

A Contrastive Review of Assessment Methods by German Language Teachers in Albania and Kosovo

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Abstract: *This study examines assessment practices in German as a Foreign Language (DaF) classroom in Albania and Kosovo, focusing on their impact on student learning and motivation. A survey was conducted with 136 secondary school students from Tirana (Albania) and Podujeva (Kosovo), using a combination of Likert-scale questions and open-ended items. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, while qualitative responses underwent thematic content analysis. Results indicate that students in both contexts understand grading criteria and perceive assessment as generally fair, yet report insufficient feedback. Students in Podujeva expressed higher satisfaction with evaluation and preferred combined oral and written feedback, whereas Tirana students emphasized oral examinations and lower transparency. Despite these differences, assessment positively influenced motivation in both groups. The study highlights the need for clearer communication of criteria, more frequent constructive feedback, and the promotion of student-centered, culturally sensitive assessment practices. Cross-border exchange of best practices is recommended to enhance DaF instruction.*

Keywords: assessment, feedback, German as a foreign language, Albania, Kosovo, student motivation

INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a central element in foreign language education, influencing not only students' knowledge and skills but also their motivation, engagement, and confidence. In German as a Foreign Language classrooms, effective assessment supports learners in achieving communicative competence while fostering self-regulated learning. Research shows that transparent criteria and constructive feedback enhance motivation and learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Recent studies emphasize that formative assessment and feedback are key to enhancing achievement and self-regulation in language learning (Bushi, Aliaj, & Kristo, 2024;

Bushi & Aliaj, 2024a, 2024b). In Albania, assessment practices are undergoing a transition toward more transparent and context-sensitive approaches (Aliaj & Bushi, 2025). Albania and Kosovo share cultural and historical ties, yet their educational systems and evaluation practices have developed differently. German has become an important foreign language in both countries due to cultural, economic, and migratory connections with German-speaking nations. While Kosovo increasingly integrates interactive and culturally responsive teaching methods, Albanian classrooms often retain traditional, grammar-focused approaches. Despite these differences, little research has examined how assessment is implemented and perceived in these contexts.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do students in Albania and Kosovo perceive assessment practices in German as a foreign language classrooms?
2. What similarities and differences exist regarding transparency, feedback, and student satisfaction?
3. What implications do these findings have for improving assessment practices in foreign language education?

By exploring these questions, the study aims to inform culturally sensitive and student-centered approaches to assessment in the region.

Background and Literature Review

Education Systems in Albania and Kosovo

Both Albania and Kosovo underwent significant reforms after the 1990s, seeking alignment with European standards in education. Despite shared goals, differences persist in teacher training, curriculum development, and resource availability. Kosovo faces challenges such as large class sizes in urban areas and disparities in quality between urban and rural schools, while Albania emphasizes standardized testing and teacher accountability. The Albanian context has been particularly shaped by the challenges of online and blended teaching, which influenced the way feedback was provided (Bushi & Kristo, 2021a, 2021b). These findings are relevant for understanding current teacher practices in both Albania and Kosovo.

German as a Foreign Language in the Two Contexts

German holds a strong position in both countries. In Albania, German language is promoted mainly through partnerships with German institutions, while in Kosovo, historical migration to German-speaking countries has contributed to a strong demand for the language. Interactive teaching methods and culturally responsive practices are increasingly integrated in Kosovo, whereas Albanian classrooms often retain traditional, grammar-focused approaches.

