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The Common European Framework of Reference

The Usefulness of the CEFR in the Investigation of Test Versions Content Equivalence

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Abstract

This paper presents one part of the PhD research realized within the broader framework of test versions equivalence in high-stakes testing context, particularly in the Slovak upper-secondary school leaving exam in English at B1 level (Maturita). The objectives of the research project are to investigate the extent of equivalence of the test versions used between 2012 and 2015 and, on the basis of the results, to propose what processes could be implemented in the test development with the objective to reach test version equivalence. In this paper, we focus on the use of the CEFR as a tool for the investigation of content and construct equivalence as the Maturita exam claims to be linked to the B1 CEFR level. Content structure analysis using expert judgement and item-descriptor matching method were conducted and the agreement coefficients were calculated. Preliminary findings indicate that CEFR descriptors can be problematic for describing the test content and construct at a discrete, detailed level, as the descriptors differ in terms of completeness, structure and specificity level. The use of CEFR-based descriptive models is also problematized by the fact that the characteristics of test items are seen as the result of the interaction among test takers' proficiency, design of the item, expert judges' characteristics and their internalization of the judgement task. The key findings of the analysis and the usefulness of the CEFR for this purpose will be discussed in light of the whole research project and possible further steps will be presented.

Keywords: expert judgement, CEFR descriptors, content and construct equivalence, test versions equivalence

1. Introduction

Test versions equivalence is one of the crucial aspects for meaningful and fair interpretation and use of test results at individual, institutional and system levels. At the same time, it is one of the key aspects of validity if we understand it as fair and meaningful interpretation of test results. This paper is limited to only one part of the research project, and its aim is to investigate whether the content structure analysis applied could be a practical and reliable method for the investigation of the content equivalence, whether the CEFR is a useful tool for the investigation of content equivalence and the expert judgement and item-descriptor matching method suitable and adequate techniques for the aforementioned high-stakes context. A secondary aim, in line with the research project in general, is to find out whether the content structure analysis described here could generate results usable for another research question about the construct equivalence of the test versions, and if these results can be used as the entry data for specifying models for the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

2. Aims and methods

Content analysis, as defined by Krippendorff [4], is an empirical method that uses exploratory approach with the aim to predict or infer. Judges analyse and interpret the input according to a predefined set of categories.

For this research, the input was tasks (texts and items) included in the reading and listening subtests of the Maturita exam. A closer look at the construct definition published on the official website (*www.nucem.sk*) revealed a very general reference to B1 CEFR level, with no information at the item level. Therefore, we had to prepare a descriptive tool that would be more closely related to the original CEFR set of descriptors for B1 level.

The aim of the analysis was to answer two research questions: *RQ1: To what extent are different test versions 2012-2015 equivalent in content?* and *RQ2: Is the content structure similar enough to be used as model specification in the CFA confirming the construct equivalence?*

Descriptive models for each subtest were created, with categories (descriptors) directly taken from the CEFR B1 reference level. Four experienced judges were asked to participate. The models and procedures were piloted and described and the judges were trained. After the training, they were sent the materials and asked to individually judge the test versions. Their task was to match each item with one of the descriptors form the relevant descriptive model. The results were sent to the researcher.

3. Variables

The judgement operates with latent traits, the variables are characteristics that cannot be observed directly and the relationship between the characteristics (of an item) and a descriptor (category) has to be inferred and interpreted. For this type of variables, McGrey (2013) proposes the term *judgemental variable*, as it “reflect(s) the subjective, yet informed opinion of a judge about a specific matter under investigation”. The definition and interpretation of these variables is not straightforward, unambiguous, and judges might interpret the variables differently despite the training provided.

4. Agreement coefficients

To evaluate the content equivalence, the agreement among judges on the content structure was calculated. Two indices were used. **Percent agreement** is the number of agreed choices within the total number of possible agreements. The advantage of this index is its easy calculation and interpretation. The major disadvantage is that it does not consider the agreement by chance, and thus it might overestimate the inter-judge agreement. In the literature, it is recommended to report the percent agreement together with other agreement coefficients, as it might help to reveal the nature of the data and that of the judgemental task.

The probability of the agreement by chance increases with the decreasing number of categories; on the other hand, the higher the number of categories, the less likely high percent agreement is [5].

Also, the distribution of the categories influences the value of percent agreement coefficient: when one of the categories prevails (*bias* or *high trait prevalence* according to Gwet [2]), the value of percent agreement increases and we intuitively expect lower probability of chance agreement.

Unfortunately, not all widely used coefficients implement this idea (e.g. Cohen´s or Fleiss’ kappa ϰ, Krippendorff’s kalpha α), and the probability of chance agreement is overestimated and in consequence, the values of agreement coefficients are lower or, according to Gwet [3], erratic. These are two of *kappa paradoxes*, discussed e.g. in Cicchetti a Feinstein [1], McGrey [6], Thompson a Walter [7]. Therefore, **Gwet’s agreement coefficient AC¹** [3] implemented in the package AgreeStat, was used, since it overcomes the kappa paradoxes.

5. Data and initial decisions

An example of raw data provided by the judges H1, H3, H4, H5 for Listening 2012 is shown in Table 1. We can see some issues that appeared in all datasets. First, for some items, the judges could not decide for one descriptor only (see H5-raw). Second, judge H3 differed from the other judges.

Third, there is a prevalence of some categories and high agreement on them, which illustrates the above-mentioned kappa paradox. Therefore, we conducted the analyses twice – with the raw data and with data with merged categories. The decision to merge data into more general categories was based on the analyses and comparisons of the content, wording, structure, overlaps and similarities among the original CEFR descriptors. The merged categories contain descriptors that were close due to their overlap in content and meaning.

Table 1: Item-descriptor matching for Listening subtest in the test version used in 2012

Listening_2012_CEFR																				
item / judge	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**
H1	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
H3	D	A	A	D	D	D	D	A	A	D	A	A	D	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
H4	C	C	C	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
H5	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	F	F	F	C=F	C=F	C	C=F

6. Analyses and discussion of the preliminary results

6.1 Frequency summary

First, frequency summary was performed for each subtest and test version to see the behaviour of the judges. We observed the amount of pair agreements: a) judge – judge; b) judge – all the other judges; c) all judges together, which is basically equal to the percent agreement. Tables 2 – 5 provide an example for the test version 2012. We can see that merging descriptors into clusters significantly changed the proportion of agreement at all levels.

Tables 2 – 5: Agreement among judges for the test version 2012

Listening (categories A, B, C, D, E, F)

Absolut agreement		**45/120 (38%)**		
	H1	H3	H4	H5
H1		0	19	13
H3	0		1	0
H4	19	1		12
H5	13	0	12	
Tot	**32**	**1**	**32**	**25**
	53%	**2%**	**53%**	**42%**

Listening (merged categories A, C, DEF)

Absolut agreement		**75/120**	**(63%)**	
	H1	H3	H4	H5
H1		7	19	17,5
H3	7		8	7
H4	19	8		16,5
H5	17,5	7	16,5	
Tot	**43,5**	**22**	**43,5**	**41**
	73%	**37%**	**73%**	**68%**

Reading (categories A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I)

Absolut agreement		**30/120 (25%)**		
	H1	H3	H4	H5
H1		0	7	5
H3	0		0	6
H4	7	0		12
H5	5	6	12	
Tot	**12**	**6**	**19**	**23**
	20%	**10%**	**32%**	**38%**

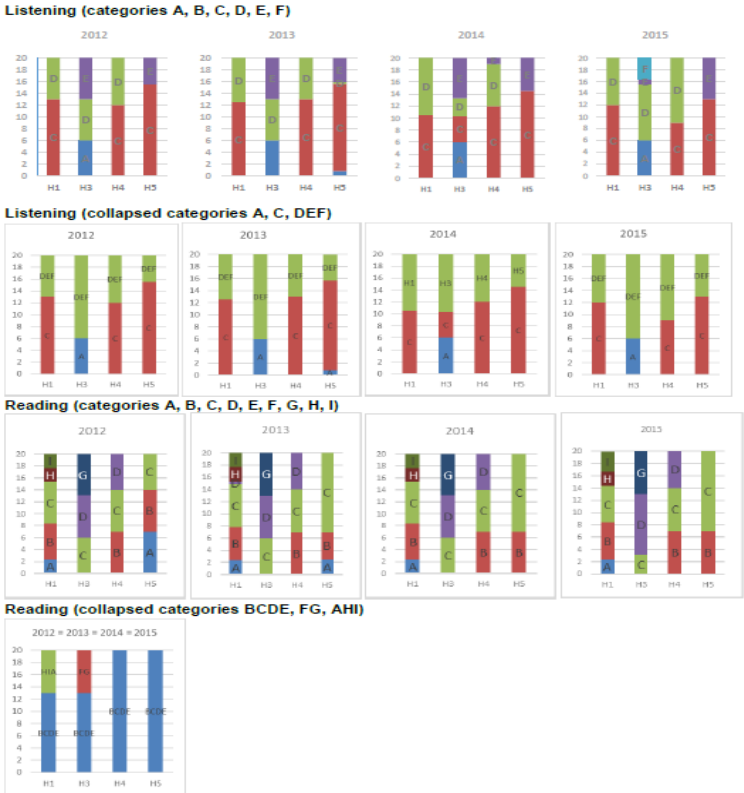
Reading (merged categories BCDE, FG, AHI)

Absolut agreement 85/120 (71%)				
	H1	H3	H4	H5
H1		13	13	13
H3	13		13	13
H4	13	13		20
H5	13	13	20	
Tot	**39**	**39**	**46**	**46**
	65%	**65%**	**77%**	**77%**

6.2 Graphical representation of the structure

Graphs 1-13 represent the test versions as viewed by individual judges H1-H5. Similar behaviour of the judges can be observed for each test version, but less agreement among judges with raw, non-merged data. For Listening, merging categories resulted in a very similar structure across judges and version, with some minor deviations. For Reading, merging the categories resulted in almost absolute agreement on the content structure of the test versions, which was seen as an unexpected outcome.

Graphs 1-13: Graphical representation of the content structure for individual and merged categories



6.3 Agreement among judges

Agreement coefficient AC[1] and percent agreement (PA) were calculated for raw and merged data. Due to the limited space of this paper, the only data for merged categories (Table 6) are presented. Again, merged data manifest higher values of coeffects than non-merged data in all cases.

Table 6: Percent agreement and AC1 for reading and listening in test versions 2012–2015

Collapsed categories	Percent agreement (PA) and Gwet´s AC1							
Year	**2012**		**2013**		**2014**		**2015**	
Skills	**PA**	**AC1**	**PA**	**AC1**	**PA**	**AC1**	**PA**	**AC1**
Listening_CEFR	0,66	0,54	0,55	0,38	0,73	0,66	0,63	0,49
Reading_CEFR	0,71	0,66	0,71	0,66	0,71	0,66	0,71	0,66

All these differences, i.e. higher values for the merged data showing higher agreement, are expectable, but there are some implications for the whole content structure analysis, or precisely, for the interpretation and the use of the results.

7. Conclusions

The main aim of the research project is to map possible ways to achieve test versions equivalence, to try out some of the methods and to propose a framework that would allow Slovak Maturita's developers to create equivalent test versions and to prove it both empirically and theoretically. The analysis of the content structure using the CEFR-based descriptive models was carried out on the real test versions 2012-2015 with well-trained experienced judges while using CEFR as a tool to which Slovak exams declare to be linked.

Although all the steps applied in the treatment of the data are legitimate and grounded in theory, the amount of decisions that had to be taken, their subjective nature and the difference between the raw data input and the merged data used in the final analysis led us to the conclusion that:

- Despite the training in their interpretation, the CEFR descriptors were in some cases interpreted differently by the judges. This might be caused by a) the subjective nature of the judgemental task, b) the similarity or closeness of the specific objectives described by some descriptors, and on the other hand c) the heterogeneous structure of some descriptors, not covering activity – text – goal in the same way across all descriptors.
- The implementation of the content structure analysis as proposed here is not practical and the costs (time, finances, people) would be probably higher than potential benefits.
- The process requires many decisions to be made by the researcher (missing answers, double-matched items, merged categories, different behaviour of some judges), which might be a threat to the reliability of the results and validity of the interpretations.

In answer to the research questions RQ1 and RQ2 we can conclude that the content structure of the test versions is similar enough to serve for the purpose of specifying models for CFA, the next step of the research. The use of this method (content analysis) in real-life cycle of high-stakes national tests, however, would require too many resources and is not convincing enough to be the only instrument to prove test versions equivalence. This method can be implemented as a complementary tool within the task moderation or test assembling processes, but cannot be a substitution for other methods, such as high-quality pretesting using incomplete design or IRT-based statistical an analysis.

The latter mentioned would probably better serve the purpose of creating equivalent test versions in high-stakes testing context of the Slovak Maturita examinations.

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CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning

"Teachers or Learners?": Swapping Roles in CLIL Classes to Improve Speaking Skills and Motivation. A Vertical Transversal Project

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Abstract

Recent language curriculum reforms in the Italian education policy have focused on CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology with great emphasis on the active collaboration between language and content teachers to foster students' communication and transversal competencies. However, in many schools, the shortage of qualified subject-area teachers with CLIL prerequisites has frequently impeded the innovation required by the Ministry, thus calling for more training on content and language goals. Convinced of the advantages of CLIL programming and supported by school administrators versed in such methodology, it was agreed that a multi-faceted approach was needed which used all the resources and competencies we had at our disposal.

This study aims at presenting a two years' vertical project involving students from different school grades engaged in interdisciplinary CLIL activities as protagonists of their learning. Senior students of a scientific high school in the provinces of Lodi and Milan became content-instructors of junior mentees who, in turn, taught last-year students from nearby middle schools after some disciplinary topics (Art, History, Science, Technology, Social Studies) had been vertically and mutually agreed with the students who played the role of novice educators. Constant monitoring and supervision were assured in the different phases of the project by both language and content teachers who cooperated as facilitators and, in a certain sense, as learners, too.

By swapping roles our objectives were both linguistic and pedagogical since we wanted to investigate how students' attitudes towards English learning and communication could improve in this new and reversed CLIL environment. To achieve our aims both quantitative analyses and questionnaires were adopted which all valued the vertical implementation as a powerful way of promoting motivation and interaction. Our results also proved that being lectured by peers was beneficial to boost students' speaking skills at all levels and to learn contents more effectively.

Keywords: CLIL, Communication, Speaking, Peer Teaching; Motivation

1. CLIL in Italy

Following the 2010 national language reform revising the high school educational policy with the aim of better equipping learners for the global age and aligning Italy with other European teaching programs, CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) has emerged as an innovative methodology catering to modern generations' cognitive and linguistic needs. Teaching a non-language subject (NS) through the medium of a second or foreign language (L2), CLIL has been seen not only as a means of improving knowledge and competence in foreign language learning and teaching but also as a way of renewing interest and motivation among students and instructors alike (Coyle, Holmes and King, 2009), since language and content have a joint and mutually beneficial role in the approach (Marsh, 2002). Thus, a perfect integration among the teaching staff (NS and L2) can really turn standard lectures into original CLIL classes successfully combining elements of content, communication, cognition and culture, together with a wide range of discourse skills.

2. Orientating towards CLIL

It is undeniable that teaming up with colleagues (NS and L2) can maximize the impact of CLIL on learning (Mehisto, Marsh, Frigols, 2008). However, faced with the request of the Ministry of Education (D.D. n. 6, 16 April 2012) (MIUR, 2012), which recommended carrying out the 50% of the final year's curricular lessons following the CLIL methodology and targeting the C1 language level of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference), a large number of educators in our Lyceum felt linguistically and pedagogically unprepared. The critical points mainly concerned how the various disciplines were to be taught through the second language and who was specifically qualified for that purpose.

Convinced of the advantages of CLIL programming and supported by school administrators versed in CLIL methodology it was agreed to take any action deemed necessary to address the shortage of trained teachers. It was clear from the outset that a multifaceted approach was needed which used all the resources and competencies we had at our disposal, other than our enthusiasm largely necessary to compensate for the greater workload and the limited budgets.

3. The "Teachers or Learners?" project

3.1 Background and participants

Born from the necessity of overcoming the lack of CLIL qualified teachers in a scientific high school in Lodi (bordering on Milan), the project has transformed a need into virtue, taking advantage of what is the very essence of CLIL methodology: integration. With the "Teachers or Learners?" project integration refers both to NS teacher-L2 teacher and teacher-student cooperation, to student-student interaction and to learners' direct engagement with teaching and learning materials. Basically, the "Teachers or Learners?" project is two years' vertical and transversal project (2015-2017) in which cross-curricular themes have been extended and taught to middle school pupils by eleven and twelve grade students. As such, it is a vertical project because it engages students from different school grades as protagonist of their learning (peer education); it is transversal because the shared CLIL topics were part of the schools' respective ministerial programmes, and it is also interactive because all the participants (teachers and students) exchanged information by means of web tools and social media.

3.2 Aims and research questions

The main aim of the "Teachers or Learners?" project was to develop and pilot a framework for teaching and learning transversal competencies through the medium of a second language where students could practice and improve their skills making use of cooperative strategies and digital tools.

Other formative and educational goals were: (1) to diversify methods and approaches of classroom practice; (2) to provide opportunities to study contents from different perspectives; (3) to develop thinking processes; (4) to employ web tools efficiently; (5) to foster different learning styles.

The project also aimed at answering the following research questions:

- How can the Ministerial CLIL requirements (in content and second language education) be successfully satisfied with shortage of qualified staff?
- Will CLIL learners achieve better language proficiency if lectured by peers?
- Will CLIL students' content knowledge and motivation be affected by this reversed and innovative approach?

3.3 Project procedures

Phase 1: In October 2015 a general survey carried out by our Territorial Education Board decreed the shortage of CLIL teachers in the province suitable for the "CLIL Teacher Profile" (Miur, 2012) whose prerequisites interwove high language and subject competencies with CLIL teaching expertise.

Phase 2: CLIL-minded teachers from our school decided to network with colleagues from six middle schools of Lodi and Milan provinces to overcome the CLIL obstacle.

Phase 3: Topics, goals, methodologies, project phases, activities and assessment criteria were first agreed and next shared with students.

Phase 4: The "Teachers or Learners?" project was designed involving senior students of our scientific high school who became content-instructors of junior mentees (eleven-twelve grade students) from the same school, who, in turn, coached last-year pupils (eight grade) from six nearby middle schools on the following CLIL cross-curricular topics: (Fig. 1):

School year	CLIL cross-curricular and transversal topics
2015-16	Article writing and journalism Evolution Gothic art and stained glasses (Canterbury Cathedral) The Tudors Art and painting
2016-17	Renewable resources Recycling Nelson Mandela and apartheid Cyberbullying

Fig. 1: Table with the CLIL cross-curricular topics shared by high and middle school students

Phase 5: For a semester both senior and junior high school students were trained and coached on CLIL thematic areas and CLIL teaching foundations by content and language teachers. This "pre-service" session took the form of weekly workshops aimed to master subject specific vocabulary and classroom discourse and to work out activities and worksheets enhancing prospective learners' interaction. The novice teachers were lectured in English on such strategies as presenting new information, demonstrating, outlining, using visuals, rephrasing, scaffolding, linking new information to previous knowledge, making inputs comprehensible and context-embedded. Attention was paid to possible obstacles based partly on the limited background knowledge of the target community and partly on L1 and L2 interference (the use of L1 was to be the last resort). Finally, stress was also put on the need to use a variety of verbal and non-verbal means to illustrate meanings, such as: repetitions, gestures, body language, analogies and exemplifications (better if carried out with the use of visual and multimedia aids).

Phase 6: The final presentation practice consisted of micro-teaching episodes (from 10 to 20 minutes) with immediate feedback from NS and L2 teachers. They varied from simple game-like activities suited for the beginning of the class (warming-up) to more complex team teaching where two or three student-teachers performed the presentation and practice stage of the CLIL lesson.

Phase 7: In May (2016 and 2017), groups of novice teachers engaged their younger learners in CLIL topics (according to the choices made by each middle school from a list of mutually agreed themes), trying to exhibit such CLIL teaching behaviours as: giving instructions clearly, describing tasks accurately, maintaining participants' motivation alive and keeping collaboration constructive and respectful.

Phase 8: Final assessment. Evaluation criteria for both CLIL content and language had been established before modules were presented. Assessment activities included individual or group quizzes and questionnaires, interactive games, hands-on tasks, visual representations (such as pictures, pictographs, maps, diagrams) and role-plays. Each presentation was attended and supervised by NS and L2 teachers who monitored students' involvement and participation by means of observation sheets. Most activities had immediate feedback.

Phase 9: Results were exchanged and analysed.

Phase 10: The CLIL modules designed by the teachers-students were uploaded on the school platform and made available to fellow teachers and learners. A "CLIL day" was also organized as a final and experience-sharing moment involving all participants.

4. Results

Regarding our research questions, the results from questionnaires and the feedback from teachers and learners proved that both content and language competencies were favourably affected by our reversed CLIL settings. These data come in line with previous research which has shown that there are gains, both cognitive and linguistic, when learners are instructed in CLIL contexts (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Additionally, peer teaching resulted in better understanding of curricular concepts thus demonstrating that rather than being a hindrance, it actually has a strong potential for the learning of subject-specific concepts. Similarly, class involvement and motivation were positively influenced by this innovative peer-instruction since all students alike benefited from being CLIL lectured by fellow educators, not only the brightest or the most talented ones. Finally, our research showed that also our novice educators did well: they learnt contents more deeply and gained several socio-cultural skills that will enrich their professional and academic lives (according to the National "Work-based learning programme").

5. Conclusions

Supported by a considerable body of educational research, CLIL enthusiasts never seem to get tired of telling about the benefits of CLIL. However, it is also wise to have some sense of the problems that CLIL initiatives may present. This paper describes how some of these challenges have been faced thanks to the creation of an enriching learning environment where students were empowered to co-construct their understanding and language proficiency actively working with their peers. This is the essence of CLIL. It has been a lot of hard work, but all the participants in the CLIL team feel it has been professionally rewarding. As such, the multidisciplinary team that was created has become a model for other schools in the province and the project has been renewed and replicated.

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CLIL Methodology in the 21st Century[1]

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Abstract

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology is expanding more and more all over Europe as the recent Eurydice Reports show. It was also mentioned in the latest recommendation on language learning issued by the European Commission in May 2018, as an effective approach allowing the improvement of students' language, disciplinary and trans-disciplinary learning outcomes.
In Italy CLIL has been mandatory since 2010: the state of the art of CLIL in Italy has been highlighted by the European Commission as a case-study, providing CLIL opportunities for all.
Moving from this background, the paper will describe an online teacher training initiative planned and promoted by the authors through an Italian online university, IUL.
The training pathway takes advantage of the tools of Web 2.0 and is aimed at getting the participants familiar with the use of technologies for CLIL. The theoretical framework and the main e-tivities of the course will be detailed, mentioning examples of the participants' products.
Among the different tasks, the CLIL web quest will be highlighted, referring to some of the participants' digital products, comparing the state of the art of CLIL in different European countries or in other parts of the world.
Another task of the course is video-annotation, allowing the participants to self-assess their own lesson or to act as a critical friend on a colleague's lesson. Teachers' reflection and meta-cognition are fostered through this technique, according to Do Coyle's LOCIT (Lesson Observation and Critical Incident Technique) model, which represents the framework of this task.
The transversal and final task of the course is the individual Action-Research plan, which each participant has designed and implemented across the length of the course, according to his/her own research question and in consideration of his/her own specific target and teaching context. Some examples of Action-Research projects will be described.
The participants' reactions and feedback will be also mentioned: comments show how powerful a similar online teacher training pathway may be for a teacher's professional and personal growth.
The overall framework behind the course syllabus is the use of the Thinking Routines by Project Zero (Harvard Graduate School of Education) identifying the different steps of the tasks.

