conscious knowledge; input processing studies demonstrate how. Processing Instruction looks at ways in which materials can be presented to learners so that Input Processing happens in the most successful way possible through input enhancement.</p> <p>The key research underpinning Professor Benati’s understanding of Input Processing and Processing Instruction was carried out between 2001 to 2007, during which time he investigated the effects of Processing Instruction under a variety of conditions, teasing out variables and testing the relative effects of this psycholinguistic approach to grammar instruction [3.1]. The main variables were the taught language: English, Japanese, Italian etc; different <i>forms</i> like gender and tense, and syntactic <i>structures</i> like word order; and then the different learners and their mother tongues. Of particular interest to the Macedonian project was how technology could best be utilised within this learning and teaching methodology. This was the focus of Professor Benati’s 2007 book <i>Delivering Processing Instruction in Classroom and Virtual Contexts</i>. It examines empirically the differential effects of delivering Processing Instruction by instructors in classrooms compared with students working individually with computers.</p> <p>The period 2008-2013 examined further aspects of Processing Instruction. The 2008 monograph [3.2.2] demonstrated how training on one particular grammatical feature impacts on the acquisition of other features affected by a similar processing problem. The 2010 book [3.3.2] examined the impact of learning through discourse or conversation as opposed to closed sentences, again on the basis of a number of classroom-based empirical studies. The 2013 book [3.3.3] examines the interplay between individual differences such as age, working memory and aptitude, and Processing Instruction. Other monographs relate research findings to their classroom applications in different contexts eg <i>Japanese Language Teaching (2009)</i> [3.3.1]. Overall, this research indicated the importance of manipulating input to provide a focus on grammatical features. Grammar tasks should be designed to ensure that learners process input correctly and efficiently by noticing and processing forms in the input, eventually making correct connections between a grammatical form and its meaning.</p> <p>Professor Benati has also undertaken research to make theory and research accessible to non-specialists, and to identify the links between theory and practice in second language learning and teaching, and links between research findings and their classroom implications and applications. He has published a further three monographs to address these issues for the benefit of teachers and practitioners.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (REF1 submitted staff in bold, **REF2 Output)</p>

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3.1 **Benati, A.** (2001). A comparative study of the effects of processing instruction and output-based instruction on the acquisition of the Italian future tense. *Language Teaching Research*, 5(2), 95–127. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/136216880100500202>

This is one of the most cited articles within the Processing Instruction research framework.

3.2 The publications on language processing and processing instruction listed below are considered key publications in the field and have made important advances in understanding the effects of processing instruction and providing solutions for grammar teaching

3.2.1 Lee, J. F., & **Benati, A. G.** (2007). *Second language processing*. London: Continuum Intl Pub Group. Retrieved from <http://gala.gre.ac.uk/1381/>

3.2.2 **Benati, A. G., & Lee, J. F. (2008). *Grammar Acquisition and Processing Instruction*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. Retrieved from <http://gala.gre.ac.uk/1403/>

3.2.3 **Benati, A. G., & Lee, J. F. (2011). *Processing Instruction and Discourse*. London: Continuum. (see reviews: <http://www.bloomsbury.com/us/processing-instruction-and-discourse-978>). Retrieved from <http://gala.gre.ac.uk/3527/>

3.3 *Second Language Teaching and Second Language Acquisition*

These monographs have also made significant contributions to the field of SLA (see reviews: <http://www.bloomsbury.com/us/key-terms-in-second-language-acquisition-9780826499158/>).

3.3.1 **Benati, A. G.** (2009). *Japanese Language Teaching*. London: Continuum. Retrieved from <http://gala.gre.ac.uk/1334>

3.3.2 Van Patten, B., & **Benati, A. G.** (2010). *Key Terms in Second Language Acquisition*. London: Continuum. Retrieved from <http://gala.gre.ac.uk/1335/>

3.3.3 **Benati, A. G.** (2013). *Issues in Second Language Teaching*. Equinox Publishing Ltd. Retrieved from <http://gala.gre.ac.uk/7322/>

Key Grants

3a A. G. Benati. *Processing Instruction and Individual Differences*. Leverhulme Trust, Visiting Fellowship Grant Dr T. Angelovska (Ref. F00345/F). Jan 2012-Sep 2012. £18,470.
The research conducted by Professor Benati in establishing how individual differences might have an impact on processing instruction was supported by a Leverhulme Visiting Fellowship grant, with Dr Angelovska (University of Munich) working for nine months with Professor Benati.