Assessment in Foreign Language Education

International research differentiates between formative assessment, which provides ongoing feedback to support learning, and summative assessment, which evaluates final achievement

(Black & Wiliam, 2009). Effective feedback has been shown to enhance learner autonomy, motivation, and engagement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Other scholars highlight the role of self-evaluation and feedback in increasing learner motivation and autonomy (Bushy & Aliaj, 2024a; Bushy & Kristo, 2021). In the specific case of German as a foreign language, correction of oral mistakes has been identified as a crucial dimension of assessment (Bushy, Kristo, & Papajorgji, 2022). Additionally, peer- and self-assessment are recognized as valuable tools for promoting reflection and active participation. However, implementing culturally sensitive assessment remains challenging, as practices often reflect local traditions rather than international standards. In the contexts of Albania and Kosovo, students reported that formative assessment elements—such as regular feedback, clear explanation of evaluation criteria, and opportunities for self-reflection—substantially influenced their understanding, satisfaction, and motivation in German as a Foreign Language classrooms.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a comparative case study design to explore assessment practices in German as a Foreign Language classrooms in Albania and Kosovo. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative feedback to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions.

Participants

A total of 136 secondary school students participated: 78 from a school in Podujeva, Kosovo, and 58 from a school in Tirana, Albania, spanning grades 6–9. Participants' ages ranged from 12 to 16 years, and all had been studying German for at least two years.

Instruments

Data were collected using an online questionnaire designed in Google Forms. The survey included closed-ended items on a Likert scale to assess understanding of grading criteria, perceived fairness, feedback adequacy, and satisfaction, as well as open-ended questions exploring students' experiences, preferences, and suggestions for improving assessment practices. The questionnaire was reviewed by two German as a Foreign Language teaching experts to ensure content validity and clarity. A pilot test with 10 students helped refine wording and confirm comprehension.

Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies) to summarize patterns across groups. Qualitative responses were coded independently by two researchers using thematic content analysis. Discrepancies in coding were resolved through discussion to enhance reliability. Key themes were identified regarding feedback, transparency, and student satisfaction.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical standards for research with minors. Participation was voluntary, responses were anonymized, and students were informed of the study's purpose. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process, and parental consent was secured for underage participants.

RESULTS

Findings from Podujeva (Kosovo)

Students in Podujeva generally reported a strong understanding of assessment criteria, with 48.1% rating it as “very good” and 44.2% as “good.” Most students (76.9%) perceived the assessment process as fair, and 66.7% confirmed that their evaluations reflected their actual performance.

Despite this positive perception, feedback was identified as insufficient: only 19.5% reported receiving adequate feedback, while 71.4% considered it too limited. When asked about preferred feedback forms, 59.7% favored a combination of oral and written feedback. Overall satisfaction with assessment criteria was high (73.1%), and 65.4% of students reported a positive impact on their motivation. Key suggestions for improvement included clearer explanations of criteria (46.2%), more varied assessment methods, and regular feedback sessions.

Findings from Tirana (Albania)

In Tirana, students also reported good understanding of assessment criteria, with 43.9% rating it as “very good” and 49.1% as “good.” Perceptions of fairness were slightly lower than in Podujeva: 71.9% felt fairly treated, while 12.3% disagreed. The adequacy of evaluation was confirmed by 69.6% of students.

Feedback emerged as a major concern: 73.2% indicated that it was insufficient, and only 16.1% received adequate feedback. Preferences for feedback formats varied, with 32.1% favoring combined oral and written feedback, 21.4% preferring written feedback alone, and 17.9% preferring oral feedback; 28.6% had no preference. Satisfaction with assessment criteria was lower than in Podujeva, with 63.2% expressing dissatisfaction. However, 73.7% reported that assessment positively influenced their motivation. Students' suggestions focused on clearer criteria (45.5%), more consistent evaluation practices, and partial reform of the grading system.

These results align with previous research underlining that feedback practices need to be more frequent, clear, and combined (oral and written) to sustain student motivation (Bushi, Aliaj, & Kristo, 2024; Bushi & Aliaj, 2024b).

Comparative Analysis

Students in both contexts demonstrated a clear understanding of grading criteria and recognized the motivational role of assessment. Key differences included:

Satisfaction: Podujeva students reported higher satisfaction with evaluation criteria.