Keywords: CLIL, teacher training, digital media, reflective teacher

1. Introduction

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) refers to the learning and teaching of subject content in a foreign language [8]. It is a dynamic and interactive methodology, focused on the learner as the main protagonist of his/her learning pathway and it has been recommended at international level, as the latest Eurydice Report (Key Data on Teaching Languages at school in Europe, 2017) and the recent proposal for a Council Recommendation on a global approach to languages (May 2018) show. In Italy CLIL became mandatory in 2010 and nowadays it is implemented in all upper secondary schools [5]. The European Commission has highlighted the implementation of CLIL in Italy as an example of case study for Europe, describing it in the latest "Eurydice Brief" report and in the above-mentioned proposal for a Council Recommendation.

CLIL teacher training is a very demanding issue in Italy, as subject teachers are supposed to develop language competences, aiming at C1 level of the Common European Framework of reference for languages and methodological competences on CLIL. Online pathways can help teachers reach those objectives, therefore online courses, MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses), webinars and

[1] The authors wish to state the following authorship: Letizia Cinganotto wrote Abstract and paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 6; Fausto Benedetti wrote paragraphs 2, 7; Daniela Cuccurullo wrote paragraph 5.

other initiatives promoted through multimedia platforms are usually attended by high numbers of participants.

2. Background

IUL, Italian University Line, is an online university co-funded by INDIRE, the National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research in Italy and the University of Florence. It delivers quite a high number of undergraduate and postgraduate online courses attended by a variety of students, a great number of whom are teachers.

"CLIL methodology in 21st century school" is one of these online courses delivered by IUL on its platform and is addressed to subject teachers or language teachers from any school level.

The syllabus has been planned and implemented jointly by the authors, following a constructive approach, aimed at directly involving the participants in the learning pathway through e-tivities or online tasks, forum discussions, "Teach Meet" webinars etc. The main goal of the course is to guide the participants in the exploration of the potential of learning technologies for CLIL.

3. Brainstorming on a CLIL learning environment

The activities proposed were aimed at exploring the potential of CLIL methodology through the use of the Thinking Routines as a part of Project Zero project[2], a framework, named "Visible Thinking", proposed by Harvard Graduate School of Education, which is made up of very simple operational steps aimed at guiding the development of thinking skills [9].

An example of Thinking Routine used in the course is the so-called "SEE-THINK-WONDER" (STW) Routine, aimed at observing a picture, a video or any other visual input very carefully and eliciting creative thoughts and wonders starting from observation. In our case a picture about a school setting was the opportunity to reflect on a possible CLIL learning environment and collect the teachers' ideas as a brainstorming activity.

Fig. 1: See-Think-Wonder

Here is an example of output from a teacher collected in the forum:

"See

In the image I can see a primary school class, where the students are sitting around a large table, carefully concentrated to understand what the teacher is saying. The walls are almost completely covered with maps, various images, schemes, probably not realized by those students, because of their complexity. The teacher listens to one of them who is talking, while the others listen silently. On the table there are pencils ready to be used.

Think

While the teacher is talking, the children show passive expressions and do not appear very active. It seems that some of them are not interested in what is happening in that place, probably the children are well managed by the teacher and remain calm and concentrated. The materials hanging on the walls do not seem suitable for the age of the group, but created for older students and are organized in a messy way.

Wonder

[2] One of the authors, Letizia Cinganotto, is actually involved in a research project with some colleagues at INDIRE, in cooperation with Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

It would probably be appropriate to propose activities in which children must act to produce something, to stimulate their creativity; in fact, they are not doing anything practical. I would really like to know what children think; from what appears through their expressions, I believe that the teacher's communicative style is perhaps too formal. In addition, the tables seem too large and the classroom small, not allowing a good interaction between teacher and students. Finally, children should work in brighter and more welcoming environments".

From the forum discussion the common idea is that a CLIL learning environment should be flexible, interactive and dynamic, allowing the learner to be active, to experiment things and discuss with peers. No top-down lecture is identified with a CLIL lesson.

4. CLIL webquest

An example of e-tivity proposed during the course is the web quest, a mini-project in which a high percentage of the input and material is supplied by the Internet.
According to Dodge [2], a web quest is *"an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet"*.
Benz [1] describes a web quest as *"a constructivist approach to learning (...). Students not only collate and organize information they've found on the web, they orient their activities towards a specific goal they've been given, often associated with one or more roles modelled on adult professions".*
The learners are guided through online research for resources, according to the specific role they have been assigned.

Teachers were asked to work in pairs or groups or even on their own and produce a web quest on the implementation of CLIL in a particular country of Europe and beyond. A "Teach Meet" webinar was organized to let the participants share the results of their research with their colleagues. Very interesting information was collected and shared on CLIL in Greece, in Spain, in Austria and Germany, highlighting similarities and differences with Italy. Interesting reflections came from the teachers as far as possible lessons to learn and bring to Italy from other countries.

5. Action-Research for CLIL

The core idea crossing the whole training pathway was an action research[3] project carried out at two complementary levels: one from the trainees' professional point of view and the other for their pedagogical use in the classroom. An action research project within an action research model.

To empower teachers for change, we focused our approach on the idea that teacher education needs to be undertaken from the perspective of teacher development, not only teacher training, which implies a process of continual, intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth and requires observation, analysis, self-reflection, *peer*-to-*peer exchange* and sharing of know-how regarding project development.

The training model was thus based on the following steps:

1. **Research** (Analysis by trainees of the theoretical framework and self-analysis of their knowledge and competence level for personal planning, organisation and resource discovery)
2. **Research** (Selection of a teaching AR plan)
3. **Research in action** by teachers while teaching in the classroom
4. **Research on action** [10] by teachers after completing the lesson.

The learning pathway had been designed to increase trainees' professional improvement and empowerment through engagement in constant enquiry into their own teaching practice in collaboration with others. It involved a process of examining practices and evaluating the results, leading to an improvement in teaching practice that benefitted both teachers and students.

[3] The origins of action research can be traced back to the 1940s through the work of Kurt Lewin, a social and experimental psychologist concerned with social problems and introduced in Britain in the 1960s by Lawrence Stenhouse who applied it to the educational field and regarded it as research oriented toward the improvement of direct practice.

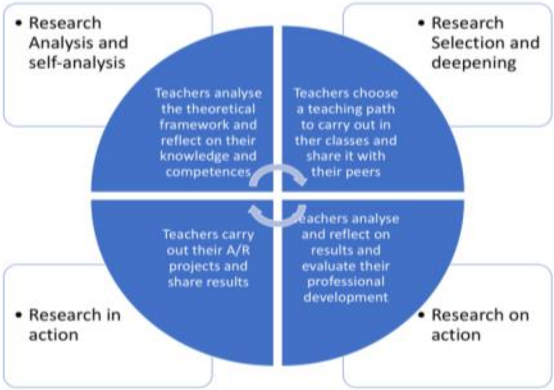

Fig. 2: The Action Research project within the Action Research model

From our perspective, action research implied moving from isolation to collaboration for participants. Trainees realised the need to investigate and share with peers their theories and practices related to Content and Language Integrated Learning/Teaching and became aware of aspects of their classroom practices that could be improved, as well as the chance to develop professionally by applying the action research approach instead of having innovations imposed from above. By designing and implementing their projects they learnt how to research their practice.

6. CLIL video-annotation

Another task proposed during the course is video-annotation which represents the focus of a great deal of research in recent years [4]. It consists of notes and comments referring to single bits of the video, taken using pen and paper or through a specific webtool, such as “moocnote” or “edpuzzle”. In a CLIL lesson video annotation can be exploited in several ways, especially using specific functions such as label, category, scale, timeline [6].

In a CLIL teacher training pathway Do Coyle [7] suggests the LOCIT model (Lesson Observation and Critical Incident Technique), in which teachers single out specific parts of the video recording for a lesson and reflect on strengths and weaknesses of that learning moment, looking for the critical incident which may be improved in the following lesson, also thanks to the help of a group of students as critical friends.

The task suggested in the course was aimed at getting familiar with some of the webtools for video annotation, matching the technical aspects with the reflection and meta-cognition which are crucial aspects in a teacher’s professional development [10].

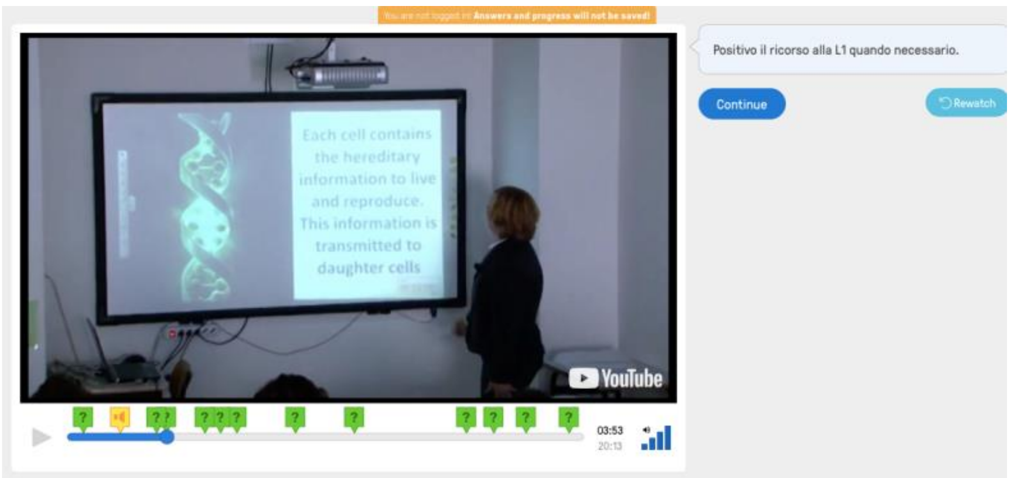

Fig. 3: Video-annotation

The picture shows an example of video-annotation: the green question marks below the video show the points in the video where a comment has been inserted, such as the one on the right in the bubble, stating that it is deemed positive to use L1 in a CLIL lesson, when necessary.

7. Conclusions

Final thoughts from the participants were collected through another Thinking Routine, named "I used to think, Now I Think", aimed at eliciting reflections on what a learner has changed after a certain learning experience (in this case the online course) from different points of view: affective, social, cognitive etc. Here is an example of feedback from a teacher:

"My thinking has definitely changed since I took this course. I used to think that CLIL was a methodology more fitting for light and easy content than for complex subjects. As a result, I found it difficult to adopt CLIL and make it applicable to ancient language and literature. Now I think that CLIL is an extremely flexible instrument and you can use it in any case, so long as you learn to plan your classes carefully and interact continuously with your students and colleagues".

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E-Twinning for CLIL: The Experience of an Italian Lower Secondary School

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Abstract

E-Twinning is a free online community for schools in Europe which allows teachers to find partners and collaborate on projects within a secure network and platform.
The many functionalities of the platform allow for the implementation of interdisciplinary activities and virtual collaborations among students of different countries, along with innumerable opportunities of training and professional development for teachers.
Thanks to these features eTwinning is an incredibly useful tool for CLIL-based pathways, allowing to explore and put into practice the many potentiality of the methodology.
The paper outlines the experience realized in an Italian lower secondary school within a project called "Welcome to my place! Let's know each other by using English", highlighting the effectiveness of the tool in the achievement of subject-related and transversal objectives.
In particular it is described how CLIL and eTwinning help to realize a competence-based teaching and learning, provide opportunities of authentic communication and support the acquisition of a "global" awareness by the students.
The role of technology and scaffolding strategies (necessary for the inclusivity of the lessons) are also reported and reflected upon, together with results of preliminary and final questionnaires administered to the students who took part in the project.

Keywords: CLIL; eTwinning, language learning, competence-based learning

1. What is eTwinnnig?

E-Twinning is a free online community for schools in Europe which allows teachers to find partners and collaborate on projects within a secure platform. It is composed of a network of more than 550.000 teachers based in 36 different countries, with thousands and thousands of projects already implemented.

The many functionalities of the platform allow for the implementation of interdisciplinary activities and virtual collaborations among students of different countries, along with innumerable opportunities of training and professional development for teachers.

Once registered and logged in the platform, a teacher can find partners from schools in other countries and then plan and develop a collaborative project. The projects can address a specific subject or be interdisciplinary, and usually foresee the interaction of the students within the virtual environment provided.

The so-called "twin-space" offers the opportunity to share files, videos, pictures and to realize live events where the students can actually talk to each other.

One of the many advantages of this portal is that teachers and educators are provided with tips, frames and tools for realizing projects that can involve a high number of students in a very simple way and at absolutely no cost, allowing for the implementation of complex activities that would otherwise be very hard to put in practice.

Furthermore, the realization of such projects helps to develop a "European mindset" among students and teachers, and gives prestige to schools towards their community and parents.

2. eTwinning and CLIL

CLIL is the acronym of "Content and language integrated learning", and refers to a methodology that allows the students to learn disciplinary contents and at the same time improve their command of a foreign language.

This methodology is nowadays acknowledged as one of the most effective for the implementation of a competence-based didactics and for acquiring 21st century's skills. Among the many advantages offered by CLIL, we can highlight the fact that this methodology improves learners' performance in both curricular subjects and foreign language, allows for the development of higher order thinking skills and encourages stronger links with values of community and citizenship.

It is easy to understand that the eTwinning platform and the CLIL methodology are a natural combination for the realization of significant projects from a disciplinary point of view which, at the same time, contribute to the improvement of language skills.

These are the premises from which we started for the implementation of the project "Welcome to my place! Let's know each other by using English" coordinated by the "Istituto Comprensivo di Corinaldo", a Lower Secondary School in central Italy. The partner schools were: "Fabian Legorboru" from Llodio, Spain; "CEIP José Garcìa Planells", from Manises, Spain; "CEIP San Roque", from Torredonjimeno, Spain; "Akabe Imam Hatip Ortaokulu" from Kataray, Turkey. The project took place during the 2017/2018 school year, from February to June.

3. The eTwinning project "Welcome to my place! Let's know each other by using English"

The students studied the history and monuments of their home town in English and realized virtual tours that then were uploaded on the twin space. The virtual tours are made up of pictures, videos, Power point presentations, etc...

Furthermore, after creating all these materials, the students communicated with each other through Skype conferences, asking and answering questions about the materials exchanged, but also about differences and similarities of life in their own country and town.

The activities related to the project were carried out through the collaboration among teachers of various disciplines, in particular History, Geography, Art, and English. Thanks to this project they managed to establish an effective collaboration, and exchange their experiences, ideas and points of view, that led to the creation of shared lessons plans inspired to the CLIL methodology.

The cooperative approach was also used for the realization of the classroom's activities: the students worked in group of three or four and were constantly encouraged to cooperate and exchange feedbacks.

Thanks to this project the pupils had the chance to know the history, traditions and characteristics of other towns in Europe and at the same time to increase the awareness of their territory by looking at it with different eyes. It is therefore possible to affirm that the activities described have contributed to developing an intercultural perspective and a mindset that we can define as "global", because it is open to the outside world and at the same time conscious and proud of its roots. We offered the students the opportunity to establish an authentic channel of communication with peers from different countries, and to develop a positive attitude and respect towards all the different experiences and life styles.

4. Competence-based learning, inclusivity and the role of technology

One of the main advantages of using the CLIL methodology for the implementation of an eTwinning project is that this choice allows for the realization of a competence-based teaching and learning.

The great cognitive challenge linked to the CLIL methodology is the need to think and work using another language. This necessity leads to a deep reflection on words and structures used both in the foreign language and in the mother tongue. The complexity of these cognitive operations encourages learners to use comprehension strategies that, once acquired, can also be used in the mother tongue and for all the other subjects.

For these reasons, the activities implemented within the project represented a good example of competence-based learning, as various scaffolding strategies were adopted to overcome the aforementioned difficulties.

Firstly, all the project activities were conducted using cooperative learning. This allowed all students, especially those with learning differences, to put their skills (technological, artistic, graphic, organizational and social) into play and to integrate them in their team, also as a compensation of weaker language skills.

Secondly, in order to create their own virtual presentations, the students had to develop the ability to communicate with words and images in a suitable and captivating way for the target audience.

Finally, in order to achieve what mentioned above, the students have learned how to use web tools that could be useful in a future workplace such as: Sutori, PowerPoint, Adobe Spark and other video making applications.

These kinds of activities were intrinsically motivating and inclusive, because each student, including those with learning differences, had the opportunity to enhance their skills and attitudes and at the same time to receive the support of peers.

In addition, teachers have constantly promoted self-evaluation and metacognitive reflection processes, to ensure that the learners could recognize their difficulties and develop effective strategies to overcome them.

The use of digital tools has played a fundamental role, both for the opportunity to use extra-linguistic skills (technological, artistic, graphic), and because thanks to the integration of images and text and the structural possibility of cooperation and sharing, has provided support for the comprehension, production and re-elaboration of disciplinary contents.

What stated above is also confirmed by the results of the feedback questionnaires administered to all the participants: all the responded identified team work, communication with foreign peers and video making as the most appreciated components of the activities carried out.

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Stimulating VET Students' Creativity and Motivation through Flipped and CLIL Experiences: The E-Classes Project

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Abstract

The article draws on the Erasmus+E-Classes project (Ref. no.: 2017-1-RO01-KA202-037344) and presents the project's objectives, target groups, methodology and outputs. The project's main aim is to motivate VET students to study science and improve their language and ICT competences by using flipped classroom and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)approaches. The article focuses on the basic theoretical background and practices related to the new flipped classroom pedagogic model. Itintroduces the main techniques, strategies and methods used in creative flipped classrooms, including the integration of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and CLIL in traditional teaching. It gives insights into how teachers can design a flipped lesson, experimentand improve their lesson according to their students' needs, the time, and the technological resources available. The article also highlights the potential and benefits that new technology offers teachers and how teachers can take advantage of its channels, join their efforts in learning communities and raise students' interest in learning. In addition, the project adds value to flipped classroom principles by involving companies in the educational process through multimedia enriched apprenticeship simulations.

Keywords: flipped classroom, CLIL, creativity, motivation, science

1. Introduction

People's mobility and the advance of modern technology have brought about new challenges to European society and schools are invited to play an important role in managing them. Technology must be integrated into the classroom to make learning more effective and applicable to reality.

Teachers use technology to enable an immediate sharing of useful learning materials, facilitate learning, create a work environment that empower students to become independent motivated learners as well as enhance various useful competences: workplace skills, problem-solving, teamwork, foreign languages, IT and multimedia, communication and cultural competences. The use of technology in a consistent instructional design not only increases students' motivation but also has the advantage to place the focus on the student and collaborative learning, where the teacher becomes a "facilitator", a "guide" or "a coordinator" of the group. One way of integrating technology into the classroom is through the flipped classroom method, which underpins the European E-Classes project [1]. The project aims at helping VET teachers to revise and consolidate their professional skills so that they can improve young people's performance. To this end the project develops a methodology especially focused on the use of ICT in school and relies not only on teachers' professionalism but also on students' involvement in their learning process and creation of materials.

2. The European E-Classes project

The main objectives of the project are [2]:

- to improve science teachers' e-skills and collaborative learning skills;
- to produce tools based on multimedia educational resources, which stimulate creativity and innovation;

- to stimulate students' active and creative role in the learning process through the use of ICT and OER;
- to collaborate with companies in order to create relevant educational products on job orientation and integration for students;

The E-Classes project addresses the following target groups [2]:

Direct target groups: VET teachers, VET students, VET schools, companies; indirect target groups: schools (in general), teachers and students (in general), parents, educational and training centers/NGOs in the field of education, teachers' associations, students/youth associations, educational public authorities (teacher training Centers), public at large.

The E-Classes project aims at creating a guide (whose main content is presented below) on flipped classroom methodology for teachers, flipped lesson plans for science classes and their corresponding videos.

3. The E-Classes project's methodology

The project's methodology, the flipped classroom, first exposes students to new material outside the class, usually a video, and then during class time it develops students' higher thinking skills through the use of strategies such as problem-solving, discussion or debates. The main objective of the design of a flipped lesson is to maximize the students' participation in online and offline activities inside and outside the classroom [3]. Teachers' main goal is not on exhausting the subject but rather on developing a wide range of students' deeper cognitive skills. Outside the class VET students develop lower levels of cognitive work, via reading or watching videos (gaining knowledge and comprehension) and in-class they focus on higher forms of cognitive work, harder work of assimilating knowledge, solving problems, debating or discussing some controversial issues (application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation), where they have their peers and teachers' support and feedback. In all, a flipped classroom activity includes the following main elements in its description: cognitive objectives, soft skills, subject, general description, tools, e-content, activity stages (pre-class, in- class, outside class), rules and results [3].

4. The main stages of a flipped lesson

In the first in-class lesson, teachers give a brief introduction to the topic and explain the learning process. As many students may not have any previous experience with flipped classroom and/or active learning, it is important to explain all the activities that students will develop outside and inside the classroom and their rationale so that they will understand the benefits of the flipped classroom method. They should also clarify the expectations concerning results, the students' participation and time needed to perform all the tasks.

The pre-class activities (videos, readings) should be developed in advance of the first-class time.

During the pre-class activities students have to watch short recorded video lectures or do some readings, which introduce the main concepts related to the content area before class. Students are also asked to do short quizzes (problems to solve, research to do), which are embedded in these materials; collaborative work among students is encouraged from this very first stage: students' answers posted to the course website are shared and commented upon [4]. Students use online dashboards to ask the teacher or their peers questions about the new content they learn outside of class or as a means to collaborate with their peers to do the tasks (www.padlet.com/ www.tricider.com/).

During the in-class activity after the video students spend the first 10 minutes reviewing the pre-class activities through a quick quiz or a question and answer session. All class activities are based on the video and they generally clarify and define new terms; they are meant to stir students' interest in the topic, promote high order thinking, stimulate reflection and discussions and create opportunities to deepen and apply the knowledge acquired. Students are engaged in active learning activities where students practice and improve what they started learning outside class, such as: case studies, creative scenarios and simulations, debates, group investigations, students' PPTs and discussions or micro lectures. They share and exchange knowledge with their peers, work together in groups to achieve tasks by using the internet, communicating with each other physically or virtually, and asking teachers for support whenever they need it. At the end of the first in-class activity teachers explain to students what they should do after the in-class activity to continue learning. Some ideas for deepening student understanding include: discussions suing boards or social media, assignments that require students to apply the skills and knowledge developed in class in a new way or to a new situation, additional readings on the topic or debates within informal learning groups [5]

Self-assessment activities carried out outside the classroom consist of short tasks or online questionnaires, with a limited number of items (3-4). Questionnaires should not check students' understanding or comprehension of the acquired knowledge but rather whether students know how to apply what they learned [6].

The activities developed in the last class session should promote peer evaluation and teacher's evaluation. The construction of knowledge should be developed based on the dialogue, active learning and collaboration. By reviewing their peers' work, VET students consolidate and deepen both their own and their peers' understanding of the material.

Mobility across the European Union requires high levels of language competence in designated languages, as these languages are not only the languages of everyday conversation but also the languages of work. Teachers have to adapt existing language teaching approaches so as to provide a wide range of students with high levels of language competence in different fields by forging relationships across disciplines, namely linguistic and non-linguistic. The result is a new method, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which refers to teaching a non-language subject through the medium of a foreign language (L2). All school subjects can be taught through foreign languages: history, civic education, physical education, biology, geography, chemistry, art or mathematics [6]. Thus, students acquire knowledge and understanding about scientific concepts and phenomena while at the same time improving their language competences related to this content.

5. Online tools

Teachers should also encourage group work and collaboration through several online tools, such as padlet, tricider or kahoot.

Padlet (http://padlet.com) is an online notice board where users, in our case teachers and students, can post ideas/information. Teachers can create a page free of charge and then share the address with students who post their ideas which appear in real time. First students have to reply to teachers' posted questions/ideas related to the video. Students' comments to their peers are also encouraged and can be added with teachers' approval. Padlet is a great collaboration tool where each contribution is valued stimulating peer and autonomous learning. It can also allow teachers to assess all their students' understanding of the materials [7].

Tricider (http://tricider.com) is a tool enabling teachers to ask a question and get replies from their students. Teachers can ask their students to post their "for or against" arguments by justifying themand then voting for their favourite. It is a free tool which if efficiently used can generate interesting class discussions [8].

