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Title **Design-Based Research in German Didactics.
Research Projects on Language, Literature and Media
Didactics**

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Abstract The editorial introduces the special issue *Design-based research in German didactics. Research Projects on Language, Literature and Media Didactics*, which consists of a total of three Academic Articles and three Practice Illustrations. They provide an insight into current D(B)R projects in language, literature and media didactics.

Keywords Design-Based Research, German Didactics

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Design-Based Research in German Didactics¹. Research Projects on Language, Literature and Media Didactics

Elvira Topalović & Laura Drepper

1.0 Introduction

Since the 1990s, design-based research has developed into an influential research format in educational and teaching research based on pioneering work from the USA and the Netherlands. This can be seen in the numerous anthologies, journals and handbooks published in recent decades, in which it has established itself as a "paradigm of educational research" (Sandoval, 2014, 18). Brase & Jenert (2024), who conducted a survey on the "Web of Science" (<https://www.webof-science.com>) in January 2024, also confirm a trend towards almost continuously increasing publication numbers since 2004:

This indicates that the terms design-based research and educational design research have become more widely known and disseminated. It also shows that the genre has found a place within educational research. (Brase & Jenert, 2024, 2)

However, the extent of research in the various disciplines in the German-speaking academic world is very different: In contrast to other academic disciplines such as Business Education (cf. e.g. Euler & Sloane, 2014), University Didactics (cf. e.g. Reinmann et al., 2024), Didactics of Mathematics (cf. e.g. Prediger et al., 2015), Music Education (cf. e.g. Konrad & Lehmann-Wermser, 2022) and (increasingly also) Foreign Language Didactics (cf. e.g. Delius, 2023), German didactics has only in recent years become increasingly involved with research approaches that are often subsumed under "design-based research" or "(educational) design research".

The great popularity of the research approach in German-speaking area (see Prediger's foreword to this anthology) is due to the fact that the creation of design experiments provides the basis for theory-based practical research (see Reinmann 2005: 60) and empirically based theorizing for educational policy (see van den Akker et al. 2006: 3f.), which could also improve the transfer of theory to practice (see Euler 2014a: 16; Reinmann 2005: 58). (Dube & Dannecker, 2024b, S. 19, trans. E.T. & L.D.)

Current evidence of the increasing acceptance in the German didactics research community is not only the recently published anthology by

¹ In German-language research discourse, the term "German didactics" refers to the academic discipline or science that deals with the theory and practice of teaching and learning German language and literature.

Dube & Dannecker (2024) in the open access series SLLD-B with double-blind review process, but also several section contributions on design-based research projects at "Symposion Deutschdidaktik" (SDD) this year (<https://sdd2024.uni-mainz.de>) as well as a panel (also with a review process). The article by Reusser (2024) published in June 2024 is likely to make design-based research even more popular, not only in German didactics: In his "food for thought on the theoretical and empirical further development of pedagogical-psychological teaching research with the objective of increasing its pedagogical effectiveness" (ibid.), Reusser argues, among other things, for the establishment and expansion of a "complementary mainstay as design-based development research (Brown 1992; Seidel et al. 2021; van den Akker et al. 2006)" (ibid., trans. E.T. & L.D.):

The objective is not primarily to gain explanatory knowledge, but rather practical and design knowledge, combined with the opening up of opportunities (Kiel 2007) and the new and further development of teaching strategies and teaching/learning materials that are expected to have the desired pedagogical effects. (Reusser, 2024, trans. E.T. & L.D.)

The statement thus joins the long-standing influential line of argumentation of the German-speaking design-based research discourse, in which "development-oriented educational research"² (trans. E.T. & L.D.) was also explicitly discussed in a future-oriented way as the "realisation of possible worlds" (Reinmann & Sesink, 2011, p. 9, trans. E.T. & L.D.):³

"Possible worlds" as a development goal is a figurative term and can include new educational programs with various individual measures or entire learning environments (physical, social and virtual). However, it can also refer to concrete, definable learning programs, individual new methods, educational or teaching and learning materials or digital tools with which people construct new (inner and outer) worlds. (Reinmann & Sesink, 2011, S. 9, trans. E.T. & L.D.)