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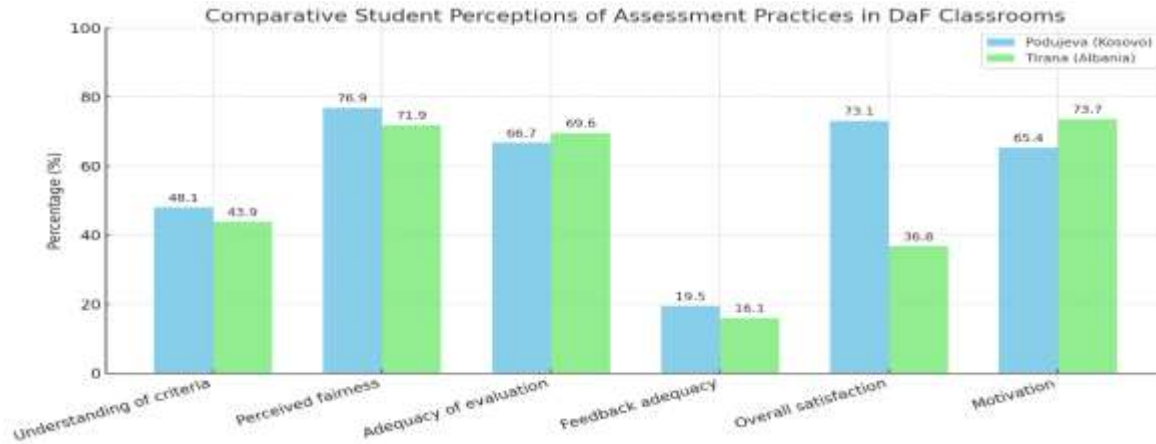
Feedback preference: Podujeva students favored combined feedback, while Tirana students emphasized oral assessment and experienced lower transparency.

Suggestions for improvement: While both groups requested clearer criteria, Tirana students highlighted the need for systemic changes, such as more continuity in evaluation and partial modification of the grading system.

These findings indicate that teaching approaches, institutional practices, and cultural norms shape student perceptions of assessment and its effectiveness in promoting engagement and motivation.

Table Nr. 1 Comparative results

Aspect	Podujeva (Kosovo)	Tirana (Albania)	Observations / Implications
Understanding of criteria	48.1% “very good”, 44.2% “good”	43.9% “very good”, 49.1% “good”	Students in both contexts generally understand grading criteria.
Perceived fairness	76.9% fair	71.9% fair, 12.3% not fair	Slightly higher satisfaction with fairness in Podujeva.
Adequacy of evaluation	66.7% confirmed correct assessment	69.6% confirmed correct assessment	Similar perceptions regarding accurate assessment.
Feedback adequacy	19.5% sufficient, 71.4% insufficient	16.1% sufficient, 73.2% insufficient	Both groups report insufficient feedback; stronger need for improvement in Tirana.
Preferred feedback	59.7% combined oral & written	32.1% combined, 21.4% written, 17.9% oral, 28.6% no preference	Podujeva students favor combined feedback; Tirana students more varied preferences.
Overall satisfaction	73.1% satisfied	63.2% dissatisfied	Higher satisfaction in Podujeva; Tirana students more critical.
Motivation	65.4% positive effect	73.7% positive effect	Assessment is motivating in both contexts.
Key suggestions	Clearer criteria (46.2%), more variety, regular feedback	Clearer criteria (45.5%), continuity, partial grading reform	Both groups want clearer criteria; Tirana students suggest systemic changes.

**Graphik Nr.1 Comparative Perceptions**

DISCUSSION

The present study examined students' perceptions of assessment practices in German as a Foreign Language (DaF) classrooms in Albania and Kosovo. The results indicate that transparent grading criteria and effective feedback play a central role in motivating learners and shaping their engagement with the learning process.

Feedback and Student Motivation

Feedback emerged as a critical factor influencing student motivation. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback provides students with information on their performance relative to learning objectives, enabling self-regulated learning and improved achievement. Black and Wiliam (2009) similarly emphasize the importance of formative assessment in supporting student progress and engagement.