Kahoot (http://getkahoot.com) enables teachers to create quizzes (multiple choice and true or false types) related to the videos or any other reading material. The tool also allows teachers to choose the amount of time students should have to answer. When all students have finished, their selected answers appear on the board. This tells teachers how everyone in the class did and is a good springboard for further discussion. The time limit pushes students to read the text quickly, developing the kind of scanning skills. [9].

At the end of the activities the teacher is encouraged to consider opportunities to evaluate the work done by reflecting on the design of the class or course. Feedback from students on what worked well and what didn't should be collected. Results obtained should be used in order to improve future practices.

6. Conclusions

Through the use of modern technologies, the flipped methodology is definitely a method which enables teachers to reach their students. A flipped class changes a teacher's traditional role and empowers students to think critically, do research and then share their knowledge with their peers in a collaborative way in an attempt to co-create new knowledge. The flipped classroom approach turns students into independent learners in control of their own learning process [6]. The video, which is accessible and can be watched as many times as the student needs, introduces the topic and stirs students' curiosity; it is a suitable tool which paves the way for class activities, which clarify and deepen the content. Students are invited to apply everything they learned in practice and encouraged to bring their own contribution to their group tasks, which are improved through the teacher's or peers' feedback. Students learn from each other under the guidance of the teacher through collaborative work and discussions. The E-Classes project is taking advantage of state-of-the-art technology and maximizes students' engagement and creates lots of opportunities for students' and teacher's interaction and collaboration, which makes learning a memorable experience.

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Sustainable E-CLIL: Adapting Texts and Designing Suitable Reading Material for CLIL Lessons Using Simple ICT Learning Aids

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Abstract

The object of this paper is to provide CLIL secondary education teachers with user-friendly, free and versatile ICT tools in order to simplify and adapt textbooks and to design suitable, original material from raw web resources.
Textbooks represent the salient content specific input but they are often too "cognitively dense" also for native readers: the aim is to reduce learner's cognitive overload when they deal with the text to avoid frustration and discomfort. This brief will show some easy techniques to increase school text accessibility and to make text comprehension functional to content&language learning. The text book's input plays a pivotal role in the learning process: it is a lesson activities generator and a powerful stimulus to gain communicative and linguistic competence in a target language.
In addition, we present interactive on-text- activities ideally planned for foreign pupils who have a different language of instruction's proficiency in order to enhance their reading performance, according to a student-paced adaptive learning's vision. Learning tools' functions for immersive reading, subject-specific vocabulary building and reading comprehension, will be introduced as scaffolding strategies aimed at making disciplinary contents "sustainable" and approachable for all learners. CLIL is an inclusive methodology for mixed skills students: it ensures that all learners have equal access to the curriculum and fully participate in the lesson.

Keywords: CLIL, Scaffolding, Reading, ICT

1. Text's semplification in CLIL settings

CLIL methodology is focused on a task-based approach in which textbook's input is a basic lessons activities generator and a stimulus to acquire communicative and linguistic competence. The main task of CLIL teachers is to build a supporting scaffolding for their students in order to convey the subject contents by anticipating or providing solutions to linguistic problems pupils may meet in interpreting study material.

In a recent article [1] professor Coonan describes some of the CLIL-teacher Profiles that have been elaborated at a European level, underlying his/her role of facilator.

Reading's facilitation strategies normally applied in the L2 courses and generally well known and widely used by the foreign language's teachers, but often ignored by the subject teachers who are not familiar with them because they work on L1 texts so they take for granted the linguistic features.

In CLIL settings text comprehension is never a passive process, it actively and massively involves learner's creative efforts: trough inferences and assumptions based on information that learner already has, the text becomes comprehensible, mainly because it is linked to students' previous knowledge, experiences and skills.

The development of any type of CLIL learning materials follows specific criteria clearly described by Peter Mehisto. The Author underlines that "quality CLIL materials are cognitively highly demanding for learners who need to assume the additional challenge of learning through an L2. However, excessive cognitive load can be avoided by incorporating enhanced scaffolding and other learner support mechanisms to help students reach well beyond what they could do on their own". [2]

The demand for scaffolded and suitable materials for each content subject taught through a target language is then remarkably high. Unfortunately, the diversity and specificity of teaching environments make impossible the adoption of a single CLIL textbook that satisfies all the pupils' learning needs.

The available books are normally designed for native speakers and cannot easily be assumed as effective educational tools in CLIL approach lessons.

Skilled readers are able to "catch" the linguistic and cultural clues contained in a text, thanks to the strategy of activation of their prior knowledge that allows them to anticipate the text's full meaning. On the other hand, the CLIL learner coping with a textbook in a foreign language does not have the appropriate linguistic skills to decode it nor the possibility to anticipate the content. This issue is emphasized by the high density of not context-embedded and abstract information that characterize academic texts and CALP tasks based on a strong subject's micro language vocabulary competence.

As a consequence of this, CLIL teacher should carefully evaluate the textbooks' complexity in order to make them accessible to students.

It is not only a question of reducing or reformulating the text itself, but rather to identify the understanding problems that may occur during the lesson and the right activities to support text's comprehension, without altering or watering its specific and original content. Text's simplification has to be considered as a transitory phase of the text's comprehension process, aimed at a higher competence acquisition of content and language. The objective is not to simplify concepts but language by "diluting and distilling" text's information density: text has not to be simple but difficult at a perfect level. The text's oversimplification has to be avoided: it may cause content's trivialism, learning stagnation, student's lack of motivation and decrease of self-confidence.

A solution to the original text's complexity could be found in selecting, among the texts adopted in the countries where vehicular language is spoken, the textbooks designed for native speakers of primary schools. This may have benefits for both the teacher and the students: from the content point of view, the comprehension of these books is easy, they also provide an authentic context for vocabulary learning. However, to teach content specific academic language to our students, these texts are not useful.

Even better would be simplifying authentic texts by providing them with appropriate activities and exercises created specifically for CLIL learning aims (scaffolding technique). CLIL tasks usually present a sort of linguistic redundancy, to enhance target language's natural acquisition, and they always must be adapted to the learners' foreign language's competence.

The teacher can also self-produce quality didactic materials from scratch according to subject content and linguistic objectives, taking inspiration on a case by case basis from both in L1 and L2 texts.

Authentic web texts, such as e-magazines and digital scientific journals' articles, or multimedia materials in general, represent a huge collection of free and adaptable CLIL lesson's material.

In this paper we present a framework to scaffold and adjust academic texts using free online ICT aids, it is divided into 4 phases or steps:

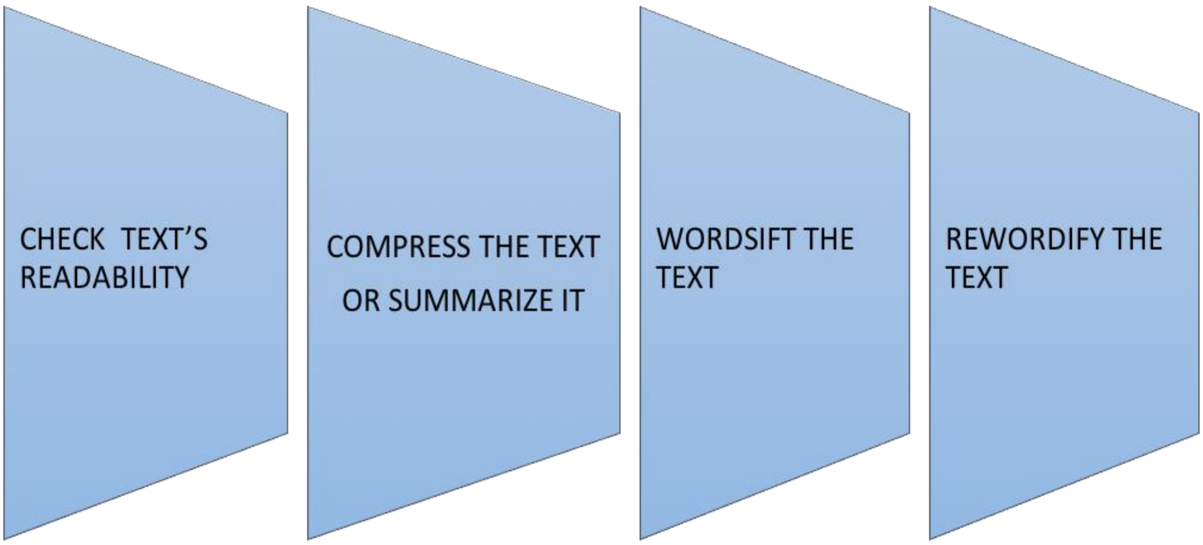

Fig. 1: Framework to scaffold and adjust academic texts using free online ICT aids

2. Check text's readability

Two important factors should be considered from teachers when they choose, adapt or create "user-friendly" (attractive and involving) study materials: the students' *target language proficiency, age and interests*, and the *text's readability*, in order to not overload students with information that they would not be able to process.

A text is considered readable when lexicon and syntax are clear according to mathematic formula and objective criteria (quantitative feature).

There are several free online software tools to automatically measure and check the legibility of a densely packed with information text: they are based on a readability formula that calculates and displays the number of sentences, words, syllables, and characters in a text. These formulas are matched against the reading level of English native speakers as target audience, however, they can constitute a useful instrument to grade the level of comprehensibility of a text given to CLIL students because they highlight polysyllabic words and long, complex sentences: teacher can cut and paste it into a box and see the grade level instantly.

In particular, the readability analyser [3], not only analyses readability, but also gives different ways to dig into text, from paragraph-by-paragraph level readability to passive voice detector and difficult and extraneous words finder: difficult academic words may alienate or confuse CLIL learners who are not familiar with them. Using this tool teachers can pay close attention to words and verb tense in passages they choose: the “Long Words” (Complex Multi-Syllable Words) and “Rare Words” tab can help them identify any words that may not be appropriate for their pupils, they are meant to be a guide to detect possible problem words.

2. Compress the text or summarize it

Overwhelming amounts of information in academic texts may jeopardise the lesson topic’s insight.

Free online summarization tools were created for shortening long text: Text Compactor [4] and Summary [5] are extremely user-friendly and require no login. To create a summary of the e-book’s page by Text Compactor, teachers just copy and paste the digital text into the box, use the slider bar to determine the percentage of text they want to end up with and view the simplified version below the original one. It even links to a text-to-speech and a language translation tool. SMMRY's supplies an efficient way of understanding text by reducing it to only the most relevant sentences. This is accomplished by:

- Rating sentences by importance using the core algorithm.
- Rearranging the summary to concentrate on a topic; by selection of a keyword.
- Eliminating transition phrases.
- Eliminating unessential clauses.
- Eliminating redundant examples.

3. “WordSift” the text

The path that supports understanding passes through a phase of global approach to the text, during which the student’s prior knowledge is activated thanks to brainstorming strategy focused on the key elements of the text. WordSift [6] is a tool that allows to build pre and post reading activities, it was designed to aid teachers to manage students’ comprehension difficulties arising from academic language in their text materials.

This software supports CLIL learners to immediately seize and display the vocabulary backbone of texts giving them the chance to investigate their language richness and variety.

The program allows teachers and students easily and quickly sift through texts by highlighting key words: a tag cloud is automatically generated and it’s possible to set up the cloud style and which words have to be marked, for example the AWL (Academic World List) words, created by Averil Coxhead or the subject’s specific words for Art, Science, Math and Social studies, identified in Robert Marzano’s important work.

Clicking on any word in the Tag Cloud, the program visualises instances of sentences in which that word is used in the text. In WordSift it is also possible a WordNet visualization: this view allows to explore data from the remarkable Princeton Visual Wordnet Corpus (https://wordnet.princeton.edu/).

A CLIL teacher can use WordSift to analyse assigned text in order to recognize demanding terms or concepts before the lesson, students can use it to preview text as a strategy for fostering comprehension, identifying the key vocabulary and using the example source sentence feature to skim and to scan the text. WordSift cooperative activities may be easily designed: students can work in small groups on the Tag Cloud using and explaining each other the unfamiliar words in the cloud (peer learning). Another vocabulary building activity inspired to this tool’s use would be to take the Visual.

WordNet display of a word web and have students classify and examine related words.

It is important to underline how these activities “hook” the new text’s information to students’ previous knowledge, they are aimed at the formulation of meaningful hypotheses and represent a motivating and high cognitive strategy.

4. Rewordify the text

In a CLIL lesson the following stage of academic text approach process consists in the analytical reading, in this stage teacher is assumed to provide different supports: questions to help students to link information, anticipations in order to create expectations on content, micro-summary to be completed from students after the reading, request for identification of text's main concepts and argumentation aimed at building a mind map of the text.

This phase is important because it corresponds to understanding's consolidation: the focus is on the acquisition of disciplinary content. A useful web tool to support this step is Rewordify.com [7], a free, online software that enhance reading skills, learning, and teaching. Thanks to this web tool teachers may simplify difficult English to improve students' comprehension and learning outputs, it also helps them to save time and to produce captivating lesson by breaking down text's complexity into digestible chunks. The whole digital text or the URL can be entered into the yellow box at the top of the Rewordify website page, clicking Rewordify text an easier instant version for quick understanding will be displayed. The reworded words are highlighted – click them to hear and learn the original complex word. Teachers can change the highlighted words in order to match the way their students learn. The software provides the so-called Learning sessions to actively teach new words: any time students paste in a block of text, Rewordify finds all the hard words, lets them select which ones they want to learn, and then teaches them in a Learning Session that is not an online quiz but an effective, step by step process where students listen to words and sentences, type them, and read them. When students have learned a word, the site quits "rewording" it, so it grows with them as they learn. Students can chart their learning progress with lots of detailed charts that show how they are doing. Plus, as they use the site, they earn points and get *Learning Stars*, a fun and motivating reward for reading and learning. Clicking the *Print/Learning activities* button teachers can pick from a rich variety of quizzes and learning activities such as cloze and matching exercises, with or without answer keys, and may also create customized word lists so the site rewords and teaches *any* word or phrase exactly the way they want.

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E-learning Solutions for Language Teaching and Learning

Business English: Introducing Learning Apps into a Blended Learning Course

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Abstract

This Business English course in entrepreneurship goes beyond communicative language instruction and offers a course designed to introduce students to innovative thinking, entrepreneurship and sustainable business practices. About 120 students in their first year are enrolled as part of the required foreign language module in Business Management (B.Sc.). Each week students learn new concepts and terminology in sustainable business practices while applying the material in a simulation task-based course using English as a lingua franca. It prepares students to work in an international context while offering online components for autonomous learning. This 12-14-week course is designed in a student-centered and blended learning format with a flipped classroom approach. Through a grant from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research the "work&study project" will offer additional online materials by developing new educational apps to enhance autonomous language learning and making the app content available under the Creative Commons license. The research project focuses on offering new learning environments to enhance the opportunities for non-traditional students enrolled at Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences. This paper will focus on the development of the first apps and results of the first testing phase. It shows how game-based learning and elements of gamification were added for educational purposes to enhance teaching and learning processes that were already well established.

Keywords: Learning App, Gamification, Business English, Blended Learning

Business English: A Simulation Course in Entrepreneurship

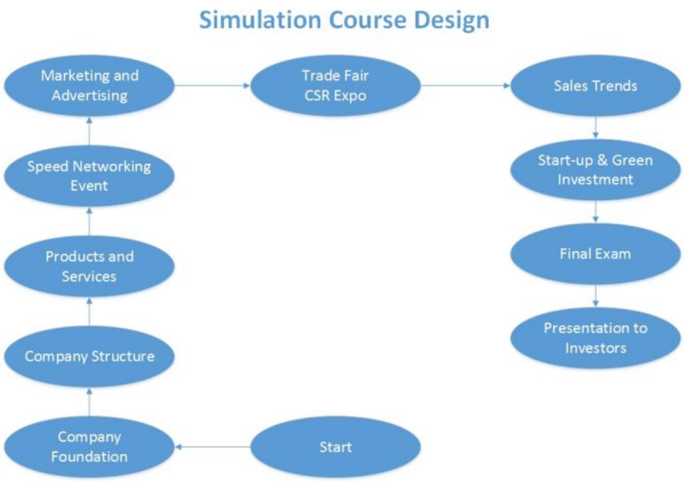

Fig. 1: (Simulation Course Design)

This content-based English language course in entrepreneurship goes beyond communicative language instruction and offers a course designed to introduce students to innovative thinking, entrepreneurship and sustainable business practices. Each week students learn new concepts and terminology in sustainable business practices while applying the material in a simulation task-based course using English as a lingua franca as seen in figure 1 (Simulation Course Design). Students are divided into groups of four to five entrepreneurs that start their own fictitious start-up company, create their own product or service, design their own website with a sustainable business concept and sell their products at a simulated trade fair. At the end of the course, the start-up companies convince investors by presenting their business plans. The course is taught at the B2/C1 level of the European Common Framework of Reference for Languages.

The course materials are based on textbooks and video material available under the Creative Commons license.

Business English is a required course in their first year of the Bachelors of Science in Management Sciences with roughly 120-130 students taking the course each semester. Each class has between 12 and 22 students that meet once a week for three hours. Each semester there are around five to six classes. The course is designed to offer students access to authentic learning material and authentic communication scenarios. Furthermore, students are exposed to different media tools that they will encounter in the workforce. All students receive the same instructions, assignments on the course wiki that they can access at any time. There are many advantages of using a one-course wiki. For the teaching team the workload is divided up into special areas of expertise. One lecturer is responsible for creating the lesson plans, the other writes the exam and one person is responsible for the vocabulary exercises. The team does not teach together but each class is taught independently with the same material and the quality has risen significantly as each contributes to the entire course.

Everyone can benefit from the quality provided by each expert and all use the same platforms.

Furthermore, the use of a wiki offers an easy method to embed videos from YouTube on topics that are relevant and provides an easy way to write and update information by taking advantage of the collaborative writing tool.

Blended Learning and Flipped Classroom Approach

In 2009, the course was changed from a traditional lecture class into a blended learning format course that was re-designed in a student-centered and flipped classroom approach. Before attending the 3-hour lecture each week, students read authentic texts related to the topic and watch online video material that is then discussed in class. Most time in class is used for active learning by applying the language skills and course content to learn by doing their own tasks related to the relevant topic. The last 45-minutes are used for simulation time and students work in their simulation companies and the instructor monitors the interactions and supports if students need assistance in their collaborative assignments.

Creative Commons and Copyright

In order to offer students different online learning environments, it was important to adhere to German copyright. Therefore, it was important to use teaching material that was available under the creative commons license to permit the use of the work for creating specialized language learning exercises, quizzes and games that can be stored online. By 2014, many parts of the course material were rewritten using creative commons course book material. The teaching team transferred its in-class vocabulary exercises and games into the learning management system (LMS) to offer weekly quizzes as a review option that could be used as well for the final exam preparation. This extended the online components and offered students more review options and time to work on vocabulary autonomously. It also provides immediate feedback with the correct answer. This was also useful for students, who could not attend the lessons. In addition, German students are used to getting so-called “scripts” that can be purchased for a small copy fee at the university copy shop. These scripts are texts and slides that are used during the lecture and should mainly replace expensive course books. In many language classes our university also offers copies of language course books in the university library for our students to borrow so that they do not have to purchase the book themselves. With the use of creative commons course material, we were able to provide the newly created course material “script” as a download without having to worry about any infringement on copyright. This also gives us the opportunity to create tailor-made vocabulary exercises that correspond to the course content for each session. These exercises were then offered on our learning management system (LMS), known as ILIAS. ILIAS is a German open source LMS that is used by many German universities (https://www.ilias.de/).

Mobile Learning App (Business English Applied – HBRS)

Mobile learning and the use of mobile apps for courses are still not that common. There are a few developers that have created tools to enable course apps to be designed for personalized courses as described in the NMC Horizon Project Strategic Brief 2016 [1]. Through a grant from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research the “work&study project” will offer additional online materials by developing new educational apps to enhance autonomous language learning and making the app content available under the Creative Commons license. The research project focuses on offering new learning environments to enhance the opportunities for non-traditional students enrolled at Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences. The aim was to offer a mobile version app of the course comprised of smaller app exercises that were previously only offered on the LMS. The researchers have developed a new approach that provides apps that are embedded in the browser and not in an LMS itself [2]. So far in e-learning the platform is where an exercise is stored and it cannot easily be used in different platforms or transferred to different institutions or courses if they are not all using the same platform. With the new modular apps there is no longer a restriction to use one singular platform as the app can be embedded in any website browser. The Client-side Component Model (CCM) was developed to run web components in the browser itself. These web components can be combined or used in a Lego-style system that enables teachers to create their own online material without using an LMS. The content can be used in many different browser settings and can replace an LMS [3]. This is also very interesting for many freelance teachers as they can create and use their own apps.

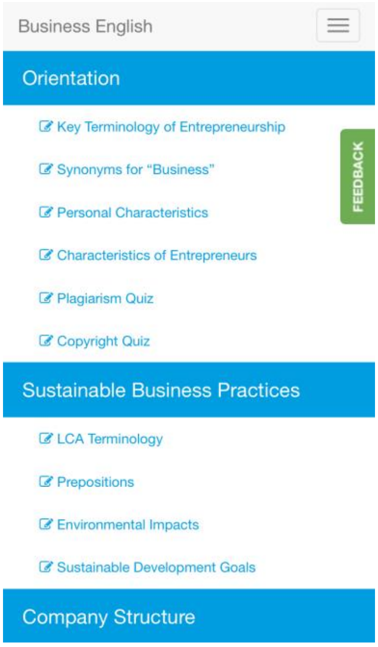

Fig. 2: (Screenshot of Mobile App)

In June 2018 the first phase of the tailor-made apps for the Business English course were designed using the material from the original exercises stored on the university LMS. The newly created app exercises were placed directly into the course wiki. The students tested the apps and gave immediate feedback to the developers in person directly in class. 75% preferred to use the app to the original paper version quizzes offered in class. All apps worked with the recent iPhones and iPad models. Students also criticized having to retype correct answers if they had to redo the quiz itself. The students enjoyed using their mobile phones for the quizzes and only a few students preferred to work on their laptops and tablets. However, the layout needs to be adjusted to the mobile format as some exercises were easily done on paper and not on the mobile phones. With the use of mobile devices, the questions and design needed to be adjusted to reflect the restrictions in the small screen and the use of scrolling up and down. Students also wanted to have a summary of the score at the end of the screen (i.e. 5 out 7 correct) and there were some devices that did not display the information as intended. These issues were resolved in the second phase of testing that took place at the beginning of December 2017. Again, all 120 students were asked to use the app with their own device. In most cases, the students used their mobile device to complete the exercises. By October 2018 the complete course app is being launched. As seen in figure 2 the course app is now offered in a completed mobile app version which includes all exercises from the script directly in the Business English App that can be accessed with a link. There is also a feedback feature where students can quickly type in issues that they would like to immediately share with the app developers.

Learning analytics and statistics will be developed in the next testing phase starting at the end of 2018. Then students will be able to access a detailed dashboard of their own assessment and can monitor their own rate of performance. This includes the possibilities of checking the time spent on an assignment, but also the number of tries it took to get the correct answer compared to their classmates by using pseudonym names to protect the personal data of students. Furthermore, different other statistical features will be added (e.g. bar charts that can be created easily to give an overview of the entire course and the statistics of individual performance on specific questions in relation to the entire number of students that completed the task). The student learning analytics can be accessed by the students and is also entirely student-driven.

Conclusions

Students are highly motivated in this student-centered course and have provided positive feedback on the use of the wikis and the new learning apps. The teaching staff is also keen on the idea of being able to create individual learning apps that can be layered and combined in different other larger components which is possible through the modular web components (ccm). We are still in the developing stage, but the first test phases have been successfully completed.