In the following, we provide a brief insight into the genesis of German didactic D(B)R research (Chapter 2) and then briefly present the contributions to this special issue (Chapter 3).

2.0 D(B)R in German Didactics

The following introductory words have become a topos in design-based research: We find a whole "family of approaches" under terms such as "design experiments" (Brown, 1992; Collins, 1992), "design science of education" (Collins, 1992), "design-based research" (The Design-Based Research Collective, 2003; Sandoval & Bell, 2004, a.o.), "educational design research" (van den Akker et al., 2006; McKenney & Reeves, 2019) or (the shorter term) "design research" (see e.g. Collins et al., 2004; the contributions in van den Akker et al., 2006; Bakker,

² Reinmann (2024) refers to it today as DBR (see foreword).

³ See also Tulodziecki et al. (2013, pp. 205–227).

2018). Collins et al. (2004) point to a change in the terminological and conceptual range – from "design experiments" to "design research":

The term 'design experiments' was introduced in 1992, in articles by Ann Brown (1992) and Allan Collins (1992). Design experiments were developed as a way to carry out formative research to test and refine educational designs based on principles derived from prior research. More recently the term design research has been applied to this kind of work.

In the German-speaking research discourse, the terms "Design-Based Research" (DBR) (cf. e.g. Konrad & Lehmann-Wermser, 2022; Reinmann, 2020; Euler & Sloane, 2014) and "Design Research" (DR) (cf. Euler, 2014; Prediger et al., 2015) – also in the longer version "Educational Design Research" (cf. Brase & Jenert, 2024) – are among the most frequently used terms – alongside other (not always congruent or older) terms such as "entwicklungsorientierte Bildungsforschung" (cf. Reinmann & Sesink, 2011), "fachdidaktische Entwicklungsforschung" (cf. Prediger et al., 2012; Hußmann et al., 2013), "gestaltungsorientierte Bildungsforschung" (Tulodziecki et al., 2013) (used as a generic term) and – in a translation close to the original, as it were – "gestaltungsbasierte" or "designbasierte Forschung". While the terms (still) vary and lead to "compromise solutions" such as "Design (Based) Research" (cf. e.g. Neuhaus 2022) or "D(B)R" for the central terms, there are some fundamental similarities in design-based research approaches.

There is probably now a consensus that D(B)R is not a concrete method (cf. e.g. Bakker, 2018, p. 6), but – there is also a variance – e.g. a "methodologischer Rahmen" or "ein methodologisches Rahmenkonzept" (Reinmann, 2020, p. 1, with reference to Bakker, 2018, p. 7, who speaks of a "methodological framework"), a "Forschungsgenre" (cf. e.g. the DFG-funded DBR network at <https://dbr.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/netzwerk/>) or a "Forschungsformat" (cf. e.g. Dube & Prediger, 2017; von Heynitz et al., 2023; Dube & Dannecker, 2024a). First used at the GFD symposium of the same name in Berlin in 2011, the "term" was defined more comprehensively and provided with examples in the GFD discussion/position paper "Formate Fachdidaktischer Forschung" from 2015: A "fachdidaktisches Forschungsformat" such as the "Forschungsformat Fachdidaktische Entwicklungsforschung" (with reference to Prediger & Link, 2012, a.o.) refers to "the totality of all content-related, methodological and research-organisational aspects" (trans. E.T. & L.D.), i.e. depending on the research interest, different methods of data collection, analysis and evaluation are also used in a research format such as D(B)R (cf. McKenney & Reeves, 2019, pp. 178–179; see also Euler, 2014, pp. 29–30;). Strictly speaking, D(B)R research is also a research *habitus* or *attitude* that is underpinned by a shared "commitment to developing theoretical insights and practical solutions simultaneously, in real-world (as opposed to laboratory) contexts, together with stakeholders" (McKenney & Reeves, 2019, p. 6) – because this is what fundamentally distinguishes D(B)R from other formats of empirical educational research: an "attitude that internalizes this unity and equality of research and practice development" (Aigner & Malmberg,