In this study, students in both Podujeva and Tirana reported that assessment positively affected their motivation. However, feedback was consistently identified as insufficient, particularly in Tirana, where 73.2% of students indicated they received inadequate feedback. Podujeva students preferred combined oral and written feedback, whereas Tirana students showed more varied preferences and emphasized oral examinations. These findings illustrate that timely, constructive feedback is not only essential for learning but also serves as a motivational tool, enhancing student satisfaction and engagement. Limited feedback in Tirana may contribute to lower satisfaction and perceived transparency. Similar to our findings, earlier studies confirm that transparent and structured feedback enhances learner engagement and academic success (Bushy & Aliaj, 2024b; Bushy, Aliaj, & Kristo, 2024).

Cultural and Educational System Influences

Differences in student perceptions between Albania and Kosovo reflect broader cultural and systemic factors. Kosovar classrooms have increasingly adopted interactive and student-centered teaching approaches, facilitating regular feedback and active participation. Albanian classrooms, on the other hand, retain more traditional, exam-focused methods, prioritizing grammar and summative evaluation.

These differences shape how students perceive fairness, transparency, and the motivational impact of assessment. In Kosovo, alignment with student-centered approaches likely contributes to higher satisfaction with evaluation criteria, while in Albania, reliance on summative assessments may hinder perceived clarity and engagement. Recognizing these contextual influences is essential for designing culturally responsive and pedagogically effective assessment strategies.

Implications for Teacher Training and Policy

The findings suggest several practical implications for teacher development and educational policy. Teachers should receive training in providing frequent, detailed, and culturally sensitive feedback, using both oral and written formats. Professional development programs could also include strategies for peer- and self-assessment, formative assessment practices, and methods for fostering student motivation through constructive feedback.

Policy initiatives should promote flexible assessment frameworks that balance summative and formative approaches. Clear guidelines for grading criteria, feedback frequency, and assessment transparency can enhance consistency and fairness, particularly in Albanian schools where dissatisfaction with evaluation was more pronounced. Teacher education should therefore include training in formative assessment design, rubrics, and mentoring practices (Bush, Tarusha, & Kristo, 2024).

Cross-Border Collaboration for Best Practices

Finally, cross-border collaboration between Albanian and Kosovar DaF teachers can play a key role in improving assessment practices. Workshops, exchange programs, and joint professional development initiatives can facilitate the sharing of successful strategies, including interactive teaching methods, effective feedback techniques, and culturally sensitive assessment approaches. Such collaboration strengthens teacher capacity, promotes innovation, and contributes to higher-quality DaF education across both contexts.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

This study provided a comparative analysis of student perceptions regarding assessment practices in German as a Foreign Language (DaF) classroom in Albania and Kosovo, revealing both similarities and differences. Students in both contexts reported that they understood grading criteria and recognized the motivational role of assessment in their learning. However, feedback was widely perceived as insufficient, particularly among students in Tirana, where traditional,

exam-focused methods remain prevalent. In contrast, Podujeva students, learning in a more interactive and student-centered environment, expressed higher satisfaction with assessment practices and favored combined oral and written feedback. These differences highlight the influence of cultural norms and educational system structures on how students experience and interpret assessment.

The findings suggest that ensuring transparent communication of grading criteria and providing regular, detailed, and culturally sensitive feedback are critical for enhancing both learning outcomes and student motivation. Integrating formative assessment techniques, peer- and self-assessment, and student-centered practices can further strengthen the effectiveness of evaluation in the classroom. Moreover, fostering cross-border collaboration between Albanian and Kosovar teachers can facilitate the sharing of best practices, innovative strategies, and culturally responsive assessment methods, ultimately contributing to higher-quality DaF instruction in the region.

While the study offers valuable insights, its scope was limited to two schools and relied primarily on self-reported survey data, which may not fully capture classroom dynamics. Future research should expand the sample to include multiple schools and regions, incorporate teacher perspectives and classroom observations, and consider longitudinal designs to track changes in assessment perceptions over time. Extending comparative research to other Balkan countries could also provide a broader understanding of regional trends and contribute to the development of more effective, culturally attuned assessment practices across diverse educational contexts.

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