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Course Development, Assessment, the Flipped Classroom, and Noodles: the Highs and Lows of an Online Classroom through the Medium of Noodles

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Abstract

Teaching a language and culture online has its set of challenges, but it also has unexpected rewards, delights, and a closeness with students one couldn't have predicted. This paper will describe the general structure of our online course titled "Noodle Narratives on the Silk Road: A Cultural Exploration of Italy and China Through Noodles." It will discuss course development, including how to set up a class online, the general structure of the course, and achieving a balance of synchronous and asynchronous activities for students to accomplish during the class. The paper will address the topic of class implementation and management, including time management, achieving learning goals, and assessment, all through an interactive online teaching experience. The paper will discuss how to utilize an online format to teach language and culture as it further defines synchronous and asynchronous activities, the flipped classroom online, as well as tips on how to foster and navigate community with students who are situated all over the world. This paper will dive right in to online classroom teaching in our global world, the benefits, the struggles, the overwhelming reasons why we should try it.

Keywords: teaching, online learning, China, Italy, culture, food, noodles, connection

1. Introduction

We were in a meeting in the fall of 2013 when we decided to compare noodles between two cultures: Italy and China. The metaphorical symbol of the noodle and all it represents in both Italy and China was enough to send us into a five-year investigation. And so, our research began. Initially we had planned to get to the bottom of the noodle mystery where did the noodle originate? This proved more difficult than either of us had imagined. We knew the noodle was a staple food in both countries but we weren't sure about their origin. Did Marco Polo bring the noodle from Italy? Ultimately, we discovered this was not true. There were many references to noodles in cookbooks, literature, and travel logs that pre-dated Marco Polo's voyages to China. When we saw an image of an overturned bowl of noodles that had been completely preserved in China, dating back 4,000 years, it did seem as though China had discovered the noodle after all. Yet, although these appeared to be the oldest noodles in existence, the discovery still didn't prove for certain that China had invented noodles, only that a number of conditions had come together to preserve a bowl of them.

Where the noodle originated was not the only question we asked. What we wanted to know more than anything involved how the noodle integrated itself into the DNA of Italian and Chinese cultures.

Did the noodle manifest itself in the two countries differently? If so, how? Armed with a new curiosity about noodles, we developed a freshman seminar and an on-line course to continue our explorations. Although the in-class discussions we had in our seminar gave us new insights, this paper will focus on the on-line course and the technology and teaching techniques we utilize.

2. Curriculum for the Online Course and Technologies

2.1 Course Content

Our online course is offered over a period of six weeks, with two 75-minute synchronous sessions per week, focusing on four thematic units. In Unit 1 (week 1) we engage students in the study of anthropological methods on food studies, aiming to build a theoretical foundation for the cultural exploration of Chinese and Italian food and prepare them for the research related to the final project.

Unit 2 (weeks 2 and 3) is an introduction to Chinese and Italian food. In this unit, students read about Chinese and Italian culinary history, and discuss family traditions and social rituals manifested in food. Unit 3 (weeks 4 and 5) is a closer examination of the noodle, i.e. the history and evolution of the noodle in China and Italy, noodle variations, its relationship with nature and society. We also study literary works and food and noodle memoirs from China and Italy. Finally, unit 4 is the highlight of the course, showcasing noodle narrative projects and research papers (described in 3.2).

2.2 Assessment

Students are expected to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- Be able to explain at least three unique aspects of Italian and three unique aspects of Chinese cultures through the study of noodles in class readings, lectures, and discussions;
- Witness and reflect upon the intersection of traditional and modern life through assigned weekly blog entries and responses, cultural and literary explorations and discussions relating to course readings and noodle restaurant visits, and Voice Thread assignments;
- Integrate into student consciousness the idea of using cultural artifacts (such as noodles) as a jumping off point for multicultural exploration through the medium of assigned weekly readings and restaurant visits, and demonstrate this integration through noodle restaurant projects and final research papers;
- Explore how students' own relationship with noodles reflects their cultural and social belief systems in blog entries and identify how and where others do the same through interviews, observation, and other anthropological methods.

To assess whether our students achieve the stated learning outcomes, we utilize a variety of assessment methods. Student grades are based on the following components:

- 10% Self-intro Voice Thread and Class participation
- 20% Reflection entries on Scholar Blogs
- 15% Group Project Presentations
- 15% Oral Mid-term Exam
- 20% Interview Project and/or Voice Thread Noodle Narrative
- 20% Final Paper and Presentation

Students write weekly blog entries on assigned topics that require them to analyze the readings and critically reflect upon the issues discussed in class/readings. Student blog entries also provide topics for ideas and analysis during the synchronous sessions. Oral midterm exams give us the opportunity to interact with students and explore topics in real time. The group project promotes collaboration and interaction among students who are physically located in different parts of the world.

The project is completed on Google Drive and presented on Zoom. In order to allow students to take advantage of their local culture and foodscape, we ask students to complete an individual project as well. Students have the choice of either visiting a local noodle restaurant and completing a VoiceThread presentation with video, images, and narratives; or conducting an in-person interview and a write-up of 3-4 pages on the cultural significance of the noodle. For the final research paper of 8-10 pages, students choose a topic relevant to the noodle, analyze primary sources (such as literary works), discuss the cultural and social significance of noodles, evaluate the impact of social changes on dietary choices, and research immigrant experiences in relationship to food. Students are required to apply anthropological methods to food studies or use fieldwork methods whenever appropriate.

2.3 Flipped Classroom and Technologies

Developing a community of inquiry and providing interactive and collaborative learning experiences are key to the success of online courses and to the achievement of higher-order outcomes. However, it is not difficult to see the challenges online courses might experience when face-to-face communication is entirely absent. In order to establish/promote connection and collaboration among students and make the learning experience engaging and interactive, we strive to integrate synchronous sessions with asynchronous learning in a purposeful and thoughtful manner by applying the principle of the flipped classroom. Our online course consists of 12 synchronous sessions where students can "see" each other and discuss issues in real time. To make the synchronous sessions more engaging and dynamic, we purposely reduce the time for lecturing by creating our lectures in multi-media formats on VoiceThread for asynchronous learning outside the classroom. Students are required to watch slides and post video comments. Although learning takes place outside the synchronous sessions, it is almost as interactive – students can see us, hear us, and respond to our questions, and are able to interact with their peers in the same manner. This allows us to gain knowledge of our students' experiences and perspectives before they arrive at the synchronous sessions. As a result, we are able to incorporate their comments into class discussions. In this way, class time is used, for the most part, for meaning-making discussions, analysis of texts, and the sharing of experiences and ideas, which is an effective way of building a community of inquiry in an online setting and providing an engaged and collaborative learning experience for students who don't have a chance to meet in person.

A variety of instructional technologies are used in this course. The main organizing platforms for the class are Zoom and Canvas. Zoom (zoom.us) provides remote conferencing services through cloud computing. Instructors create a Zoom link for the courses and students join synchronous sessions using a personal computer or by calling in on their phones. During synchronous sessions, instructors can show presentations, videos, audios, write on the virtual white board, divide students into groups for discussions. Students can raise their hands to ask questions, give in-class presentations, and attend office hours outside the classroom on Zoom.

Course materials, including the syllabus, lesson plans, readings, and assignments, are housed in the course site on Canvas, which can be accessed online from any location, anytime. Additionally, Canvas supports technologies such as YouTube and VoiceThread, making it an easy and convenient tool for online courses.

Providing easy-to-use platforms for students to share their coursework is important for successful online courses.

In our class, students submit their reflection entries on Scholar Blogs (scholarblogs.emory.edu).

The blog site allows the posting of narratives, videos, and images, making it possible for students to include media components in their blog entries. Instructors and students can add comments.

VoiceThread is used by both students and instructors in this course and they can interact with each other asynchronously anytime, from any location. As a versatile tool, VoiceThread allows a group of people to engage in asynchronous conversations around a series of textual documents, images, audio files, or videos. Such communication can be placed in a relatively closed, and thus protected, online environment. Since VoiceThread is incorporated into the course Canvas site, students can easily create a multimedia presentation of their noodle narratives based on a visit to a noodle restaurant.

VoiceThread also proves to be an effective tool for active learning.

3. Conclusions

During our noodle classes, both in person and on-line, our debates, conversations, and projects go deep into the noodle's purpose. Initially we were convinced we would find distinct and obvious differences between Italy and China, reflecting historical, geographical, and philosophical differences.

We did find these. However, what surprised us and our students the most involved the similarities these cultures share, especially around the emotions and connections created through the act of food preparation and eating together. Food preparation is a vital component of the eating process. Both Italian and Chinese cultures value communal food preparation just as much as they do eat the prepared food. These two acts bring families together, allow them to discuss and resolve problems, give them a forum for demonstrating love and devotion to each other, and allow them to individually and collectively be more resilient in the face of adversity. Time and time again, when discussing noodles and food with our students, we discover and rediscover that the act of preparing and eating food is a way family's bond, talk, and overcome, not only in Italy and China, but all over the world.

Many of our students miss their home towns and families. They long to recreate their family meals by cooking for friends and purchasing spices that evoke home. Students also share food with others as a way to bridge cultures. Through on-line teaching techniques and technology, careful scaffolding, and the flipped classroom, we are able to see into the lives, experiences, and dinner tables of our students. With delight, we share noodles with each other across tables, cultures, and oceans.

Distance Learning Environment

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Abstract

The introduction of information technologies in all spheres of modern life leads to their increasing use in the educational process of higher education institutions, which provides an opportunity to use not only traditional but also electronic means of education. The method of implementation of the learning process is based on the use of modern information and telecommunication technologies that allow the student to carry out training at a distance without direct contact with a teacher.
Distance learning is an innovative learning that is able to solve the problems of training specialists adapted to the socio-economic conditions of life and work in the information society.
Research shows that students with access to computer assisted instruction, integrated learning systems technology, simulations and software that teach higher order thinking and/or collaborative networked technologies showed positive gains in academic achievement. Students, who take either all or part of their instruction online, perform better than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction. The question of the formation of foreign language competences has become quite acute in the last decade in connection with the interstate joint work on the creation of educational, scientific and communicative space, undergoing continuous qualitative transformation and developing in digital and virtual format. The main mission of the teacher is the formation of full-fledged competencies, implying the ability to implement intercultural communication in a foreign language, considering the ethical, social, national and cultural characteristics of the language.

Keywords: Distance learning environment, computer assisted instruction, collaborative networked technologies, integrated learning systems technology, innovative technology

1. Introduction

Educational institutions have a unique opportunity to expand its activities through international arena. Globalizing trade, industry and finance spheres create a world in which cross-cultural interactions occur more often than at any other time in the past. The need for new professions and specialization in many traditional occupations significantly increase the scale of the target audience for training. Professionals and students wishing to master the specialized knowledge and skills that meet the needs of a rapidly changing world, look for access to relevant educational resources, even if it has to go abroad or to study remotely. More simple and cheap communication, especially, is being fuelled by a growing desire to teach and learn in a cross-cultural environment.

Online distance education courses that are designed based on principles derived from social constructivist theories of learning usually incorporate teaching strategies that require learners to collaborate, communicate, explore, and reflect. In these perspectives learning is viewed as an active, constructive process through which the learner creates a new knowledge based on available cognitive resources by extracting information from the environment and integrating it with the information stored in memory; thus, it follows that constructivist and collaborative approaches are the most appropriate modes for managing online discussion groups.

1.2 Distance learning

Distance learning is by definition carried out through institutions; it is not self-study or a non-academic learning environment. The institutions may or may not offer traditional classroom-based instruction as well, but they are eligible for accreditation by the same agencies as those employing traditional methods.

Geographic separation is inherent in distance learning, and time may also separate students and teachers. Accessibility and convenience are important advantages of this mode of education. Well-designed programs can also bridge intellectual, cultural, and social differences between students.

Interactive telecommunications connect individuals within a learning group and with the teacher.

Most often, electronic communications, such as e-mail, are used. Whatever the medium, interaction is essential to distance education. The connections of learners, teachers, and instructional resources become less dependent on physical proximity as communications systems become more sophisticated and widely available.

Distance education, like any education, establishes a learning group, sometimes called a learning community, which is composed of students, a teacher, and instructional resources – i.e., the books, audio, video, and graphic displays that allow the student to access the content of instruction. In the distance learning environment, such networking can enable students' connections with each other and thereby reduce their sense of isolation.

Regardless applying constructivist principles in online distance education course design, it is important to consider whether these design principles fit the perspectives and expectations of students from different cultural background. Learners' expectations of a course, whether face-to-face or online, tend to be focused on the mastery of content for the course and on obtaining high scores on the tests.

Researchers have studied how to motivate online learners to participate actively, for example, by providing incentives and by making participation a part of evaluation. An online learning environment has many benefits for learners, such as flexibility, the quantity and quality of participation, open and accessible communication, and archived postings from participants for reference. However, as students enrol in online courses from different locations, time zone differences may keep some students from participating, especially when synchronous communication methods are used.

Advances in media technologies make open and distance education an important alternative to traditional learning format, creating favourable conditions for the formation of communities involved in an effective virtual learning environment.

In addition, you should consider the desire to maintain diversity in response to cultural identity and strengthen community through the recognition of the right expression.

The increasing demand for access to educational resources makes students legitimately require culturally adapted educational content that ensures the full development of the individual. As it has been noted, the students acquire knowledge in a multicultural context which is not synchronized with their own culture, sometimes there is a serious conflict. This conflict is associated not only with an incompatible way of learning and teaching, but also because of the growing wish to maintain contact with the local culture in which the student will ultimately work. Consequently, educationalists, teachers, methodologists – especially those who work in the online environment must possess the skills to prepare content that is tailored to the cultural specifics [3].

If the organization of the educational process and development of didactic materials are essentially social in nature, suppliers of learning content should not take a neutral position when creating their courses. Learning efficiency will be significantly improved, if the developers of educational material, providers of educational material are aware of the importance of considering the cultural stock of their students and how these cultures can occur in the learning preferences.

They have a clear understanding of how their cultural views are represented in materials. Moreover, providers of educational content must analyse your expectations regarding how students will and should react, to be ready for unexpected reactions. In addition, they must balance the need to help students to adapt to specific professional, educational and dominant cultures.

1.3 Distant learning environment

The specificity of language learning as an academic discipline is determined by the fact that it is characterized by features inherent in language as a sign system, at the same time it is determined by a number of distinguishing features of mastery and possession from the native language.

At the same time, it differs significantly from any other academic subject. A significant feature of the language learning as a subject is that its absorption does not give a person an immediate knowledge of reality [2].

The activity of each learner should be built under the guidance of an experienced teacher, i.e. on the basis of interactivity. The educational process should be built in such a way that the teacher has the opportunity to monitor, adjust and evaluate the activities of the students. An independent activity of the learner needs an effective feedback. The student should have a variety of contacts in the learning process with partners. Types of independent activities of trainees should also include a variety of individual and a paired group.

The advantages of distance learning activities over traditional forms are their efficiency, productivity, and richness, possibility of fast and effective self-actualization of students. New information technologies have a significant impact on the psychological and ideological quality of students. A necessary condition for distance learning is a gradual transition from the information orientation to the interactive one. Multimedia training programs have an increasingly significant role that involves the freedom of choice of action and obtaining effective results. The development of interactive training programs will complement the facilities and capabilities of distance learning technologies.

Information and communication technology have a great potential in solving problems of intercultural competence development to build the teaching process as an intercultural activity which can be considered as a promising distance learning environment [4].

2. Conclusions

More research is also needed to address students' personal factors and social factors in an online distance learning environment. These include interpersonal, social interaction and social presence among learners, all of which to be taken from a culturally sensitive perspective.

Distance technologies were originally intended to serve as a means of improving efficiency in the educational process. Furthermore, it has been shown that well-designed distance learning environment can help improve memory retention, increase motivation and generally deepen understanding. Distance learning environment promotes collaborative learning, including role playing, group problem solving activities and articulated projects. Generally, distance learning environment is promoting new approaches to working and learning, and new ways of interacting. Distance learning environment improves student understanding, increasing the quality of education, and thereby increasing the impact of education on the economy. ICTs are transforming schools and classrooms by bringing in new curricula based on real problems, providing tools to enhance language learning, giving students and teachers more opportunities for feedback and reflection, and building local and global communities that include students, teachers, parents, practicing scientists. Information and communication technology have great potential in solving problems of intercultural competence development to build the teaching process as an intercultural activity which can be considered as a promising learning environment, the formation and development of intercultural competence of students. The use of distant technologies can be seen as a process of computer-based educational environment designed to solve problems of intercultural competence of students of different specialties. ICT is the technological basis of international information exchange; they create didactic conditions for the development of personality, development, communication, intercultural competence.

Learning through the use of computer technology develops analytical thinking, intellectual and creative abilities and autonomy in constructing their own knowledge. The teacher is irreplaceable: the students see the instructor as a person who can assist them by regulating their learning activities. The observation also showed that the students seek information, feedbacks and corroboration with the instructor in the distance learning environment. Supportive learning environment provides communication between students and instructors, and an efficient access to study materials and instructors.

We consider the distance learning environment from the students' perspectives. There is a great need to understand the experience, advantages and anxieties brought into the flexible learning environment by students borne out of the existing didactic teaching and exam oriented educational system. The pedagogy of distance learning environment has to be studied and scrutinized.

Due to its unique didactic properties (along with the development of language skills and the formation of language skills) modern information and communication technologies can significantly enhance and boost the effective distance learning environment.

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E-Learning and Students' Motivation: A Research Study on the Effect of E-Learning on Language Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

Web-based learning is used nowadays as another option to face to face language teaching and learning. Although the e-learning term and tools do exist for over a decade, the educational research field has not given enough attention to the study of student motivation under the effect of e-learning. Online platforms could be used as an aid to deliver e-content and to provide various possibilities for implementing asynchronous e-learning web-based modules. In today's modern learning scenario, it is believed that appropriate utilization of sophisticated tools of e-learning has generally been recommended in order to yield best possible results. In online education, students have autonomy, as they are free to decide what they want-where-when they want to study. Self-regulated learners are described as learners who are active participants in their learning process. The purpose of this study is to investigate self-regulation in Online Language Courses. As self-regulated learning is very important in settings of online education, measurement and adequate support of it are very important. Possible differences between age groups will be examined. A questionnaire will be used and administrated to potential/actual students. The significance of this study is that it will raise the awareness of academic staff to the importance of using the interactive features of e-learning as an important asset in teaching.

Keywords: e-learning, SOL-Q, online language learning, self-regulated learning

1. Introduction

As more and more personal computers were deployed in workplaces and homes during 1970s and 1980s, the use of computer-based training increased rapidly [18]. "E-learning is defined as formal and informal education and information-sharing that uses digital technology" [7]. e-Learning capitalises on advances information processing and internet technologies to provide, among others [19]: personalisation, interactivity, Media rich content, Just in time delivery, user-centric environments.

According to Rosenberg [18] e-learning has great possibilities based upon three criteria: e-learning is connected to a network, e-learning is delivered to the user via a computer that uses standard Internet technology, e-learning focuses on a broad view of learning which differs from the traditional views of education.

Several studies have investigated students' perspectives of online learning. Petrides [14] interviewed students to reveal their perspectives on Web-based learning. In Vonderwell's [23] study, 22 students were interviewed concerning their perceptions of their asynchronous online learning experiences. Chizmar and Walbert [2] showed that the public display of online discussions made learners more careful in posting their comments Petrides [14] found that participants to work easier in collaborative groups in an online course without rearranging everyone's schedule

2. Online language learning

Within the field of language learning, there have been several advancements in technology that have promoted the development of multiple software's. Language learning applications first appeared as PC-based and were usually specialized in phonetic training [4]. For example, the SPATS programme [13], [25] is targeted at remedial work with hearing aid users. The literature on learning outcomes of these new age language learning technologies is not extensive, as few have investigated the design and evaluation of the usability of such applications.

Language education theory supports that notion and additionally finds that language learners require comprehensible input in order to make sense of new knowledge in the target language [11],

[12]. In addition, linguistic and cognitive language theories stress the importance of presenting learners with multiple opportunities to interact with authentic, contextualized, and linguistically challenging activities and materials in communicative and academic contexts [6], [10], [11], [12].

Adding e-learning instructional components may provide more of those opportunities, and may also offer more flexible access to students [15].

In online education, students have autonomy, as they are free to decide what they want-where-when they want to study. This amount of autonomy is a major challenge for students, as being completely responsible for their own learning process. This means that they have to engage in self-regulated learning (SRL) [8]. Self-regulated learners are described as learners who are active participants in their learning process [27]. Self-regulated learners are not only metacognitively and behaviourally active during the process of learning (performance phase), but also before (preparatory phase) and after the learning task (appraisal phase) [17]. SRL encompasses task strategies – the cognitive processes learners engage in – and the activities to regulate these cognitive processes [27].

The purpose of this study is to investigate self-regulation in Online Language Courses. As self-regulated learning is very important in settings of online education, measurement and adequate support of it are very important. Possible differences between age groups will be examined.

3. Methodology Research

Self-regulation in online language courses will be measured through the use of the SOL-Q. Participants of the research divided in two age groups (15-30years old – 1st group – and 31-46 years old 2nd group) in order to reveal possible differences between the two groups self-regulation data towards online language learning.

3.1 Instrument

Several questionnaires are available to measure Self-regulated learners, such as Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire [16], the Online Self-regulated Learning Questionnaire [1], the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory [20], and the Learning Strategies questionnaire [24]. The basic problem with all the aforementioned questionnaires is that their validity in online settings has not been established. Measures developed for traditional classrooms must be validated for use in online settings [22]. For example, a recent study has shown that the MSLQ could not be validated in an asynchronous online learning environment [3], as well as the validity of the MAI and the LS in online settings has not yet been tested. In this research, the relatively new SOL-Q questionnaire, developed by Jansen *et al*., [8] will be used to measure self-regulated language learning in online courses. This questionnaire was tested in the context of Massive Open Online Courses by conducting an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on two separate datasets collected in two different Massive Open Online Courses. The SOL-Q, consists of 5 scales: metacognitive skills, environmental structuring, help seeking, time management, and persistence [8]. The participants responses scored using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from “not at all true for me” (=1) to “very true for me” (=7).

3.2 Participants

In Greece, as in many other countries, there are many foreign language academies that offer both traditional and online courses. During the last decade the demand for online language courses has increasingly increased and every year even more learners (both teens and adults) tend to orientation towards online language learning. Participants of this research (N=402) were Greek university students who had participated in online courses offerings of a foreign language.

4. Results

62% of them were male and 38% were female. 48% belong to the age group 15-30 years old and 52% to age group of 31-46 years old.

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine differences between the two groups’ self-regulation Table 2. Prior to the test, a test to determine the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices using Box’s M test was carried out. This is a way to determine whether the variance-covariance among the dependent variables is the same or the opposite, across all groups.

This is a prerequisite for MANOVA test [9]. Table 1 shows the result of tests Box’s M.

Table 1: Box's M test

Box's M	F-value	df1	df2	Sig.
5.814	0.948	6	34534.413	0.442

Table 1 reveals that there is a significant difference between variance-covariance among the dependent variables for all level of independent variables (F=0.948, p=0.442) (p<0.05). This is interpreted as the variance-covariance of dependent variable is not homogeneous across all groups.

Stevens [21] proved that even if matrices homogeneity of variance-covariance (Box's M test) is significant, it is not mandatory to be a problem for the MANOVA test, in cases where the sample size is large and almost the same (biggest sample/smaller sample <1.5) due to the impact of type I error is very small. In this study, the number of sample size is large and almost the same, therefore the above test hypothesis can be done by using MANOVA test.

In the MANOVA analysis, there are various statistical tests that can be used to test hypothesis such as Wilks' Lambda, Pillai's Trace, Hotelling's Trace and Roy's Largest Root. Each one is used to test the hypothesis multivariate, which the population mean is the same. In this study, Hotelling's Trace was used: Hotelling's Trace =0.13, F (6,1014) = 21.21, p<.01. Univariate F-tests showed that Time management, Environmental structuring and Help seeking were significantly different between the two groups. The first age group had higher means in all scales, Table 2. There was no significant difference between the two groups on Metacognitive skills and Persistence.