2022, p. 33, trans. E.T. & L.D.). In this sense, researchers and practitioners work together on the further development of teaching and the acquisition of knowledge for subject didactics. They thus enter into a "development partnership" (Reinmann & Sesink, 2011, p. 49, trans. E.T. & L.D.), which "requires both sides to engage with the other's perspective as a prerequisite for success" (Delius, 2020, p. 246, trans. E.T. & L.D.).

Significantly, the earliest D(B)R studies that (also) deal with German didactic issues include two international, interdisciplinary and parallel projects that integrate school and foreign languages – and thus also German and Foreign Language Didactics – namely the Erasmus+ project "Mehrsprachiges Lesetheater" (MELT) (2014–2017) (cf. Kutzelmann et al., 2017; Kutzelmann & Massler, 2024) and "Mehrsprachiges Vorlesen durch die Lehrperson" (MeVoL) (2014–2016) (cf. Hilbe et al., 2017). In both studies, the project leaders refer to Euler (2014), Reinmann (2005) and van den Akker et al. (2006), among others. Five specific attributes or "main features" that are common to all D(B)R studies are adopted in the implementation. These are: Interventionist, Iterative, Process oriented, Utility oriented and Theory oriented (cf. Kutzelmann & Götz, 2017, p. 18; van den Akker et al., 2006, p. 5). Another early D(B)R study on metaphor comprehension in German lessons is the article by Dube & Prediger (2017): Using the influential FUNKEN model – developed in the "Forschungs- und Nachwuchskolleg Fachdidaktische Entwicklungsmodell" at the University of Dortmund (cf. Prediger et al., 2012) – it is shown "how the research format, which is well established in other subject didactics, can also be used in German Didactics in the context of research on literary learning" (Dube & Prediger, 2017, p. 1, trans. E.T. & L.D.). In recent years, this article as well as Dube (2019) and Dube & Hußmann (2019) have become important sources of inspiration for German didactic design-based research projects – whether for ongoing or completed doctoral and post-doctoral studies in Language, Literature and Media Didactics or for larger collaborative projects such as the literature didactic research project "Perspektive und Aufgaben im Literaturunterricht" (PAuLi) (cf. von Heynitz et al., 2023) or the language didactics research project "Ko-Konstruktionen über das Schriftsystem" (KoKonS) (cf. Jagemann et al., 2023). Some of these studies led to the current anthology by Dube & Dannecker (2024), which Prediger (2024, p. 3, trans. E.T. & L.D.) hopes will "have a major impact and continue to inspire German didactics to conduct design research projects that are both theoretically and epistemologically sound, empirically substantial and practically significant".

And, of course, this special issue of EDeR also stands for the now lively design-based research activities in German didactics: The special issue brings together contributions, which of mostly were presented at the 2nd conference of the research network "Design(-based) Research in der Deutschdidaktik" (D(B)R-DD) at the University of Paderborn in 2023. The network was founded in 2022 at its first conference at the University of Wuppertal with the aim of promoting D(B)R research in German Didactics and increasing its visibility (cf. the conference report

by Drepper & Uhl 2022 and Dube & Dannecker, 2024a). The DFG-funded network "Design-Based Research (DBR) as a Methodologischer Framework in Educational Research (DBR Network)" (<https://dbr.blogs.uni-hamburg.de>), in whose forms of participation (e.g. colloquia, workshops) the members of D(B)R-DD participate, was the inspiration for the foundation. The articles in this special issue provide an insight into the German didactic issues being investigated in the D(B)R research format – whether in a project funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) (article: Dannecker et al.), in a postdoctoral study funded by the Faculty of Cultural Studies (University of Paderborn) (article: Drepper) and in completed literature didactics (article: Lewald-Romahn) and ongoing language didactics doctoral projects (article: Elger, Härtel, Sutalo).

