

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT WITH JANJA KAFEL

Transcription of the Sound Recording

Interview with a German Teacher

Interviewer: Tanja Božič, Petja Janžekovič

Interviewee: Janja Kafel, German Teacher

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Tanja: Hello, Janja. First of all, I would like to ask you to briefly introduce yourself. Can you tell us how many years of experience do you have in teaching a foreign language, how old were your students on average, and how big your groups of children usually were?

Janja: Hi, Tanja. I am Janja Kafel, and I have ten years of experience teaching German as an elective subject at Primary School. My students were primarily between the ages of 10 and 15, and the groups usually consisted of 12 to 20 students.

Tanja: What is your opinion about the project now that we have introduced it to you?

Janja: I think the project sounds very promising. There are many resources available for language learning, but there is definitely a need for more targeted tools that can help students with learning difficulties.

Tanja: Did you perceive any specific challenges that you faced as a foreign language teacher when teaching children with different learning difficulties?

Janja: Absolutely. One of the main challenges was that students with learning difficulties often face stigma and are reluctant to participate fully. Additionally, they struggle with memorization and need constant repetition. Keeping their motivation high is another significant challenge.

Tanja: How many of these students were there in your classes?

Janja: In my experience, there were about 3 to 5 students in a class of 20 with some form of learning difficulty, whether it was diagnosed or not. This included issues like dyslexia, ADHD, and general difficulties with language acquisition.

Tanja: How did you use game-based digital teaching methods to teach children with learning difficulties? Were there any particular successes or challenges that you have encountered?

Janja: I used several digital tools like Kahoot, Baamboozle, and LearningApps to make lessons more interactive and engaging. These tools helped students learn in a fun way and provided instant feedback, which was very motivating. One challenge was that not all students had equal access to digital devices, which created disparities in their learning experiences.

Tanja: How did you improve your knowledge, skills, and competences as a foreign language teacher to better meet the needs of children with learning difficulties?

Janja: Continuous professional development is crucial. I regularly attended workshops and online courses focused on teaching strategies for students with learning difficulties. Collaboration with colleagues and sharing best practices was also very helpful.

Tanja: How did you identify the learning needs of children with learning difficulties in foreign language lessons?

Janja: Identifying learning needs required close observation and communication. I looked for signs of struggle, such as difficulty following along, reluctance to participate, or consistently low performance. I also spoke with parents and school counselors to get a complete picture of each student's needs.

Tanja: How did you adapt or modify the teaching materials to accommodate the different learning styles and challenges presented by children with learning difficulties?

Janja: I used a variety of strategies, such as simplifying texts, using larger fonts, and incorporating more visuals and interactive elements. I also provided additional practice materials and used assistive technologies to support learning.

Tanja: How did you design and implement individual learning plans for children with learning difficulties to ensure their success in learning a foreign language?

Janja: Individual learning plans are tailored to each student's specific needs. I set achievable goals, provided regular feedback, and adjusted the plan as needed based on the student's progress. Collaboration with parents and other educators was essential to ensure that the plan was effective.

Tanja: Can you give examples of inclusive teaching strategies that you used to include all learners, including those with learning difficulties, in foreign language learning activities?

Janja: Peer support is one effective strategy. Pairing students together, where one can help the other, fosters a collaborative learning environment. I also use a lot of group work and interactive activities that encourage all students to participate.

Tanja: Did you use assistive technologies or tools to support children with learning difficulties in your foreign language classes? If yes, how?

Janja: Yes, I used various tools such as text-to-speech software, interactive whiteboards, and language learning apps. These tools help make the learning process more accessible and engaging for students with different needs.

Tanja: How did you work with support services or professionals specializing in learning difficulties to address the specific needs of your students?

Janja: Collaboration with school counselors, special education teachers, and psychologists is crucial. We have regular meetings to discuss each student's progress and adjust their learning plans as needed.

Tanja: How do you provide feedback to children with learning difficulties and what strategies do you use to communicate effectively with them and their parents?

Janja: I provided regular, constructive feedback that highlights both strengths and areas for improvement. Communication with parents is frequent and involves detailed updates on their child's progress. I also encourage parents to be involved in the learning process at home.

Tanja: How do you differentiate assessment to fairly evaluate the language skills of children with learning difficulties, taking into account their different learning needs?

Janja: I use a variety of assessment methods, including oral exams, project-based assessments, and modified written tests. I ensure that the assessments are aligned with each student's individual learning plan and provide them with the necessary accommodations.

Tanja: What specific professional development opportunities or resources do you think would be useful to further improve your ability to meet the needs of children with learning difficulties in foreign language teaching?

Janja: Specialized training on teaching strategies for different types of learning difficulties would be very beneficial. Additionally, more resources and tools tailored specifically for foreign language learning would help teachers better support their students.

Tanja: Can you tell a success story of a student with learning difficulties who excelled in a foreign language under your guidance? What strategies contributed to their success?

Janja: One student comes to mind who had severe dyslexia. Initially, he struggled a lot, but by using visual aids, interactive games, and personalized instruction, he made significant progress. His confidence grew, and he became more active in class. By the end of the year, he was able to read and write simple sentences in German, which was a huge achievement for him.

Tanja: Thank you so much for sharing your insights, Janja. Your experience and strategies are very inspiring.

Janja: Thank you, Tanja. It was a pleasure talking to you.