Table 2: MANOVA for the two groups

	2st group		1nd group		F	Sig	η^2
Metacognitive skills	M	5.32	M	5.58	4.864	0.41	0.018
	SD	1.41	SD	1.32			
Time management	M	4.72	M	5.11	25.154	0.000	0.061
	SD	1.52	SD	1.22			
Environmental structuring	M	5.23	M	5.92	24.206	0.000	0.058
	SD	1.18	SD	1.14			
Persistence	M	5.29	M	5.38	1.711	0.158	0.004
	SD	1.13	SD	1.17			
Help seeking	M	3.81	M	4.02	9.214	0.003	0.032
	SD	1.39	SD	1.31			

To measure self-regulated language learning in online courses in both groups, multiple regression analyses will be used, Table 3.

Table 3: Multiple regression analyses of self-regulated language learning in online courses

		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
Variables	Group	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p value
Intercept	2nd	11.98	0.81		16.92	0.000
	1st	11.79	0.89		13.65	0.000
Metacognitive skills	2nd	-.126	.121	-.087	-.089	.317
	1st	.011	.127	.013	.059	.89
Time management	2nd	.127	.091	.098	1.208	.201
	1st	.102	.127	.072	.709	.399
Environmental structuring	2nd	.243	.129	.201	1.971	.064
	1st	.117	.196	.095	.682	.494
Persistence	2nd	.402	.127	.297	2.954	0.005
	1st	.302	.179	.264	1.804	0.081
Help seeking	2nd	-.029	.078	-.285	-.152	.687
	1st	-.304	.109	-.245	-2.604	0.014

According to the multiple regression results, the coefficient of determination – R^2-, which is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables, of the 2nd group was 0.146, meaning that our independent variables explain 14.6% of the variability of our dependent variable and the F-ratio, which results indicate whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data, was F(5, 986) of 5.795, p<.001, explaining a significant amount of variance in the outcome variable. R2 for the 1st group was 0.197, explaining 19.7% of the variability of our dependent variable and the F-ratio was F(5, 932) of 5.689, p<.001.

After the evaluation of the *F*-value and R^2, the regression beta coefficients were evaluated, Table 3. The beta coefficient is the degree of change in the outcome variable for every 1-unit of change in the predictor variable. The *t*-test assesses whether the beta coefficient is significantly different from zero. In the 2nd group, Environmental structuring and Persistence (Beta= .201 and .297) and in the 1st group Persistence and Help seeking (beta= .264 and .245) were significant predicting self-regulated language learning in online courses.

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Integrating Usage-Based Theory of Language Acquisition with On-line Foreign Language Learning

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Abstract

The presentation will describe beginning on-line university foreign language courses in Chinese, Russian and Spanish which in teaching students to orally communicate in these languages employ Usage-Based Instruction (UBI). UBI is a pedagogical approach which borrowed its name, and was inspired by usage-based model of language and language acquisition. Usage-based theory of language represents a relatively novel view of language and language acquisition shared by scholars in such areas a Cognitive Linguistics and Cognitive Grammar, Construction Grammar, Corpus Linguistics, Usage-Based Linguistics, and Cognitive Perspective in Second Language Acquisition. Closely associated with this view is the Competition Model and the Theory of Connectionism. The main tenets of usage-based concept of language are: linguistic system in the mind of the language learner arises from specific exemplars of use; language is a large array of meaningful units or constructions – conventionalized pairings of form and meaning; frequency is the main determinant of language acquisition; language is learned and is learned as anything else; both L2 and L1 learning are seen as essentially similar processes and rely on a single set of language learning mechanisms. The learning mechanisms involved in language learning are rich memory, categorization, associative learning, pattern-finding, schema-formation, automatization, entrenchment, chunking, analogy and imitation. At the described university, this perspective was laid into the foundation of Usage-Based Instruction – an innovative pedagogical approach to teaching students to communicate in the target foreign language which has been successfully applied for a number of years in both face-to-face and on-line language courses. In our presentation, we will attempt to demonstrate how seamlessly this perspective can be integrated with on-line delivery. In the development of our fully on-line asynchronous language courses, we, for the most part, take advantage of Voice Thread, a cloud application which allows both students and instructors to upload, share and discuss documents, presentations, images, audio files, and videos; comment on slides by means of the microphone, webcam, text, phone or audio-file upload. Additionally, the courses rely on such tools as Blackboard Collaborate, discussion forum, assignments, and tests.

Keywords: usage-based theory of language acquisition; usage-based instruction, on-line foreign language teaching

Introduction

Usage-Based Instruction (UBI) has been developed and used for a number of years at a private Midwestern university, where foreign language is an elective subject, with the purpose of making instruction for speaking in beginning language courses more efficient. It is widely known that students' main motivation in studying a foreign language is driven by their desire to orally communicate in it. (Magnan, Murphy, & Sahakyan, 2014) Although studies of outcomes of collegiate foreign language courses are scarce or out-of-date, anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that that instruction for speaking proficiency generally does not meet the target levels. "The typical American language and literature major is *lucky* (emphasis added) to achieve level 2 on the Interagency Language Roundtable scale after four years of study. Median attainment after four years of harder languages for English-speaking adults, such as Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Korean, or Japanese is only ILR 1 (Long, Gor, & Jackson, 2012, p. 100). The presentation describes an effort to make instruction for speaking more effective by applying one of the leading post-Chomskyan theoretical linguistic models, known as Usage-Based Model of Language to on-line instruction in foreign languages.

From Usage-Based Model of Language to Usage-Based Instruction

One of the unique features of Usage-Based concept of language is that it views language represented in the mind as an inventory of constructions (Croft and Cruse, p. 225). defined as conventional, learned form-function pairings/mappings pairings/mappings at varying levels of complexity and abstraction (Goldberg, 2013). Form in constructions refers to any combination of phonological, syntactic, morphological patterns and *meaning* includes lexical semantics, pragmatics, and discourse function. Constructions exist at all levels of language, i.e., include: words, morphemes, idioms, partially lexically filled and fully general phrasal patterns. Everything that speakers know, can be re-cast as knowledge of constructions (Hilpert, 2014), knowledge of language is knowledge of constructions, and language acquisition is learning of constructions (Ellis and Cadierno (2009, p. 117).

In the UBI, constructions are used as units of learning and the main feature of the UBI instructional sequence is that it relies on lexically specific and thematically organized constructions that serve as the primary objects of instruction. Therefore, the course learning outcomes are articulated in terms of lexically specific constructions students will master by the end of the course, unit or an individual lesson, and will be able to produce both in interpersonal and presentational modes, with high degree of automaticity.

Studies conducted within the constructionist perspective (Tomasello 2009; Lieven and Tomasello, 2008; Li, Piewen; Eskildsen, and Cadierno, 2014; Ellis and Cadierno, 2009), show that acquisition of constructions is usage-based: linguistic system develops on the basis of experience with language and emerges as a result of numerous usage events – instances of the language user's understanding and producing the language. Gradually, through repetition of similar instances of use, more abstract general representations, such as phonemes, morphemes, and syntactic patterns, begin to be formed.

Thus, knowledge of language *arises* out of *language use* rather than is generated by the rules.

Usage-based view rejects the traditional view, in accordance to which language is a set of rules with words plugging into them (Tyler, 2012) Although rules are convenient tools to *describe* the language, they do not *generate* sentences or can act as guidelines for creation of new utterances: they only describe something *after the fact*. Instead, linguistic representations exist in activation recurrent patterns of mental activity or cognitive routines. Following these important premises, the UBI instructional system foregoes the "rules" and has students learn L2 constructions from concrete exemplars of usage (Ellis and Cadierno, 2009). The expectation is that once a collection of like examples is in long-term memory, a more abstract schema develops and *grammar* arises out of analogical generalizations over stored exemplars of constructions. Special concern for long-term memorization and retention is one of the main characteristics of the UBI approach. Multiple iterations through both the meaningful input and output activities and relentless follow-up practice in using the already learned constructions in a variety of communicative situations during which students have to retrieve it from memory are all indispensable features of the UBI. In the same vein, the UBI instructional system emphasizes the special role of continuous review: for the new material to be transferred into the long-term memory, it is continually reviewed throughout the course.

Another important feature of Usage-Based view of language is that it does not see knowledge of language as being uniquely different from other types of knowledge. Language learning relies on a single set of cognitive processes that are involved in other types of knowledge and learning besides language. Cognitive processes involved in language learning include categorization, cross-modal association, neuro-motor automation, entrenchment and chunking, inference schematization, automation, and analogical mechanisms that we use every day to produce and decode language (Bybee, 2002; Bybee, 2013). A special role, in Usage-Based view of language acquisition, is attributed to associative learning. Learning a language, according to Ellis, is a "the gradual strengthening of associations between co-occurring elements of the language" (Ellis, 2002, p. 173). The UBI instructional system largely relies on associative learning, a powerful learning mechanism and, therefore, uses such tools as frequent, repeated exposure and use, immediate feedback, practice, and reinforcement throughout the instructional sequence, with frequency playing the most crucial role in the process. When a new construction is introduced, students are subject to multiple exposure of the target construction. Such constant purposeful and carefully engineered repetition facilitates the process of entrenchment of constructions in the students' mind.

Another concept that figures prominently in Usage-Based model of language is entrenchment defined by Landgacker as routinization and pertains to how thoroughly the structure is mastered and "the ease of its subsequent activation" (Langacker, 1991, p. 45). In the UBI, it translates into the requirement that every construction is mastered by the students until students demonstrate fluency in its use, i.e. ease of use and natural rate of effortless production. Fluent performance is very reinforcing and students are more willing to continue in the educational enterprise (Anderson 2000, 6) in our case desire to continue foreign language study. Underlying entrenchment is a chunking process, which results in establishing gestalt-like chunks of language processed as a holistic unit. The UBI employs the concept of chunking prior to the instruction: longer constructions are chunked or segmented into smaller digestible, bite-size pre-fabricated constructions that students will acquire and will be able to use as elements in other constructions.

Introductory and intermediate language courses at Lewis University are being offered in both face-to-face and online formats. Both follow UBI model in teaching listening and speaking proficiency, with reading and writing skills supporting and supplementing them. These online courses are asynchronized, with VoiceThread as major learning/teaching venue, supplemented by various additional activities to engage and access students. There are no required times for students to be logged in, however, there are three deadlines each week for assignment submission. Typical weekly and monthly assignments include commenting on VoiceThread, Discussion Boards, Cultural Journals, movie reports/paper, individual speaking project for presentational speaking (using Voice Thread, Adobe Spark Video and annotated PowerPoint), and pair and small group work for interpersonal speaking (using online conferencing app such as *Collaborate*) Each Voice Thread online lesson consists of slides created following different stages of UBI outlined above. Adaptations from traditional courses are made for the course to better sync with an online environment. Main considerations are how to implement and deploy essential input and output activities as envisioned by UBI approach to maximize student learning experience online.

The UBI instructional sequence comprises:

1. Focused Input which serves as a trigger for the development of initial meaning-form associations;
2. Forced Choice output – during which students begin to produce target constructions while they are still in their phonological memory;
3. Scaffolded Output during which previously learned sentence chunks come together in meaningful production, in a personalized context, based on such scaffolds as pictures, questions with modeled responses, key words and phrases, clues and prompts, both in L1 and L2;
4. Guided Practice which includes role plays, information gap activities, guided presentations, guided interviews, and other practice activities conducted both in reading and writing formats;
5. Recycling – carefully designed communicative activities that allow the student to use the language learned in a variety of new contexts making learning permanent.

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Online Environment in Language Skills Development

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Abstract

Online environment offers wider horizons than a face-to-face learning in the classroom can offer. It provides time and space that often lack in everyday learning situations. The study demonstrates how implementation of online elements into school syllabus helps to improve language skills of lower secondary learners. It aims to show that learners are able to direct their language development if they are given a prompt and an appropriate learning environment. Learners of an elementary school took part in one-year experimental use of online reading environment with the aim to monitor their learning habits, reflect on their work and present the content in their regular lessons. The study presents the data collected via qualitative methods: interviews (learners and teachers) and content analysis (reading protocols, reading journals). The results show significant growth in interest to work on language skills development outside of the classroom as well as willingness to participate in the classroom activities based on online learning tasks. The findings also reveal improvement in using language for reading protocols and journals at the level of vocabulary growth and partially at the accuracy level as well.

Keywords: online learning environment, language skills, reading, reflection, self-directed learning

1 Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language has experienced many changes and challenges in Slovakia in the last years. In 2008 teaching of foreign languages became compulsory at primary level and three years later the choice of the first compulsory foreign language was limited to English.

However, after ten years it seems that despite this shift to early language learning, the language proficiency of students, especially in lower secondary education, is still inadequate and does not reach an output level A2 [1] of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Lower secondary education in Slovakia seems to be rather conservative and resistant to change and innovation. It demonstrates a low level of stimuli present in language teaching and is heavily based on textbooks as well as the traditional approach towards language teaching. There is a huge lack of meaningfulness in the activities that students are asked to carry out and thus a rather limited personalisation of the acts.

This study focuses on possibilities of enrichment of the language learning environment in order to intensify the learning experience via online reading programmes. The aim of this study was to use the experience of similar studies [2] and to find out whether the inclusion of an online learning environment would represent a higher stimulus for using the target language and at the same time whether there would help to improve the language skills of the students. It presents the outcomes of a longitudinal research project with the aim of verifying the applicability of online reading programmes with incorporated activities for the development of productive language skills in the real context of elementary schools and to determine the significance of the impact such programmes would have on the development of language production. Online reading programme was implemented into a year plan of five experimental groups. Students were expected to produce linguistic meanings that were motivated by their own interests within a wider contextual framework. At the same time the interest of the study was also to identify learners' attitudes towards the online learning supplement and the level of motivation for this practice.

2 Reading and skills development

Reading in a foreign language is a complex process which has many specific aspects. Approaches to reading as a process and in the same way approaches to teaching reading in a foreign language classroom have changed over the last few decades from that of seeing reading as a passive process of receiving information to understanding reading as an active and even interactive process [3]. An experienced reader who has reached a certain level of automaticity uses these processes as one functioning complex. In this context Hedge [4] explains the interaction as “interplay among various kinds of knowledge that a reader employs in moving through a text.” Geva and Ramírez [5] call this kind of knowledge strategic knowledge and connect it with what is typically understood as reading comprehension.

Lower secondary learners have automatized word-level reading skills and mastered sufficient fluency at the lower level, there is a wide range of higher-order strategies they need to apply. In order to “read to learn” they will be expected to demonstrate cognitive skills such as predicting, breaking down the text into details and then synthesizing the read text, summarizing, inferring from the text, drawing conclusions, identifying key arguments and supporting details, connecting prior knowledge with new facts, providing evaluation of what was read, etc. All this will require a carefully planned and systematic approach in making reading a part of every lesson and, in a wider scope, there is a need for a consistent reading programme (RP). Immersion into the target language has a profound effect on the development of individual language skills and sub-skills. The enlargement of the word stock is a natural part of this process as has been supported by many research outcomes of longitudinal studies.

One such example is a case study that was conducted in the Slovak educational context at a primary school with the aim of involving young learners in levelled reading programmes [6]. The results of supported the initial hypothesis that immersion into the target language through levelled reading programmes would have an impact on vocabulary expansion and on general understanding of the language.

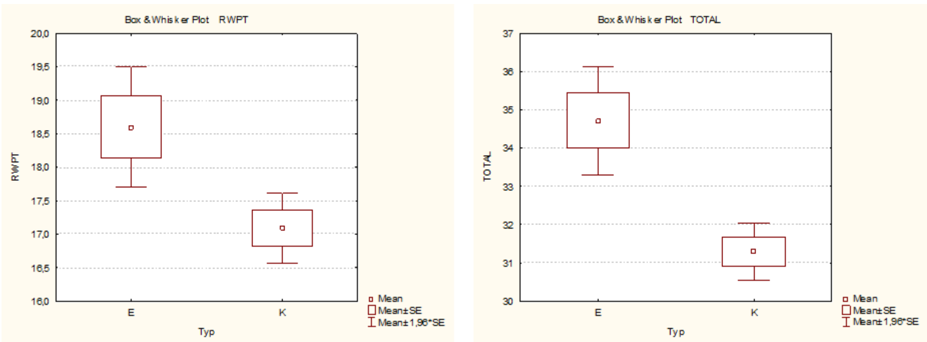

Fig. 1: Vocabulary expansion.

The difference between experimental and control group at the beginning (left) and at the end (right) in a vocabulary test.

3 Reading in online learning environment

As the use of modern technology has influenced the educational context in every single aspect, teaching reading has not been left out. Today’s generation of leaners at school are digital natives [7] and the use of technology for them feels like second nature. Applying technology in developing the reading skills of learners requires a modification of reading strategies used by the reader in comparison with a traditional reading process based on the printed material. The question of text difficulty or appropriateness will be considered more often in a classroom where teacher uses technological devices than in a traditional classroom since the sources, at any proficiency or authenticity level, are open to the learners at any time. This can be viewed as an advantage on the one hand because the intensity of exposure to the target language is incomparable in this way. At the same time, however, we need to be aware that both systemic and schematic knowledge are challenged much more while using open sources and Krashen’s term *comprehensible input* [8] has a huge relevance in this situation. Learners can become discouraged by the incomprehensibility of the text, especially when facing authentic texts.

At present there are many opportunities to involve learners in using online libraries. Some of them offer a mere selection of books for reading, some, on the other hand, have a complete task management for both learners and teachers. Learners can enter such a virtual learning environment via personalised access; they can see their own progress and enjoy bonuses awarded by the teacher.

Such environment even allows for communication between the learner and the teacher so the learners can be guided even though they work independently of the teacher. Teachers, on the other hand, can see a complete overview of the learner’s attempts in reading, task accomplishment, recording of their own reading aloud, etc. Teachers can even invite parents to see their children’s progress in order to motivate them and support them. This is vital especially in lower-level reading programmes.

4 Methodology

This study focused on the implementation of online reading programmes into the curriculum of lower secondary learners. The experiment with 150 learners (72 in experimental and 78 in a control group) of 5^{th} and 6^{th} grade at elementary school comprised of systematic reading books in online library as well as experiencing one lesson per week as a follow up session after reading a part of the book online. The books were selected by the teachers and assigned to the learners for a certain period of time. The follow-up activities were designed to address the development of language skills and their practice. They focused on the development of language skills. The learners were tested before and after the experiment so that their progress could be measured. The test focused on learners' response to visual or written stimulus. After the experiment learners and teachers were also involved in an interview addressing their experience during the online learning and in order to record their attitudes towards using online learning elements. The experiment lasted for one school year.

4.1 Findings and discussion

In order to analyse the performance of the CG and EG the descriptive statistics of the total scores was used for each group. Based on the descriptive statistics of the total mean scores of all learners (CG 52,19% and EG 63,07%) at pre-testing at the beginning of the experiment and their mean scores (65,4% and 82,69%, respectively) at post-testing after completing the reading programme, it can be concluded that performance in the test after the experiment was better in both groups. This fact is not surprising since all learners made some progress within a school year. However, while the difference between the CG and EG in pre-test was 10,88%, it was 17,29% after the experiment in post-test stage. The values of the t-test used show that there is a significant difference in the results of the two groups in favour of the EG. This finding supports the assumption that an online RP would have a positive impact on the learners' performance.

In interviews students expressed that they found the experience positive and motivating and asked for continuation. They did not consider online learning an extra burden and appreciated more space and time they had for handling the task. The students expressed their belief that their language improved significantly in this year and they felt more secure in using the target language. Teachers, who were monitoring students' progress via reading journals as well as the learners' behaviour in the lessons supported this fact by stating that even lower achievers tended to accomplish online tasks in comparison to textbook tasks and they also participated actively in the lessons more.

Findings demonstrated that an involvement of online RP has a huge potential to deepen learning experience. The results also support the assumption that inclusion of online RP will influence not only the language progress of the learners but also their attitudes towards learning. In general, it can be concluded that online RP as a supplement of the learning space resulted in a significant rise in motivation to be involved in practising the target language and in consideration of this practice as more meaningful and more enjoyable than typical textbook-based practice.

5 Conclusions

This study focused on the implementation of online RP into a regular EFL classroom. It was assumed that online RP a regular component of foreign language teaching can serve as a generator of higher involvement and desire of learners to immerse into the target language and produce meaningful outcomes. The findings of the research bring encouraging conclusions and suggest, it is crucial to supplement language teaching with input which allows for deep immersion into the target language and use this input for generating desirable outcomes. Therefore, online RP can provide the extent of exposure which is necessary for generating interest and personal involvement on the part of the learner.

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Personalized Learning, Self-Directed Learning, ICT and Student Motivation

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Abstract

The change from teacher-centered to student-centered learning- and teaching approaches that has been going on for decades as well as classroom heterogeneity have enhanced the importance of personalized learning-and teaching (P-learning) and learner autonomy.
At the University of Applied Sciences Burgenland (UASB) in Eisenstadt, Self-Directed Learning (SDL) has been used and refined in the English classes of the business-related Master study programs for some years. It offers the students an autonomous approach to language learning by providing them the opportunity to define individual learning goals and choose individual learning tools to reach them. Students independently work on their SDL-project in their self-study time and realize it mainly by using online materials and specific online language-learning tools and/or apps. ICT enables students to access and use relevant teaching materials independent of time and place while at the same time it enables their teachers to monitor and give feedback at their convenience.
Self-Directed Learning, together with personalized feedback for the learners, are used to ensure that through partial degrees of freedom regarding place, time and content of the course, students can work on individual learning goals and, consequently, remain highly motivated.

Keywords: P-learning, Self-Directed Learning, ICT, learner autonomy, E-learning, student motivation

1. Introduction

The fact that many language classes at universities and other educational institutions have become more and more heterogeneous in regards to native languages, cultures and also learning styles of the students, requires teachers to employ “different strategies, cultural experiences, vocabulary examples and techniques” [1] to deal with each of the learners. Apart from that, the general change from the teacher-centered to the student-centered classroom over the last decades, which has created an atmosphere in which students are more actively involved in the learning process than they used to be, has changed language learning and teaching, too.

2. Personalized Learning (P-learning)

The above-mentioned new era of teaching started in the 1990s with people such as Mazur, who developed the concept of Peer Instruction to involve his students in the teaching process [4] or Alison King, who suggested that teachers step down the stage and leave it to the students. These concepts were the first steps towards P-learning and learner autonomy. P-learning refers to the effort to facilitate tailor-made teaching and cater to the individual needs of each student.

To support P-learning it is necessary to partly hand over the teaching process to the students and let them work autonomously and self-directedly. This means that students need to be involved more actively in the learning process by inspiring them to dissect and reassemble information “in a way that is personally meaningful to them so that they remember it more easily and are able to retrieve it when needed” [1]. However, it also means that students need to actively reflect upon their strengths and weaknesses, identify goals and contemplate how they can best meet their needs.

3. Self-Directed Learning (SDL) and ICT

In the self-directed learning environment, the students are in the center amidst an impressive array of diverse tools they can choose from, with the teacher constantly revolving around them, not losing sight of the learners, their needs and their goals. Placing students in the center clearly exposes that each student has different strengths and weaknesses, needs to work on different skills, needs different teaching approaches, and has different learning styles or preferences.

SDL is an approach to learning and teaching that reaches and embraces this diversity in classrooms. Learners have the freedom to choose what they would like to work on and how they organize their work. They identify their specific learning needs, formulate their individual learning goals, determine the resources they need to reach this goal, find learning strategies and assess and reflect upon the learning outcomes.

3.1 The SDL Process

At the beginning of the process, students reflect upon their skills and find an area of the language they would like to improve. As soon as they have found a focus, they need to formulate a SMART goal in a "Goals Proposal", which also addresses anticipated supportive factors or limitations and functions as a constant reminder of what the initial goal was. Then, they create a timetable, and, subsequently, find helpful resources and tools that support them in achieving the set goals in the time available. With the goal in mind they start performing the tasks that help them train and improve the respective skills.

After each learning-session, students need to provide evidence for their work by documenting the tasks they have performed in their online "Learning Diary". Additionally, they assess themselves and reflect upon their learning experience so that they can adjust or modify their actions or strategies before continuing with the next learning-session. By consistently following these steps, learners are in a Feedback Spiral [1], which does not only help them to reach the language goals they have set, but also teaches them how to learn and be more effective in all subjects.