3.0 The Articles

The special issue comprises three Academic Articles and three Practice Illustrations, which are briefly presented below:

Wiebke Dannecker, Leonie Carell, Sophie Spieß, Caroline Ambrosini and Kerstin Ziemer present the results of the Literature Didactics BMBF project DigiLi ("Lernen mit digitalen Medien im inklusiven Literaturunterricht") in their *Academic Article*. The focus is on the development of a digital learning village for whole-text reading in the 7th/8th grade, which aims at a multimodal exchange for heterogeneous learning groups. Using selected examples from the testing of the learning setting, design principles for the use of task formats, digital media, follow-up communication and cooperation between learners are reflected upon and further developed. The authors particularly emphasize the importance of cooperation: on the one hand for inclusive literature lessons and on the other hand for multi-professional teams in DBR projects.

Laura Drepper presents the results of a Language Didactic post-doc study in an *Academic Article*. The aim of the study is to develop a reading learning environment with riddles for learning to read at the end of primary school using a digital medium. The project is characterised in particular by multi-perspectivity: on the one hand in the formulation of design assumptions and design principles for the design development and on the other hand in the design testing using multiple methods for data collection and data analysis. In the evaluation of the learning environment, design principles are derived that are applicable to the German didactic research discourse and offer empirically based recommendations for practice. The article thus shows how multi-perspectivity can support the integration of theory and practice in DBR research.

In an *Academic Article*, **Laura Lewald-Romahn** presents a model for the design of inclusive literature lessons that can be located at the interface of literature didactics and special needs education. With the understanding of literature teaching as a "Möglichkeitsraum" (Frickel, 2020, trans. E.T. & L.D.), the PhD project brings together theories of

literature didactics and special needs education and develops the *DiaMantEn* model under the title "Fach-)Didaktischen Möglichkeitenraum-entwicklung – anwendungsbezogen und theoriegeleitet für Entwicklungsforschungsprojekte". The *DiaMantEn* model is based on the widely cited FUNKEN model by Prediger et al. (2012) and aims in particular to take special educational theories into account in specialised didactic development research.

In a *Practice Illustration*, **Yvonne Elger** shows how the specification of the learning object, the design process and the (further) development of theory systematically interact in a design-based research process. This interplay and possible interactions crystallize in a particular way in the revision phases after data collection and data evaluation within a design cycle. Based on her language didactics PhD project (Pragma project), which investigates the functional-pragmatic development of linguistic competences in text production in 6th grade, the variety of revision phases in a DBR project is illustrated using concrete examples.

In a *Practice Illustration*, **Kira Härtel** presents the development of a language-reflective learning environment with multilingual children's and youth books, in which multimodal approaches to languages and an interactive format can be used to initiate and visualize language-reflective activities by fourth-graders. Based on the method of Conjecture Mapping according to Sandoval (2014), she describes in detail how the design development was approached in the PhD project, which is located at the interface of Language and Literature Didactics: from the formulation of (initial) assumptions as to how a learning environment would have to be designed to enable children to engage in language-reflective behaviour, through to the development of an interactive format.

Tanja Šutalos *Practice Illustration* gives an insight into her Language didactics PhD project, in which materials for structure-orientated spelling support for learners with a (diagnosed) reading and spelling disability are developed, tested and evaluated. The materials are based on structural features of German spelling and were trialed in two test groups with a total of 18 learners (6th and 7th grade). The oscillation method (cf. Reinmann, 2020), in which individual features of the materials can be further developed during testing (e.g. the addition of *Trochiplättchen* for syllable spellings), should be emphasized in particular. Selected examples are used to show how learners can benefit from a structure-orientated approach in spelling lessons.

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