3b A. G. Benati. OSCE High Commissioner of National Securities (Ref. 035/10). €58,821.
Professor Benati was the co-ordinator of a team, the editor of the teacher's guidebook and the trainer for a teacher training cascade programme.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Macedonia has faced high levels of community conflict and tension in recent years, bordered as it is by Kosovo and Albania with a large Albanian population living within its borders. A coalition of stakeholders including the Macedonian government and Bureau of Education, OSCE (Organisation for Security & Cooperation in Europe) and British Council saw improved inter-ethnic communication as a way to reduce tension. But the three main ethnic groups – Serbian, Macedonian and Albanian – had only a low level knowledge of each other's languages. Professor Benati is one of a group which developed the discipline of Processing Instruction which showed that people learn from immersion in a language and from implicit or unconscious searching for meaning in the form and structures they hear. They found that methods which enabled this implicit

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acquisition were more successful than traditional methods, which give explicit grammar instruction followed by mechanical practice. Professor Benati has led many classroom-based empirical studies in the last 20 years in order to develop practical tools for teachers, particularly in the teaching of grammar. He was invited to apply his research for the first time on a project of this scale, to introduce a new education policy and practice in the teaching of second languages across Macedonia. The project was implemented between May 2010 and December 2011.

The underpinning research on input processing and processing instruction represented the foundation for the development of a new model of grammar instruction which provided teachers in Macedonia with more effective and appropriate ways of teaching grammatical features, eg syntactic features, verbal morphology and nominal morphology, in the language classroom.

The two major outcomes of this project were the publication of a teaching guidebook, and the development and implementation of a training programme for school teachers on grammar teaching. The Guidebook was launched on 19 October 2011 at the Centre for Conferences and Studies in Skopje. The launch sparked wide interest in the professional and academic community. The event was attended by sixty participants including the Deputy Minister of Education and Science, representatives from the Department for the Promotion of 'Communities' Languages and faculty deans from state and private universities in the Republic of Macedonia. Hundreds of copies of the Guidebook, published in four languages, Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian, were disseminated during the event. The event was covered by the national TV station "Kanal 5" and a number of newspaper articles were published. Since then, thousands of copies of the Guidebook have been disseminated among language teachers throughout Macedonia, in collaboration with the regional offices of the Bureau of Education and Development.

Between August and December 2011, 444 language teachers from 37 primary and 17 secondary schools from 3 different cities (Skopje, Tetovo and Kumanovo) were trained using the teacher training programme on grammar teaching and the Guidebook. Twenty-eight training sessions were delivered in two languages (Macedonian and Albanian). Teachers of other foreign languages (English, German and French) benefited from the training as well as those teaching Macedonian and community languages. Responses and comments received from the training were positive and encouraging. The feedback confirmed that the training was well-designed and provided important insights into language curriculum development. It enhanced teachers' knowledge and ability to develop effective grammar tasks and to deliver them in the language classroom. The plan is to cascade the training to all schools in the country and to develop further training modules, for instance on the best way to give feedback to students.

An additional value of the project is the knowledge sharing and cooperation between institutions that previously worked in isolation from each other. As a result of the success of the project, state advisors from the Bureau of Education Development are cooperating with state and private university professors in adopting a new strategy to develop effective policies and methodologies in teaching a second language in Macedonia. A web site has now been set up where teachers can have online access to the training programme and the guidebook (Benati, A. (2011) (Ed.) *A Guidebook for Language Teaching*. High Commissioner For Minority Languages OSCE & British Council Macedonia. (Translated into Macedonian, Turkish, Serb, and Albanian.)

The research and its application are relevant to the acquisition of all second languages. Professor Benati and colleagues have since applied it to the teaching of Arabic and Japanese.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. <https://www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilMacedonia><https://www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilMacedonia>
2. Letters of support provided by two British Council Managers. The Head of Sector for Professional Development, and the Director of the Bureau of Education Development, both at the Bureau for Development of Education, Republic of Macedonia, and a further British Council

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Manager are corroborative contacts.

3. <http://www2.gre.ac.uk/about/schools/humanities/about/news/ed/a2040-alessandro-benati>

Book reviews

1. <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=7212452>

2. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00990.x/full>

3. <http://www.continuumbooks.com/books/detail.aspx?BookId=131256&SntUrl=150124>

4. http://jalt-publications.org/jj/issues/2010-05_32.1