Fig. 1: Feedback Spiral [1]

Self-directed learners need to be self-managing as they have to define goals and design a strategic plan; they are self-monitoring and find out what works and change strategy if necessary, and they need to be self-modifying as they reflect, evaluate, analyze and apply again. The facilitation of student autonomy naturally changes teachers' roles, too, and they need to support learners in developing these dispositions.

Whereas teachers used to be the "sage on the stage" they have now shifted to being the "guide on the side" [3]. They have become facilitators, resource providers, guides, evaluators, critical thinking promoters and supporters, in addition to their role of a language expert. However, it is not only their way of teaching that has changed, but also the way of assessing students had to be adapted to this new form of teaching and learning. As each student has an individual learning goal, the form of evaluation has to be personalized, too. Teachers, therefore, need to give constant constructive feedback regarding the students' progress during their learning process.

ICT is an integral part of the SDL work as there are numerous different language-learning tools and materials, from which students can choose, available online, and they can use different devices such as their mobile phones, tablets or laptops to work with them. Materials are provided for all different levels, learning types and skills, students can access independent of time and place and work at their own pace, while it enables their teachers to monitor and feedback at their convenience. This independence facilitates a constant exchange between teachers and learners, and, therefore, greatly enhances student motivation.

3.2 Self-Directed Learning and its implementation in the English courses of the International Business Relations (IBR) Master Program at the UASB

The English courses in the IBR MA program at the UASB are a combination of 20 face-to-face, 10 online and 20 self-study units, which are mainly used for the SDL work.

In the beginning of the first semester, students are introduced to the concept of SDL and its advantages, provided with useful resources and examples of how to find a focus, formulate goals and work on their project. Interestingly, most of the students have not had any experience with being an autonomous learner before, and it is crucial for the teacher to guide them carefully and offer regular support, especially in the initial phase. This happens either in the face-to-face but also in online sessions.

In the second phase, the teacher already guides the students towards reflecting upon their strengths and weaknesses, formulating a clear goal for the semester and finding appropriate resources. The "Goals Proposal", which has to be submitted in written form, is first discussed between peers in a face-to face session in a "Conference with Critical Friends". This meeting offers students the opportunity to receive and give peer-feedback and modify the proposal before it is handed in to the teacher. The proposal does not only contain the focus and goal for the SDL work, but also an estimation of how reaching the goal might enhance the professional or personal life and how relevant it is. It should already contain the methods and tasks the student intends to use for the work, a reflection of strengths that might help to achieve this goal as well as potential limitations that might hinder them in the learning process. Then, teacher and student review the proposal together and edit, if necessary, before the students start working on achieving their goal over the semester.

In the third phase, after each of their learning sessions, students upload an entry in their online SDL Diary, where they document and reflect upon their learning experience. This serves the students and the teachers equally. On the one hand, learners themselves can see the progress they are making, and thoroughly reflecting upon the usefulness of tasks or methods shows them, what they might have to change to reach their goal. On the other hand, teachers are provided with the evidence that the students actually perform their SDL tasks, they can constantly monitor what individual students do, give feedback, and, therefore, accompany the student throughout their way.

At the end of the semester, students provide a "Reflective Report" in which they summarize and assess their learning experience and learning outcomes. This, together with the SDL Diary, is evaluated by the teacher using a performance-based rubric, assessing the students' development rather than their grammar skills.

Students' opinions regarding the concept of SDL are divergent. At the beginning of their studies, they seem to be a little overwhelmed by the freedom of choice and the transfer of responsibility from teacher to student. However, after having gotten used to autonomously working on a relevant goal, they seem to realize the advantages of this concept and they appear to be far more motivated than students who do not work with SDL.

It seems that self-directed students are in a continuous learning mode, strive for improvement, are critical thinkers, can cope with occasional failures better and are constantly improving and growing.

4. Conclusions

SDL as a part of P-learning is a highly effective way to enhance student motivation. The fact that learners have the opportunity to choose their own goals and work on them autonomously and independently, at their own pace, following their own needs, makes SDL extremely attractive to them.

The SDL experience helps students to set realistic goals, design strategies and learn from their own experiences. It makes them reflective and critical thinkers, which supports them not only in their language classes but also in all other subjects during their studies.

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Preparing Students for Online Language Learning

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Abstract

Technology has permeated all aspects of our society making online courses a must for most, if not all, educational programs. Unfortunately, educators have mistakenly assumed that students need no preparation for engaging in the online classroom. On the contrary, engagement in the online classroom requires a vastly different set of technical skills than those required for social media or video gaming. Online instruction is often asynchronous resulting in isolation that often leads to unrealistic expectations on the part of both student and teacher. Therefore, it is imperative that students be taught how to properly use and engage the technology. Additionally, due to the inherently intimate nature of language learning, online language learners face a unique challenge arising from this isolation-quality comprehensible input. Finally, students often enter the language learning process expecting to immediately be able to speak the language. While teachers are used to managing expectations of this nature in the traditional classroom, continually managing and reinforcing such expectations in the online environment is a challenge. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers develop online lessons and tools to help learners understand the concept of proficiency and its measurement. This presentation will discuss development of modules to address these issues and exhibit sample modules that can be used in K12 and post-secondary online programs.

Keywords: Proficiency, technology, language learning

Introduction

Technology use in educational settings is a hot topic around the world. Teachers are always looking for new ways to engage students especially in the online environment. Unfortunately, most educators assume that 21st Century students, having grown up with computers, iPhone and internet at their fingertips, already possess the technical skills needed to navigate online courses with little or no help. Likewise, students make assumptions about language learning and often have unrealistic expectations about their proficiency level at the end of one course. Students often believe they should be “fluent” after one course because they do not understand the nature of language learning – especially the need for comprehensible input in order to learn a language. The solution seems obvious – teach our students the technical skills they will need to be successful including the language learning process and the concept of language proficiency levels, and encourage students to set appropriate learning goals for the course. However, this is a much more daunting process in the online environment. This paper will present a brief review of current research and then describe two modules that have helped students better navigate learning a language online in beginning online courses.

1. Research

In 2001, Marc Prensky coined the term “digital native.” [1] He defined digital natives as those born after 1980 who have never known a world without computers, the internet or cellphones. Those born before 1980 did not grow up with all of the modern computer technology he called digital immigrants.

He asserts there is a natural, generational divide between digital natives and digital immigrants which has led to many erroneous assumptions about today’s students and their technological skills. In her article, O’Neal states “It is problematic that there are so many assumptions about how just because a [person grew up with digital media … they are automatically tech savvy.” In fact, the amount of empirical evidence suggesting the contrary is growing. [2] One study on college students’ technology use found that they did not know how to properly use email nor did they know how to use Google to find needed information. [3]. Danah Boyd interviewed 150 adolescents about technology and found that just because young people spend a lot of time on the internet or using social media does not mean they have any real idea of how best to use these tools. She asserts that the idea of “digital natives” is dangerous because it implies a skill level that students do not actually have and prevents them from being taught how to properly use technology. [4]

In the 1980’s and 90’s, research on student beliefs and expectations in foreign languages classes was prevalent, but did not specifically look at student expectations of learning a language or explore expectations of proficiency. With the advent of proficiency-oriented instruction, teachers have begun to use proficiency level terminology with students, and it has become clear that students needed to be taught both the process of language learning and the various proficiency levels. While there are no empirical studies yet support the claim that teaching students about proficiency and language learning, anecdotal evidence suggests that it is key in tempering student expectations and motivating them to succeed in their language classes.

2. Teaching Technology Skills

As the research above shows, students need to be taught the technical skills they need in an online class to be successful. The first step is determining which technologies will best suit the needs of the learner in the class. In the author’s experience, it is better to teach students about all the technology required and then practice it in their native language before attempting to use it in the target language.

In prior online courses before developing the technology module, students often complained about learning new technology throughout the semester. But having them learn and practice in the native language first seems to have reduced their cognitive load, their anxiety, and allowed for community building within the online environment. This community development (getting to know each other and foster friendships within the class) helps lower the affective filter and produces a more conducive learning environment.

When creating a technology module there are several considerations: First, the number of different programs, websites, etc. (e.g. during the first semester of the author’s program, students complained about the quantity of technology used that required a separate login information). Thus, the teacher needs to carefully evaluate the ease of use, as well as, the purpose served of each piece of technology.

Second, the learning management system needs to be considered. In many schools and universities, the learning management system (LMS) is decided by administrators. No matter which LMS is used, teachers need to consider what tasks/assignments can be performed within the LMS, tasks that fully integrate with the LMS, and which tasks/tools are completely outside of the LMS. The fewer outside tools used, the easier it will be for students to successfully navigate the course. Once all tools have been chosen, video tutorials on the use of the tools must be created or found. Often, there are existing video tutorials already from the developer, but they still must be incorporated into a task that students complete to demonstrate their mastery of that tech tool.

Many of these initial tech-learning tasks can build on one another. For example, students can make a post to a discussion board within the LMS, or be required to comment on classmates’ posts. In addition to learning how to post and comment, students use the process to get to know each other and select conversation partners for the course. Incorporating the selection component causes students to read the posts with a different eye and they often read more than the 2 required posts. After selecting a conversation partner, they are required to have “get to know you” conversations in their native language using an online conferencing tool that must be recorded on video. Conversation starter questions are provided, but the students are not required to use them – the only requirement is a 5-7-minute conversation. The student response to these assignments has been quite positive. Students report liking to have a purpose for the discussion post (finding a partner) and getting to interact in the native language first reduces their anxiety about later speaking with them in the target language.

Additionally, students are given the opportunity to practice with the video conferencing tool. This is especially important because several students have recorded audio only or video with no sound not realizing. They can redo the assignment to figure out how to use the tool correctly before they complete tasks in the target language.

2.1 Teaching Language Learning Strategies

Most students enter foreign language classrooms with a wealth of school experience. They assume that the skills acquired in other classes will help them be successful in their language class. However, the 21st century language class is quite different from any other because the subject of the class is also the medium of instruction. In other words, students are learning French through the teacher speaking French. It can be disconcerting for students who expect the focus to be verbs charts and flashcards. Today’s students want to understand the reasons for what they are being asked to do; thus, the need to be taught the focus of the course is communication and that grammar and vocabulary are only tools to help them communicate, but that actually using the target language as much as possible is essential for language learning.

Often students also have unrealistic expectations for proficiency development. Most students feel that they should be “fluent” at the end of one semester of study and become disappointed when they can only answer yes/no questions, make lists, and use memorized chunks of language. This disappointment often leads students to believe that language learning is “too hard” and “they can’t learn it.” Their expectations for proficiency are set too high due to a lack of understanding of proficiency and its development. Educating students about proficiency and setting realistic expectations is crucial to student success in the course, and getting students to continue their study of the language.

Another crucial element to student success is teaching them strategies for how to learn a language.

Students must be equipped with language learning strategies that can be used not only in class but in their daily lives. Teaching students how to learn a language is just as important as teaching the language itself. Learning a language is a unique experience and traditional classroom strategies used in other courses will not always lend the same success in the online environment. For example, in order to teach all of the necessary content, the author created three videos on proficiency, communication and language learning strategies. The videos are interactive meaning students must answer questions to move on to the next segment of the video. In addition, students have other tasks to complete. To demonstrate their understanding of proficiency, they must post a description of their favorite Friday night activity in their native language and on the proficiency level the student chooses.

For example, if a student chooses a novice low level, (according to the ACTFL guidelines) they will post something like “fun. Football game, win, hot dogs” to describe their favorite event. The other students will read the posts, decide the proficiency level and post their answer. One week later, the students go in to check and see if they were correct. They also complete a goal setting activity in which they choose the proficiency level they would like to reach at the end of the course and at least two language learning strategies they will use. Throughout the semester (every 4-5 weeks), students are asked to re-evaluate their goals and adjust if needed thus keeping these ideas front and center throughout the course and helping students take responsibility for their own learning.

3. Conclusions

It may seem a rather daunting task to incorporate all of this content into an already full foreign language course. Yet, when incorporated, the author’s experience has been that students are more engaged and more successful in their language learning and more likely to continue taking language courses.

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VISIAGORA by CLL Language Centres: An Innovative Distance Learning Experience and Pedagogical Approach in a Virtual Classroom

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Abstract

Providing an innovative solution for distance language learning is nowadays very challenging. The distance teachers are most of the time left alone to set up their classes and teaching material whereas learners are struggling to keep motivation at a high level.
After 2 years of research and experimentation, CLL Language Centres (associated to the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium) developed and launched an innovative solution, Visiagora, where classes are based on a communicative approach and are built up around a pedagogical structure of 30 minutes in a virtual classroom: learners benefit of the experience of a short but intense one-on-one class with the features of a physical classroom but are taking their language course from the comfort of their home or office. As a result, the learning experience and motivation is increased and the foreign language acquisition becomes more efficient.
This paper goes through the innovative and communicative pedagogical approach and structure of our 30-mn classes: they are composed of 7 phases (introduction, lesson overview, comprehension activity, consolidation activity, presentation activity, production activity and delay correction & summary), and also offer self-training pre-lesson and post-lesson activities.
It will also develop the features of our virtual classroom and whiteboard, which enable the learners and teachers to benefit from all the features of a physical classroom.
To conclude, the learning and teaching experiences from the perspective of learners and teachers will be presented, as well as the results in terms of foreign language acquisition (based on the CEFR) of the learners who used our solution.

Keywords: Distance learning, virtual classroom, one-on-one classes, innovative pedagogy

1. Introduction

Technological development has resulted in new consumption patterns and the world's population being increasingly connected. Changing consumption patterns (nowadays mainly focused on flexibility, immediacy and availability) are also present in the world of education and training.

Developments in the way content is provided is a core part in this movement.

Online training takes place almost entirely asynchronously and it is essential to offer synchronous training in the model of distance learning. For this reason, CLL developed and launched Visiagora, a unique distance learning solution in Europe.

2. Visiagora

CLL Language Centres was founded by the *Catholic University of Louvain* (UCL) in 1984. Since then, we have been providing language training to 25,000 people each year in 37 languages.

In 2018, after 2 years of extensive research on technological and pedagogical innovations and thanks to our 30-year expertise and experience, we launched Visiagora, a high-performance and unique solution in Europe that represents a major asset in the learning process allowing to follow language classes from anywhere and at any given time.

Visiagora is a solution for language learning via an online platform. Innovative due to its pedagogical and technical aspects, the platform offers tailor-made language training enabling learners to achieve their objectives, live and online, whenever and wherever they wish. The platform centralises all the tools necessary for a user-friendly experience: it offers an intuitive dashboard on which learners can access the profiles and calendars of teachers, book their live online classes, manage class bookings and access the virtual classroom.

The virtual classroom is prized for its ease of use and efficiency, which is inspired by classroom teaching while facilitating interaction: an interactive whiteboard, a chat room, innovative teaching materials and the ability to interact orally and visually with the teacher. It is a comprehensive tool, easy to use yet powerful, and that requires no installation or plugin. Only an internet connection and a computer with a webcam, microphone and speakers are necessary.

Visiagora's pedagogical approach is inventive and efficient as our course sessions offer pre-session content, session content and post-session content.

3. Pedagogical approach

3.1 Vision

- Tutoring

Our research demonstrates that almost half of the learners do not complete their training if they are not accompanied by a teacher. A digital tool is thus only useful if it is well directed and can become meaningless without teachers' active intervention. Tutoring is therefore an essential part of live online learning and increases the completion rate of online courses.

- Triggering

The primary factor encouraging learners to pursue training is the link with a specific issue or need. Additionally, most learners are encouraged by the availability of self-service training at any moment. Learners increasingly want personalised and relevant pathways for their learning, are willing to take responsibility for their training, and to access it when they see a pertinent need.

- Commitment

Quality of content encourages learners to complete and return to their training. Interactivity, pedagogical approach, teacher quality as well as the overall user experience are important factors.
Visiagora's pedagogical approach is therefore based on the following concepts. Learners:

1. interact with expert native-speaking teachers.
2. are exposed to authentic tasks and to a variety of creative activities.
3. are guided through the learning process.
4. work in a positive atmosphere.
5. autonomy is encouraged.

3.2 Course organisation

3.2.1 Placement test

Beginning their course, learners undergo CLL's placement test to determine their level according to the Common European Reference Framework for Languages. This initial test has two purposes: to assess the candidates' current levels of knowledge and to test their motivation.

The language test consists of five parts (grammar, vocabulary, written expression, listening comprehension and oral expression), four of which are interactive and electronic (adaptive online test), and one happens during the first live class. This allows Visiagora to validate the learners' levels but also to set up ice-breaking activities ensuring learner-teacher cohesion. Teachers also identify learners' strengths and progression of learning.

3.2.2 Live online class

The classes take place in our virtual classroom and last 30 minutes. Individual class sessions are scheduled between learners and teachers via teachers' calendars, accessible online using our platform.

3.2.3 Evaluations

Teachers query learners during the fifth class to gather their opinions on the course and to ensure that the training corresponds to their expectations: this allows to rebalance the work required for each linguistic skill and to review the strategies adopted until then.

To allow learners to assess their progression, teachers regularly organise ungraded evaluations: those are simulations in which learners are brought to reinvest the communicative and linguistic elements seen in class. Learners also perform a self-evaluation that allows them to reflect on their progress, difficulties and overall satisfaction. Teachers may also mention any successes, areas of progress and means to be put in place to facilitate the consolidation of the language.

An evaluation test is organised at the end of the cycle. The test is carried out by teachers and concerns the content of the program followed by learners. It determines whether learners have achieved the objectives that were set according to their level. Similarly, to the placement test, the evaluation test consists of a series of varied and calibrated exercises that define learners' levels in oral comprehension, written comprehension, written expression, oral expression and interaction.

3.3 Course structuration

3.3.1 Participation

Learners are considered as actors in their own learning, progress and areas of improvement. They are active participants in the progression of their courses, taking part into the preparation process, thus becoming more responsible and more motivated.

Teachers' role is no longer limited to the transmission of knowledge. They also accompany, guide, support and encourage learners in their activities. They help learners enriching their vocabulary, assist them into expressing their needs and provide constructive feedback.

3.3.2 Pre and Post session material

Sessions offer pre-session content (for more effective interaction during the session), session content (where spoken interaction is key) and post-session content (allowing the learner to review and understand their next steps in learning the language). Pre-session and post-session materials are available in a library of resources that can be consulted before and after the session.

Pre-session material consists of 6 phases: overview, contextualisation, functional language presentation, grammar presentation, vocabulary presentation and a knowledge check.

Post-session material consists of 5 phases: outcome review, language function review, grammar review, writing extension and finally a section which consists of a final self-evaluation using can-statements based on the CEFR.

3.3.3 Session structure

Classes follow a specific structure:

- Phase 1: Introduction and lesson overview

This phase allows learners to feel at ease and motivate them as a mean of reassurance toward the linguistic context. In order not to discourage them, no direct corrections are made. The goal is for learners to realise that communication is possible despite errors.

The learning objectives are clearly stated and include both the content and the outcomes of the learning session.

- Phase 2: Icebreaker/starter

Icebreakers are crucial to build rapport with learners, to put them at ease and to allow teachers to start assessing the learners' levels.

- Phase 3: Comprehension activity

This consists in presenting the vocabulary that will be explored in the functional language within the lesson and establishing the semantic content of the lesson.

- Phase 4: Consolidation activity

This is the opportunity to practice the vocabulary presented and consolidate the semantic content. This will lead into the following activity which will consolidate the language functions that have already been touched on.

- Phase 5: Presentation activity

This is the re-presentation of the key language functions and integration of new vocabulary looked at during the lesson. The grammar and vocabulary are presented as a functional tool to assist in the objective of the lesson, or, in other words, a "toolbox".

- Phase 6: Production activity

This is an opportunity to put everything together and practice speaking using the functional language and other aspects (grammar and vocabulary) of language together. This takes up most of the lesson and is the best way for learners to speak and practice what they have learnt.

- Phase 7: Delayed correction and summary

Learners are left with a good idea of what they have done and what they need to do to improve next. It starts with delayed correction and feedback on the speaking activity. This is a good opportunity for drilling and other practice. The lesson concludes with a summary of the objectives and learning outcomes.

4. Teaching and learning experiences

The advantages of Visiagora for learners are numerous. They include the automated and simplified registration and placement test, the online and fully flexible class booking, a real and complete virtual classroom, classes with qualified and experienced teachers as well as innovative pedagogy and expertise. These advantages offer the flexibility and immediacy required by learners and therefore encourage learners to commit to their learning, reinforcing their autonomy and improving their progress.

Teachers also benefit of numerous advantages: they have access to a single platform allowing them to manage their availability, access their online classes and teaching materials, and thus provide their classes from any location connected to the Internet. The structure and teaching materials necessary for a course session are fully provided and can be accessed directly online. In addition, teachers receive a full onboarding as well as ongoing professional development ensuring that they are up-to-date with Visiagora's innovative pedagogy.

5. Results: foreign language acquisition

After a 6-month test phase and a launch 4 months ago, the results show that our students' progression according to the CEFR, after a training on Visiagora, was rapid and effective for levels A0 to B1. The sample for higher levels (B2 to C1) was not representative enough to be analysed.

Our regular classes in physical classrooms for the same period gave the following results: on a sample of 404 learners following a 30-hour training course, around 55% of the A0 to B1 students progressed by at least half a level of the CEFR (representing 94% of the total students) when 12.5% of the B2 to C1 students (representing 6% of the total students) had the same progression. All in all, 53% of our physical classrooms' students progressed by at least half a level.

When mentioning a minimum of 60 hours of training to progress from one lower level to another (i.e. levels below B1) in a regular class, lower level learners following Visiagora's pedagogical approach benefit from its flexibility, progressing more rapidly, correlating with the idea that motivation, autonomy and flexibility are essential to learner progress.

ICT Based Language Teaching and Learning Approaches

A New Moodle-Based Learning Environment for Italian as a Second Language

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Abstract

The contribution illustrates the design phases of a new learning environment (based on MOODLE) for the delivery of online Italian language courses ICoN, with a particular reference to the virtual classroom study mode, and therefore to the integration of educational contents and spaces of interaction, in the context of the construction of a social space of learning.
The following plugins are described: the custom graphic theme and the customized class report.
The new MOODLE environment has been specifically designed for language learning, and responds to the following educational needs: encouraging horizontal and vertical interaction between students and tutors; promoting cooperative learning; supporting the "learning by doing" approach thanks to an essential interface that allows students to orientate in the language course, and navigate the contents in a friendly way; reconciling the flexibility and autonomy of the study through digital materials (in e-learning, blended learning or self-learning) with the guarantee of achieving clear and well-structured teaching objectives; providing both the student and the teacher with intuitive tools to monitor the progress of activities and progress in the learning phases.

Keywords: Italian as a Second Language, e-learning, virtual classroom, MOODLE

1. ICoN Italian Language Courses: the structure, the teaching approach and the numbers

ICoN Italian language courses are online courses based on the philosophy of *learning by doing*: they have a standard structure and are divided into modules, units and sessions, which contain activities with an automatic correction system and grammar and lexical study files. The student learns the Italian language by carrying out the activities, and by checking an immediate feedback on the correct answers, the wrong answers and the solutions.

Feedback is not used for evaluation purposes, but simply as a learning tool: the student can repeat the activities as often as desired. Through the performance of the activities, improves the acquisition of the Italian by formulating and verifying his/her own hypothesis on lexicon, structures and uses of language.

The activities with automatic correction (about 1000 for each of the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1) constitute the basic educational material of the courses.

The student engages in about twenty types of exercises, specifically developed for language learning: in addition to the classic cloze and pairings, there are reorders, grid and table fillings and working exercises on the written text, in which the student is called to select, manipulate, classify elements of the text itself.

The courses have been designed to be used in e-learning mode (in virtual classroom with tutoring or self-learning), but can also be used in blended learning paths, or as a digital resource for Italian teachers.

In the virtual classroom mode with tutoring, students are enrolled in a virtual classroom (generally composed of 15-18 students). In the class forum, tutors propose, even with the help of Web 2.0 tools, written and oral production activities with open correction, which have a dual objective: on the one hand, to complete the activities that are corrected automatically with production activities; on the other hand, to foster, through the activities themselves, building relationships between students and mutual knowledge.

The class forum is a real learning space, where communication takes place exclusively in Italian from beginner levels, according to an immersive approach.

In self-learning mode, the student is not enrolled in a virtual classroom, but performs only self-correcting activities in total autonomy, without interacting with other students and with the tutor.

2. The learning environment and the educational needs

Since 2001, thousands of students from all over the world have learned Italian with the online Italian courses ICoN, both privately and as part of projects funded by State-bodies and institutions (for example, the Brazilian Government, or the Autonomous Province of Trento).

Over the years ICoN online Italian courses have undergone various transformations in the format and learning environment. From 2009 to 2016 they were provided through an open-source ADA platform, customized for ICoN, while starting from 2017 they are delivered on MOODLE (version 3.1), after a migration of contents from the previously used educational platform.

We have developed a personalized learning environment for the needs of ICoN courses on MOODLE, which can be summarized as follows:

- to enhance the orientation of the student through a friendly navigation of the activities with automatic correction;
- represent in a clear and transparent manner the progress of the student in carrying out the activities with automatic correction;
- in the tutoring mode, to propose to the student an environment that reproduces a real virtual classroom for formal learning of the Italian language, and which promotes communication within the class forum;
- to provide the virtual classroom teacher with an agile and fast tool to get an immediate glance on the progress of the class, and to deepen the "critical" cases through the MOODLE monitoring and tracking tools.

3. Development of new MOODLE plugins

In order to make the MOODLE CMS suitable to ICoN courses format and educational needs of language learners, MOODLE has been extended with the following plugins:

- ICoN customized graphic theme;
- New ICoN customized class report.

3.1 ICoN customized graphic theme

ICoN Italian language courses are characterized by the great abundance of teaching materials: each course level contains about 1000 activities with automatic correction, which were mapped on the activity Quiz of MOODLE (according to a correspondence 1 Quiz - 1 session), enriched with a new set of question types not provided in the native version of MOODLE. About 100 study files, integrated through a specific menu, add to all that.

Therefore, the graphic theme has been developed to respond effectively to the needs to create a welcoming and friendly learning environment, which allows the student to orientate himself within this substantial quantity of teaching materials, and to set up the study of the language, in an autonomous and flexible way, but without losing sight of the learning objectives and the general sense of the educational path.

To meet this need, the course map has been designed; the map presents the contents of the course for subsequent levels of study (modules, units and sessions), which can be expanded or collapsed.

The map reproduces the sections of the course, and gives information (aggregated or detailed, depending on the level of depth in the navigation of the hierarchy) on the progress of the student during the course.

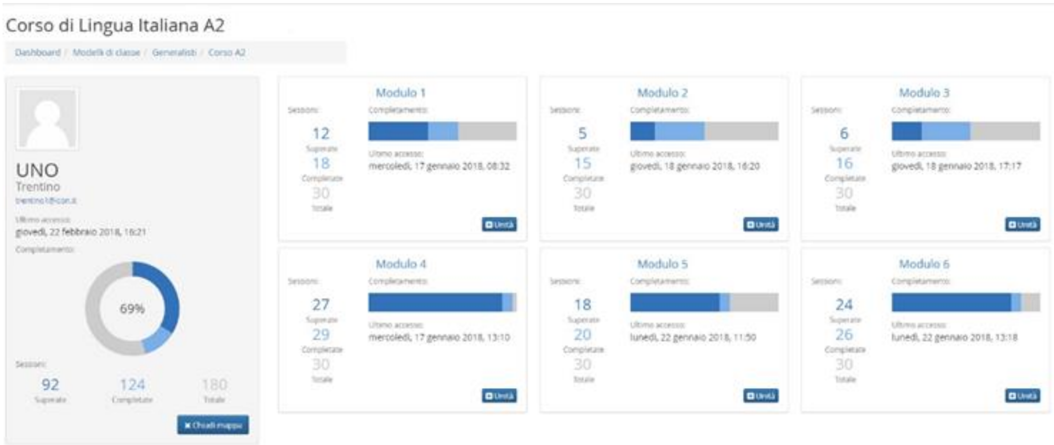

Fig. 1: Course map: student-side

The progress of the course is represented by the total number of sessions passed and completed: the sessions completed are the Quizzes actually delivered via the keys “Finish” and “Attempt all activities” (“Delivery” and “Send all and end” in the native terminology of MOODLE); the sessions passed are the Quizzes that have a score above 0.1. In ICoN language courses, the Quizzes do not represent a moment of evaluation, but rather a tool through which students learn Italian, thanks to the automatic correction and to the subsequent reflection on correct and wrong answers.

0.1 sufficiency is set by default to ICoN language courses, but of course can be changed based on the specific needs of the educational path.

The ICoN graphic theme includes, among other things, the redesign of the MOODLE native navigation menus, with the aim of making the student concentrate on the central elements of the course.

The single multi-function menu of MOODLE has been divided into its functional macro-components:

1. **Navigation:** links for navigation between courses and categories;
2. **Administration:** link for the administration of MOODLE;
3. **Index of the course:** navigation link during the course (integrated with the MOODLE tracking system, so as to show the course completion data);
4. **Index of the study cards:** accessory links for access to ICoN study cards of each course (not available in the MOODLE native menu).

The new menus are accessible to the user through a system of lateral navigation bars, with the following differentiation according to the role:

- “Student” role: the “Navigation” menu, the “Index” menu and the “Home” key have been provided. In addition, the tutoring student displays the “Class” section (expandable and collapsed), with the profile of the classmates and the link to the class forum;
- “Tutor” role: displays the “Administration” menu in addition to the “Navigation”, “Index” menus and the “Home” button.

Both the student and the tutor have access to a “Start from first steps” section, containing short video tutorials on the course structure, contents and navigation, and main functionalities. This section, at the first access, is well highlighted in the Home; it is then always reachable and can be consulted via the Index of the course.

The “Index” menu, always reachable from any point along with the “Home” key (which refers to the main page of the course) deserves a deepening.

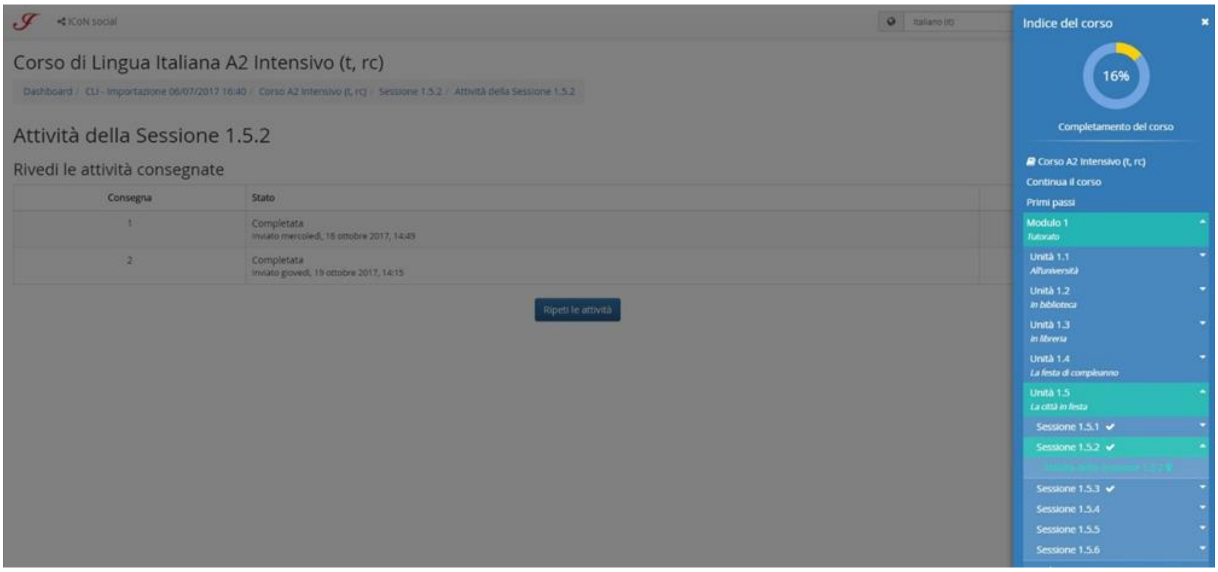

Fig. 2: Index of the Course

The Index reproduces the sections of the course, hierarchically structured in modules, units, sessions, and changes dynamically based on two elements:

- where the student is located ("positioning" icon);
- which sessions have been completed ("check" icon).

As shown in the Fig. 2, the initial part of the Index reproduces the total percentage of completion of the course.

As well as the other elements of the course, the Index was also designed to facilitate the student's orientation within the course and to represent the student's progress in a friendly manner in carrying out the activities.

3.2 ICoN class report

The "ICoN Class Report" plugin, a tool accessible only to the tutor starting from the "Administration" menu, has been designed to allow the tutor to have a fairly immediate glance on the progress of the class (both in tutorship and self-learning), to understand quickly enough which students work on the platform and have entered the rhythm of the course, and which instead present critical issues that need to be explored through the MOODLE monitoring and tracking tools ("Completion of activities", "Participation in course" and the "Summary Report" and "Complete Report" of the individual student profile).

So, to build the ICoN class report, we have selected this information for each student:

- Number of sessions completed and passed;
- Last access to the course;
- Completion of the course, represented as a completion bar with two colours indicating the completed sessions and the passed sessions.

For each student, it is possible to go down in detail and visualize the same information for the different contents of the course, organized hierarchically in a similar way to the course map.

The map collects and processes the tracking data related to the development of the sessions (Quizzes), which are displayed both aggregated and grouped according to the various levels of the course.

Thanks to the ICoN class report, the tutor can easily identify which students are at risk of "drop out", which activities are regularly carried out and which ones present critical issues that require additional support (explanations, additional indications given either in the forum or via the private message box).

It is possible to access the pages of the Italian course both from the ICoN class report (accessible only to the tutor) and from the course map (accessible from the home of both the student and the tutor). These pages are:

- Module page;
- Unit page;
- Session page.

From the session page, the student accesses the activities, (the actual Quiz), consisting of cloze, pairings, fillings of grids and tables, and other types etc., displays the correction of each activity with the solution in case of wrong answer, sends the session to the system and repeats them if necessary.

All attempts are recorded on the session page according to the MOODLE Quiz's native mechanism, so the student can check everything he has done, compare, learn Italian in total autonomy.

4. Conclusions and prospects for development

In this paper we have summarized the development elements of the interface of the new ICoN Italian language courses on MOODLE.

The native interface has been strongly modified, to customize the learning environment based on the specific needs of those students who decide to learn Italian online with a flexible program but still traced and clearly identifiable in all its parts.

A further development of the plugins described above is planned, in particular:

- Creation of a new format for the course;
- Creation of new types of applications for the MOODLE Quiz;
- Update of the ICoN class report, with the introduction of tools to filter, organize and query the main tracking data.

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Application of the Web Quest Technology in the Organization of the Independent Work of Students in the Process of Studying Disciplines

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Abstract

One of the forms of project activity on the basis of modern Internet technologies is web-based technology which is based on not very complicated but problematic tasks. Web-Quest is a web-task which is a scenario of organization of students' project activity on any topic using Internet resources. It involves working with a large amount of material, research activities and critical understanding of information. The project activity in the context of the socio-cultural information space includes modern second-generation Internet technologies (Web 2.0) that allow users not only to find and download information but also work together and post new information on the network, create an open, interactive educational information environment in which information accessible to the learner becomes a means of developing their personality. When studying linguistic disciplines web-quest is used as a kind of independent creative work of students, a project assignment with elements of a role-playing game in the performance of which information resources of the Internet are used. We use different types of tasks in the independent work with students using the technology of web-quests: assignments to find a source from the Internet on a particular topic of a specific academic discipline and its retelling task (this kind of independent work can be considered conditionally creative since the format and form of the students' reports at the seminar sessions with the use of electronic presentations consists not only in presenting the original materials from a particular website or Internet portal but also in selecting, organizing and processing the information found); presentation on the basis of this material (with the compilation version of the web-quest [compilation task] students analyze educational portals and Internet sites on a certain topic, select the most significant, from their point of view, and systematize, rework and reformat the content of the relevant portals and sites); drawing conclusions on the work done. The use of web-quest technology allows to solve the problem of providing continuous intensive teaching communications to students in the information and communication space both in classroom and extracurricular independent work.

Keywords: web-quest technology, students, independent work, linguistic discipline, project activity

1. Introduction

One of the leading trends in the development of the system of higher education in Russia is the strengthening of the practice-oriented study of disciplines. This applies not only to the increase of the share of active and interactive methods in teaching, strengthening attention to organizing and conducting practices [2; 5; 6] but also changing approaches to organizing independent work of bachelor students. Considering the significant increase in the level of information and communication competence of future graduates of higher educational institutions it is important to use information and communication technologies as an organizational and substantive basis for work at home.

Such an approach to the organization of work involves the development of assignments using Internet technologies which depending on the type of assignment can be performed on-line or off-line.

Forms of delivering results can also vary: text documents (with hyperlinks), multimedia presentations, databases, web pages, web quests, etc. Particular attention, in our view, should be turned to educational web quests.

The purpose of this article is to identify the pedagogical potential of Internet technologies among which an important place is given to the technology of the web-quest in the process of organizing work with the aim of forming educational and cognitive interest of students of higher educational institutions.

2. Web-quest as a new educational technology

Web Quest is a web-task which is a scenario for organizing students' project activity on any topic using Internet resources and involving work with a large volume of material, research activities and critical understanding of information.

In B. Dodge's work "Some Thoughts on WebQuest" it is defined as a reference activity in which necessary information is borrowed by the learners from the Internet by interacting in a collaborative process through video conferencing [1]. He considers two levels of WebQuest: short-term and long-term prospects (from one week to a month).

The project activity in the context of the socio-cultural information space includes modern second-generation Internet technologies (Web 2.0) that allow users not only to find and download information but also work together and post new information on the network, create an open, interactive educational information environment in which the information available to the learner becomes a means of developing personality [7; 8; 9].

As a form of organization of independent work, the web-based quest has a number of advantages: the increased motivation of students; activation of individual or group activities; more rational use of time allocated for independent work of students; the ability not only to integrate different types of assignments and forms of delivering results but also to vary the level of complexity of the task for independent work, the duration of implementation, the number of performers.

Web-Quest promotes development of such structural components of thinking as analysis, comparison, classification, induction, abstraction, designation further perspectives. It is aimed at the formation of a whole range of general cultural and general professional competences: ability to self-organization and self-education; ability to work in a team, to solve standard tasks of professional activity using modern information and communication technologies considering the basic information security requirements, to search and process scientific information, to work with databases and information systems [6].

According to T. March's ideas, a web-quest should have an intriguing introduction, a correctly formulated task that provokes higher-order thinking, the dispersal of roles that provides different points of view on the dilemma; sound introduction of Internet sources [4].

It should be remembered that the best web quests show a connection to real life [8].

The topic of web quests is determined by the content of the subject area and is highly variable. It can be offered both by teachers of specific academic disciplines and by the students themselves depending on the educational goals.

3. The results of empirical research

We apply different types of tasks in the independent work with students using web-quest technology (retelling task, compilation task, persuasion task, analytical task, consensus building tasks and self-knowledge tasks).

We pay special attention to scientific web-quests (scientific tasks). Typically, students use the option of doing work on this technology as a project. For example, "Functions of a style and its varieties". In this case students present different positions in the solution of the problem, they use both Russian and English portals and Internet sites in different areas in a specific discipline (*Pedagogical rhetoric, Methods of education*):
http://www.russianforeveryone.com/, http://www.dist-learn.ru/, http://texts.cie.ru.

As an example of the element of the web-quest on the topic "Russian phraseology" let's describe a business card of the web-quest:

1. The subject is *Russian*.
2. The age category of students is *university students*.
3. The central task is *the formation of students' skills of independent work with the proposed material, work with sites and portals on the Internet, drawing up a short summary for the effective study of a new topic.*
4. The number of roles is *4.*
5. Names of roles (for microgroups of students): *"Contemplators", "Memory Keepers", "Fantasiers", "Thinkers"*.
6. Anticipated result. *Using websites and portals of the Internet allotted **we should study** some general topics; **draw up** a thesaurus and a brief summary of these topics; **perform** a practical part; **make** project assignments in the form of web quests.*

The result of the work of each micro group of students or an individual version of it should be a report on a specific topic or a presentation at a seminar.

At the end of 2017-2018 academic year we conducted a survey of students of Nizhny Novgorod State University named after N.I. Lobachevsky and Kuban State University (Krasnodar). 265 people took part in the survey.

Using questionnaires, we posed some questions:

1. Do you need knowledge about the use of Web technology and the skills associated with its use in professional activities?
2. Do you have any difficulty in completing the tasks of the web-quests?
3. In your opinion, is this technology effective? If so, why?

These questions were given to the students before and after the cycle of classes using the technology of the Web Quest.

Table 1: Results of the questionnaire

№	**yes**		**no**		**difficult to answer**	
	Before the experiment	After the experiment	Before the experiment	After the experiment	Before the experiment	After the experiment
1	73%	95%	9%	1%	18%	4%
2	89%	26%	2%	74%	9%	-
3	52%	96%	3%	–	45%	4%

The answer to the third question was answered by the students participating in the survey as follows: Web-Quest technology promotes the formation of specialized competences: mastering the culture of thinking, ability to generalize, analyze, perceive information, set goals and choose ways to achieve it; ability to work with information in global computer networks.

The analysis of the questionnaire shows the importance and expediency of using information communication technologies: they make it possible to make the learning process more active, to give it the character of research.

4. Conclusions

The use of web-quest technology in the independent work of students in various areas of training at the university in the study of linguistic disciplines can be considered as one of the criteria for implementing the personality-activity approach to learning.

It can be noted that when using web quest technology in the independent activity of students in the process of studying linguistic disciplines the interrelation of classroom and extracurricular educational and cognitive activities is realized, new opportunities of the personality-activity approach to teaching and monitoring students work are given; new competencies are formed and continue to develop; new means of web-technologies are used; the ability to reflect an educational and cognitive activity when assessing the work of other students is developed.

Using the web-quest technology, future bachelors learn to highlight necessary, relevant information on the specific educational humanitarian discipline from a large amount of information on the Internet, to apply it to solve the tasks set by the teacher; to receive a specific product of independent creative activity; to defend their position during the seminar, to prove its importance for life in the information society and future professional activity [3; 9].

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Are IWBs Worth in EFL?

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Abstract

An interactive whiteboard generates many challenges and opportunities for foreign language teaching and learning. It enriches learning environment; reduces learners' anxiety and increases their self-confidence; provides learners with more choice and stimulates learner' autonomy. On the other hand, we should be aware of some drawbacks, such as an inappropriate use; low school budgets or teachers' reluctance to accept new approaches. The purpose of this paper is to discuss and present the analysis of the use of IWBs in EFL teaching from in-service teachers' perspective, applying SWOT analysis in a specific Slovak socio-educational environment. The findings gathered via questionnaire and face to face interviews have indicated that the participants (n=46) value as the foremost strength's followings: a rise of interactions and class discussions, accepting various learning styles, an increase in creativity and motivation, sharing and re-using of materials and saving some work. Some of the weaknesses are that the respondents lacked the previous training and experience; no evidence of effectiveness of teaching and learning; teachers' unwillingness when using new technologies; overuse of IWBs; time consuming preparation; challenging problem solving and unexpected shutdowns.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, Interactive Whiteboard, SWOT Analysis, In service teachers

Introduction

For past few decades, information and communication technology (henceforth ICT) has become more common within all industries including education. Betcher and Lee (2009:13) [1] stated that technology accelerated students' thinking, supported discussions, activated thoughtful ideas and facilitated abstract concepts easier to understand. The introduction of interactive whiteboards (IWB) into education sector has been an object of research since the late 1990s and early 2000s (Orbaugh, 2013) [2]. Research findings of the two major studies in the UK into impact of IWBs on learning effectiveness have been contradictory. One study proved little impact on the pupils' performance (Moss *et al*., 2007) [3]. However, another study conducted in Manchester area has proved progress in the national testing scores of the pupils after they have been taught with IWBs (Somekh *et al*., 2013) [4]. The main aim of this article is to present the analysis of IWBs uses in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) from in-service teachers' perspective, applying SWOT analysis in a specific Slovakian socio-educational environment. The sub aim is to give an overall understanding of the topic and to be aware of some aspects that need to be taken into consideration when implementing and using IWBs in TEFL.

1. Literature Review

A considerable amount of literature has been published on using IWBs in education e.g. Ross, G., *et al*., (2009) [5]; Somekh *et al*., (2013) [4]; Al-Faki and Khamis (2014) [6]; Beauchamp and Parkinson (2005) [7]; and Schmid (2010) [8] etc. According to Miller and Glover (2002) [9], one of the problems that were highlighted by earlier researchers was that IWBs brought a problematic approach with restricted students' interaction driven by prepared materials. This means that students just passively listen to the teacher's talk without any of their own inputs. Miller and Glover's (ibid) [9] own study showed, however, that with the use of appropriate materials, which allowed students' interaction, the learning outcomes were more significant. These authors talk in detail about the benefits of using IWB in teaching-learning process as seen by a sample of teachers in five middle sized schools in the north of England. The detailed investigation into the IWBs use within Canadian environment presented by Karsenti (2016) [10] showed that the IWBs were more complicated and time-consuming to integrate than others talking about technical parts. Still, the results also confirmed real educational potential.

Almost every paper that has been written on IWBs (e.g. Cimermanová (2011) [11]) includes a section relating to their functions. In the same vein, Pacurar and Clad (2015) [12] imply that language teachers frequently use the simple functions. On the other hand, teachers of Math and Science use the IWB in a more complex way. The study was conducted in the several middle size secondary schools in France. More studies have been conducted in the United Kingdom as the schools there are all equipped by IWBs. These studies confirm that there is a need for a pedagogic shift to an interactive approach to teaching-learning process and from using IWBs as a visual aid to the integration of the technology into planning and delivery of the lessons (Schmid, 2010) [8].

2. Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to present the analysis of the use of IWBs in EFL teaching from in-service teachers' perspective, applying SWOT analysis in a specific Slovak socio-educational environment. It was decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation was to apply a questionnaire and face to face interviews applying SWOT matrix (Sarsby, 2016) [13]. Since the analysis considers both internal and external factors, we understood that as an opportunity to take a deeper look at what they can handle and which strategies or operations need to be changed. In our study we focused on the followings: a) strengths: advantages over other teaching methods; b) weaknesses: disadvantages; c) opportunities: factors in the surroundings that using IWB in teaching EFL can develop to its advantage and d) threats: factors that could cause problems when using IWB.

The anonymised questionnaire was used to obtain the information concerning the teachers' perception of IWBs. After delivered to 75 teachers of English (lower and upper secondary education) in the region of Prešov by e-mail, data (n=46) was collected and analysed to get a better picture of the teachers' approach towards IWBs. The total response rate was rather low, as only 64% of the teachers of English responded back. The questionnaire consisted of 20 closed-ended questions with a format of a agree-disagree item (10 per each internal part) and 2 open-ended questions for external components. Due to the low response rate, a face to face semi-structured interview was used to discover more detailed picture and obtain more relevant data. The author used a convenience sample of 17 teachers of English language.

3. Findings

The findings (both questionnaire and interviews) have indicated that the participants valued (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) as the foremost strength's followings: a rise of interactions and class discussions; involvement of various learning styles; an increase in creativity and motivation; sharing and re-using of materials; saving some work; reduction of printing; better visualisation due to the different outputs. As for the weaknesses: initial expenses; on-going expenses on training and servicing; no evidence of effectiveness; uncertainty exploiting technologies; external factors such as sunlight, shadow-blocking content, colours display and unexpected shutdowns. Opportunities resulted in: no replacement of a teacher; rich learning environment; lower pupils' anxiety; more risk-taking action; intrinsically motivate pupils; learning by doing approach; promotes self and peer assessment and evaluation and increases pupils' self-confidence. The most frequently expressed threat was inappropriate use of IWB without any concept or educational strategy; a lack of preparation for higher education or a future career followed by new technological upgrades; lack of the previous training and experience; no evidence of effectiveness of teaching and learning; teachers' unwillingness when using new technologies; overuse of IWBs; time consuming preparation and challenging problem solving.

4. Conclusions

The analysis revealed that the key strengths lie in offering more opportunities for interaction and class discussion, providing that IWB is used to its full potential, accommodating various learning styles, or catching pupils attention and encouraging their involvement in the subject. IWB also allows pupils to cope with more complex concepts and increases their creativity. But the main strength is in motivation. We have found that using IWB in teaching-learning process increases motivation in several ways. To start with, it allows high level of interaction by matching, dragging and dropping objects or manipulating text and image. Secondly, it increases enjoyment of lessons through an extensive use of resources. Finally, IWB is a colourful tool offering many customised features.

On the other hand, there are some weaknesses First of all, the initial expenses are considerable, especially when a school decides to equip every classroom with IWB. Another aspect to look at is a lack of effectiveness. There is limited evidence that using IWB increases performance of pupils. Many teachers find the process of training frustrating. With the lack of training, the IWB cannot be used to its full potential and lessons might become unnatural. The learning environment is an important opportunity of using IWB in teaching because there is a correlation with the learning outcomes.

Another opportunity arises from the principles of learning a foreign language e.g. lowers pupils' anxiety; promotes risk-taking and cooperative learning. In this stage, the role of teachers is irreplaceable as they act as mentors. The main findings dealing with threats we have to point out are that IWB itself does not replace a teacher. Teachers must become confident while using IWBs if they want to reach teaching objectives. The teacher training is especially important because the lack of it presents a threat of incorrect use of IWB. The main concern is that it may be used as a device filled with information, but without any concept or strategy of educational objectives. Another finding is that pupils might get bored if it becomes a routine. It is recommended therefore, not to overuse IWB and work with other relevant sources. The evidence presented in this study suggests that the implementation of new technologies allows teachers to use such tools for teaching which were not at their disposal in the past. To summarize, it is necessary to emphasis the essential role of teachers.

The teacher strategy must be aimed at individual learning preferences and diverse educational needs, therefore IWBs should serve as a meaningful tool and not a dull device fulfilled with information.

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Assessing Speaking Skills in Online University Courses: The Case of English for Tourism

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Abstract

Summative assessment is especially useful for scoring and grading at the university level. In the case of English for Tourism – a core and ESP subject in the online Bachelor Degree in Tourism at the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria – the assessment of speaking skills is done through a video (oral) presentation on a topic covered during the course. Since online classes require a special consideration when selecting and implementing assessment of speaking skills, the students have to be provided with models and samples to follow, alongside tools that may help them overcome performance difficulties and a rubric adapted to the level and expected results for guidance. In this paper, we explain the steps taken to assess speaking skills in students of Tourism that bring different levels of prior knowledge into the virtual classroom but need to acquire and develop, at least, a B2 oral fluency and accuracy for their professional careers.

Keywords: Online university courses; assessment; speaking skills; oral presentations; rubric

1. Introduction

Generally speaking, the assessment of students has three distinctive purposes nowadays; namely, diagnostic, formative and summative [1]. While diagnostic assessment precedes instruction and is "used to gather information about students' prior knowledge and to identify misconceptions" [2], formative assessment "gathers information in an *ongoing* manner throughout a course. That information is then used to guide teaching and to improve learning and performance" [2]. By contrast, summative assessment takes place when "information about student learning is gathered and analyzed at the conclusion of a course in order to determine whether students have achieved identified goals" [2]. Therefore, summative assessment has been traditionally used to obtain a total score at the end of the course, as it helps to "collect appropriate information about the level of achievements reached by students" [1]. Summative assessment can be variously carried out through a culminating project that incorporates (part of) the knowledge acquired in class, a final exam or test, or a performance task, for instance.

Oral presentations are a type of performance tasks by which the students engage in the process of active communication by conversing, explaining a point of view, discussing an issue or sharing ideas and materials with an interlocutor in their native or in a foreign language [3]. Rubrics are assessing tools and, as such, they can be used to test students' performance by incorporating indicators of intended learning outcomes [4]. This way, the teacher offers students a broad description of what they are expected to do: how complete and appropriate their oral performance should be to arrive at a certain score or grade. Through the criteria or indicators specified in the rubric, both English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students can recognize the goals regarding their speaking skills required in a language-oriented course.

In recent years, performance-based tasks have gained considerable support among educators, as a process in which thinking skills, cooperative work, interpersonal relationships and problem-solving strategies are fostered and worked on [1, 4, 5, 6]. Online university students' oral presentations, like the ones described below, could be more limited in range and reduce the aspects of the learning process that can be effectively assessed, yet they are a useful tool to evaluate speaking skills despite the geographical location. In fact, it promotes involvement and a more active participation in the virtual environment. Even though the students do not have much opportunity to interact with others, due to our distance and online learning modality, having to prepare an oral presentation is an activity that allows collecting evidence of their speech performance (including aspects such as pronunciation, oral discourse, ability to effectively communicate in real-life contexts orally, non-verbal language, etc.).

2. Material and methods

2.1 Data collection

We analysed 48 videos by 24 different 2nd-year students of 'English for Tourism III', a core subject of the online Bachelor Degree in Tourism taught at the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain); ten of these were incoming Erasmus+ Programme students. As part of their formative assessment, they have to submit three assignments during the course aimed at checking their progress in B2-level Use of English, Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking skills [7] by means of comprehension and expression exercises and/or tasks handed in either in written form or via oral presentations. In the latter case, each student has to record two videos of around 3-minute length focusing on topics of professional interest covered in the textbook. Thus, the audio-visual material used for this paper consists of 24 creative videos in which the students promote their hometown or city supported by realia, pictures and images; and other 24 more subjective videos that record their opinion about a promotional video of a high-quality international resort (available at YouTube[ES©]).

2.2 Types of assessment and tools

It is widely accepted that online classes require a special consideration when selecting and implementing assessment for speaking skills [2]. If students are to pass the course successfully, they have to be provided with models and samples that can be imitated and adapted to their level and skills (that is, somehow personalized or customized), alongside with other strategies and resources that help them overcome any difficulty they may encounter during the summative assessment.

Firstly, the students attending 'English for Tourism III' are subject to formative assessment, as defined in the Introduction above. Since meaningful feedback is a key component of this type of assessment [2], it is regularly provided to students so that they gain knowledge and strategies to complete the exercises and tasks appropriately. To this end, they have the support of the self-study textbook plus periodic feedback on their performance through the Virtual Classroom [VC], including thematic forums, self-evaluation tests, private dialogues for tutorials and teacher-commented correction of assignments. Besides, to improve their overall performance and language skills, there is a 'Further Resources' section at the VC that is gradually enlarged and complemented depending on the needs for reinforcement detected in their writing (informally in the forums or more formally in the assignments).

Secondly the students get a copy of the applicable rubric well in advance so that they can prepare and modulate their discourse and have the expected speaking outcomes clear [4, 6]. The rubric used for this concrete group of ESP students includes a series of descriptive criteria that are evaluated simultaneously while the students are observed in the process of doing something [3, 6]. In this case, we are interested in a successful B2-level of oral communication in English to do a qualified job in the tourism sector. For this reason, the rubric articulates around two main criteria: a) the dimension involved, which considers linguistic, discursive and attitudinal facets; and b) indicators of levels of achievement plus scoring, from "below average" (1 mark) to "excellent" (4 marks), to a maximum of 16 marks. Due to space restrictions, in **Table 1** below we present the three dimensions, but just a sample of the indicators and score:

Table 1: B2-level rubric sample criteria for 2nd-year students of 'English for Tourism III'

Dimensions		**E.g. Indicators of the level of achievement**	**E.g. Corresponding score**
Linguistic	Use of English: Grammar & Vocabulary	Too many basic mistakes and errors, which are below the minimal [upper-intermediate] level required in the subject. The vocabulary used is poor, repetitive and not much related to the topic, in particular, and to Tourism, in general. Informal register for an oral presentation in academic situations. Words are not usually well collocated or appropriate for the context.	Below average; needs improvement (1 mark)
		Speaking is clear most of the time (50-75%), yet some words are mispronounced. Some mistakes and errors, but do not	

	Pronunciation & Enunciation	prevent effective communication. Basic pronunciation and/or enunciation problems are detected, but not frequently (these do not make ideas difficult to understand).	Satisfactory; acceptable – good (2 marks)
Discursive	Oral presentation: structure & delivery	The introduction is clear and concise. The presentation flows and is connected so it is relatively easy to follow the discourse. Reduced need for using a written outline or personal notes. Ability to present the topic with relative easiness, although being nervous. Seems relatively comfortable with his/her oral presentation and skills and acts naturally most of the time. Appropriate voice volume, tone and pacing, with supporting gestures.	Above average; very good (3 marks)
Attitudinal	Originality & attitude	St is consistently ready to participate. Stays and speaks with a positive attitude throughout the video. St cares about organization, background, details and academic correctness in front of the screen and is not distracted. St sustains the audience's attention throughout the presentation.	Excellent (4 marks)

3. Results

At the beginning of the course, the baseline level of English in the classroom ranged from B1 to C2 (native speakers) as per the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) descriptors [7]. Three students (= 6 videos, 12.5%) had an 'excellent' rating due to both their native language mastery and their indeed outstanding communicative competence and promotional skills.

Six students (= 12 videos, 25%) presented a semi-native or high-level of spoken English.

Accordingly, their linguistic and attitudinal dimensions were 'excellent', yet the discursive one was 'above average' in these cases since some structural and delivery elements could be improved, especially in relation to the relative dependency on written notes and to being unable to control non-verbal and body language (thus transmitting some degree of nervousness and insecurity). Thirteen students (= 26 videos, 54.2%) were between 'satisfactory' to 'above average', going from B1+ to B2+ levels. A detailed description of their performance would require larger space but, roughly, these students had adequate language skills to present the contents of their videos, yet with different degrees of fluency and accuracy. In these 26 videos we see an evident effort to complete the task and comply with the requirements, even if most of them showed uneasiness having to speak in front of the camera or difficulty to express themselves naturally; at times, it was difficult to figure out whether they could be conversing in English properly and without fear of being judged. Finally, two students (= 4 videos, 8.3%) needed improvement; their English language level was adequate for the purposes, yet the videos presented did not meet the minimal requisites nor were totally focused on the task.

As a result, we observed that 22 students had incorporated most of the recommendations and indications received through formative assessment, hinting at metalinguistic awareness of structures and functions [8]. The more subjective part, that of being able to communicate orally according to a set of instructions but, at the same time, showing creativity and strategies to express their personal opinion on a relevant topic, was assessed flexibly inasmuch as it depended on many extralinguistic factors that they had to bring to the classroom from the outside or work hard to develop in a short time (a course spanning 6 months).

4. Concluding remarks

Using a rubric that adopts a holistic approach, that is, one where all criteria (covering dimensions and indicators) are assessed simultaneously, may work relatively well in online university ESP courses that require testing speaking skills. At the stage of summative assessment, this kind of rubrics allows faster scoring of performance tasks such as oral presentations, but the knowledge and skills shown in them may correlate with formative, or continuous, feedback by which the students receive support and indications of "good work" and an opportunity to rethink and reinforce their overall results in the subject as much as the basis for long-life learning.

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Blended Language Learning in Higher Education: Students' and Tutors' Perceptions and Experiences

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Abstract

Recent policies and trends have led to an increased use of technology with regard to teaching practice and content delivery in higher education institutions in Germany. This paper reports on a small-scale pilot study with 41 international BA and MA students studying German at A1 level at their host institution in Germany. The weekly face-to-face lessons took place over a period of 15 weeks. In class, all tutors used the same textbook, which was dovetailed with the curriculum of the online learning platform. The participants were divided into two groups and each group worked with a different commercial language learning platform. The e-learning components consisted of both asynchronous and synchronous tools, namely self-correcting online exercises, online oral and written assignments which were marked by their respective teacher, as well as regular written chats and forum entries. The classroom tutors were also the students' respective online tutors. The e-learning component was worth 25% of the final grade and was compulsory. The aim of this paper is to examine the perceptions, satisfaction and experiences of the students and tutors in relation to the use of the blended-learning concept offered. Individual motivation was also considered. To this end, pre- and post-course-questionnaires were employed. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a subgroup of students. The results of this small-scale action research are aimed at contributing to the understanding of the issues and beneficial aspects of blended-learning concepts in foreign language teaching and learning in the higher education sector. Implications of the study are discussed.

Keywords: blended learning, German as a Foreign Language, autonomous learning, evaluation, ubiquitous learning

1. Introduction

The potential of digital technologies for foreign language learning has long been noted by foreign language researchers and educators [5]. For instance, digital technologies offer access to input and practice (audio recording, video, tutorials, drills, mini drills) and provide opportunities to communicate (asynchronous and synchronous messaging) [5]. Online components added to a traditional face-to-face-setting (F2F) and outside of the classroom have the potential to assist students' L2 development.

What is more, they provide additional language practice whenever and wherever students want and encourage learner autonomy.

2. Context

The international students (N=41; 24 females, 17 male) in this study were learners of German (A1.1-level) who received 3 hours of face-to-face instruction per week over 15 weeks. A further three hours of self-study online per week were expected of them. The e-learning part was worth 25% of their final grade. A platform called *Deutsch Uni Online* (DUO) was employed, which follows a mainly constructivist approach, including some degree of interactivity and output-practice. The second commercial platform used was *Learnlight,* which offers a bank of mainly drag-and-drop exercises, multiple choice and reading, listening and matching-up exercises. The following table gives an overview of what students were expected to accomplish for the e-learning part of their course:

6 of 7 written chats
6 of 6 Forums
7 of 7 written/speaking assignments (e.g. recording themselves)
80% of all self-correcting exercises assigned to students
2 of 2 progress tests

Table 1: Compulsory components of the e-learning part

The students' performance was tracked within both systems and was accessible to their respective tutor.

3. Method

An anonymous pre-course-questionnaire (in English) was administered to gather information about students' experiences, their attitude towards learning German, their confidence and ease in using computers, their attitude towards computer use in general, their readiness to use computers for German language learning and for homework and assignments.

The anonymous post-course-questionnaire (in English) gathered information about students' perception of the online components used in the blended-learning format. It included questions about the perceived effectiveness of the online components, especially with regard to the development of their language skills. Students were also questioned about their level of anxiety regarding the use of some tools and about their autonomy as learners.

In both questionnaires, a mixture of scales was employed, including Likert-type scales and a one binary response format, when confirmation was more appropriate than degree of agreement. Open-ended questions were also included. The semi-structured interviews, which were recorded and analysed, were conducted with five self-selected students on a one-to-one basis (F2F and one via Skype).

4. Results

41 students completed the pre-course questionnaire. The results show that the majority of students acknowledge the importance of computers for knowledge acquisition (82,9%) and their career (92,7%), whereas only 48,8% are clearly positive about working with computers. The majority of the students shows a positive attitude towards the use of computers in language learning (58,6%) and believes that e-learning is a good addition to face-to-face lessons (63,4%). In terms of experience, only a minority has worked frequently with online components when learning languages in the past (26,8%).

The post-course-questionnaire, completed by 39 students, showed that 71,7% of students thought there were too many e-learning components. When asked whether they would have preferred a traditional course rather than a blended one, 58,9% felt the blended course was the better option. In this context, one student pointed out: "Because we are now in an era in which we involve technology in every aspect of life so [sic] including the e-learning is necessary by now". Only 35,8% of the students believe they would not have learnt as much German if the e-learning components had not been part of the course. 58,9% felt the combination of F2F and online learning was enjoyable.

However, only 38,4% felt motivated by the online components, 1/3 were unsure about whether the e-learning parts were motivating and 28,2% did not feel motivated by it. Students were asked about their preferences regarding the individual tools: 53% of students liked doing the online exercises and 66% felt there was a lot of variety in terms of exercises. 38,4% believe that the online exercises allowed them to work more intensively than handwritten exercises. The majority (53,8%) of students enjoyed the forums. However, the chats were liked by only 38,4% of the students, ¼ of students were uncertain about them. As far as anxiety is concerned, 1/3 of all students felt less under pressure when doing online exercises compared to classroom activities. In terms of speaking tasks, a minority (38,4%) perceived those tasks as stressful. With regard to improving their skills, 73,6% of the participants agree that they improved their reading skills because of the e-learning. 71% believe that their writing skills have improved because of the e-learning component. 55,2% of the learners feel that their work with the online components resulted in better listening skills. A minority of the participants (33,3%) believes that their speaking skills have improved due to e-learning components. 26,3% of the students feel more comfortable speaking German because of practising with the online components.

Some students recognised that the online components encouraged learner autonomy. As one student commented, "e-learning is a form of "do it yourself" so it pushes me to practise." Several students mentioned technical problems, which were time-consuming and frustrating. Some also stated that they struggled with learning how to use the platforms. As far as the workload is concerned, 20% commented that it was too high and 43,5% were unsure. In the qualitative part of the questionnaire, some students commented on the fact that some units on the *Learnlight* platform did not match well with the curriculum taught by their German tutor. Even though the pre-course-questionnaire showed that German was an important part of most of the students' programmes (75,6%), some comments in the post-course questionnaires suggest that motivation was not very high amongst some students.

One student pointed out that most Erasmus students do not see German as a priority and many only need a pass in the subject. The reasons for relatively low level of motivation could be that many students only stay at the host institution for one semester. As far as the tutors are concerned, they clearly thought the e-learning components were a beneficial addition to the course even though it was stressful at the beginning to learn how to handle the different components. The teachers felt that tracking students' progress was especially time-consuming. In their opinion, it was at times difficult to motivate some students to make full use of the online components.

To sum up, the students' reactions to the experience of a blended learning format for their language learning was mostly positive and the e-learning components were seen as beneficial, especially for their listening and reading skills. Many appreciated the opportunity to revise what had been dealt with in class and in general. The results did not show a considerable positive effect on students' motivation; however, the majority still wants to benefit from a blended-learning format in their future language learning.

5. Discussion and implications

The study was aimed at identifying teachers' and students' perception and experience of blended learning in a specific language learning context. The results show that the majority of students perceived the blended-learning format as useful. Their initial attitude towards using computers in language learning stayed roughly the same. A considerable minority did not fully embrace the blended learning format. Likely reasons for this are, amongst other things, the range of components used, motivational issues, learners' beliefs, technical issues as well as difficulty with developing learner autonomy.

One implication of this study is that it is advisable to share findings in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) research using student-friendly language to ensure students see the potential benefits of certain tools for their language development. For instance, only a minority of students in this study believes that written chats had a positive impact on their speaking skills. However, since language used in chat rooms is closer to oral than to written discourse [4], L2 speaking can be developed through written chats in the L2 [3]. Discussing this in class may influence students' view of the efficacy of online components and their motivation to use them. Likewise, it is advisable to put a special emphasis on discussing blended learning and its potential value in general before and during the course. This could also encourage students' reflection on their language learning. Discussing self-reliance and independence as learners may also lead to more learner autonomy. It is often taken for granted that students use new technology with ease. However, this pilot study has shown that students need to be trained thoroughly in how to use platforms and tools for blended-learning formats; even though they are digital natives, they still need guidance and help regarding technical and content issues. Training and support for both teachers and students is also necessary for the "normalisation" of CALL within language learning and teaching [1]. It is clear from the students' answers that most students want a blended-learning concept that is closely interwoven with the conventional part of the course. This is likely to be important especially at beginners' level to avoid being overwhelmed. A limitation of this study is that the sample was not very large (41 students) and the duration of the study was relatively short (15 weeks). Future research should assess the advantages and disadvantages of this blended learning module with larger populations and adapt the concept according to teachers' and students' perceptions and needs. The aim is to find the balance of instructional strategies that is specifically targeted at improving student learning [2].

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Confucian Teaching Re-Examined in Foreign-Language Teaching Settings and Transformative Learning

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Abstract

This paper examines differentiated teaching efficiency through the lens of ancient Chinese teaching philosophy reinforced by transformative learning theory. It discusses how the teacher's role in transformative learning is a natural step for Confucian teaching, especially in terms of how "teaching students in accordance with their aptitude" and Confucius's practices and ideas are followed and shared by other ancient Chinese scholars. The corresponding transformative learning theory is quoted to add depth to the research.

Keywords: transformative learning, differentiated teaching/learning;

Having fun in learning

Transformative learning is found in the stereotypically Chinese word *xuexi* (學習). The word means "to learn" or "to study". In the combination of these two characters we see a progression of transformation from *xue* "to learn (a process) to *xi* "acquisition" (a result). The oracle character *xue* represents two hands(手) grasping from both sides the object of learning (爻), depicting the process of learning. For example, *xueyouyong* (學游泳) "to learn how to swim" highlights the process trying to master a skill. *Xi* is result of effort. The oracle character is formed by two feathers (羽)above the radical *ri* (日) which means "day". In *Shuowenjiezi*, (说文解字), the first Chinese dictionary, Xu Shen (许慎) said *xi* is "the bird flutters and advances daily," (小鳥振翅日有所進, Xu Shen) which implies that *xi* is the result of consistent actions. *Xi*, when used in combination with other characters, contains the meaning of learning result, such as *xishui*習水 "(knowing how to swim)" implies a mastered skill that cannot be unlearned. Confucius lifted the two-character *xuexi* to new heights by saying: "To study and at due times practice what one has studied, is this not a pleasure? (學而時習之，不亦說乎?《論語·學而》Confucius). Here, Confucius emphasized the importance of *xi*, the result of practice, (i.e. the result of *xue*), implying that what has been learned is enjoyable.

Having fun in learning is crucial, transformation makes sense from this perspective. Confucius stresses this point even more in this statement: "The one who knows how to study is not as good as the one who loves it. The one who loves study is not as good as the one who has fun in doing it." (知之者不如好之者, 好之者不如樂之者 – 孔子《論語•雍也》 Confucius). Although Mezirow shares the idea that the "transformation of meaning schemes occurs routinely through learning" (1991, p. 167),

Confucius's idea of having fun in learning made a unique contribution to modern transformative learning theory.

Another Confucius of contribution was the encouragement of continuous and reflective learning: "If there are men walking together, there must be one who can be my teacher. I learn not by filtering out the good but abandoning the bad."

(三人行，必有我師焉；擇其善者而從之，其不善者而改之《論語·述而》Confucius) For Confucius, teachers earned their roles from constant learning, but it is not necessary a fixed position. He stated: "If a man keeps cherishing his old knowledge, so as continually to be acquiring new, he may be a teacher of others." (溫故而知新，可以為師矣 – 孔子 《論語•為政》Confucius) The same idea is shared by transformative learning theorist Mezirow who believes that: Transformative learning is "…. the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future actions." (1991, p. 162). Mezirow also believes that "In transformative learning … we reinterpret an old experience (or a new one) from a new set of expectations, thus giving a new meaning and perspective to the old experience. (1997, p. 6) Another ancient Chinese scholar also emphasized this transformative self-examination idea: "True learning is achieved through independent thinking, outstanding accomplishment is realized through practice." (能思之自得者, 真; 習之純熟者, 妙 – 王廷相《慎言 潜心》Wang Tingxiang).

Teacher's role

In Chinese culture, a teacher is expected to do two things well: to serve as a role model and to *yincaishijiao* (因材施教 "teach students in accordance with their aptitude," or "competence-based teaching," in modern terms). The former shows the ethics and moral roles a teacher plays in Chinese society. The role of teachers was earned through their achievements in both moral practice and academic learning – a result of high standard transformation. According to Hanyu (韩愈), a philosopher in the Tang Dynasty, "a teacher's job is to preach, lecture, and provide solutions (师者，所以传道授业解惑也 – Hanyu). The three tasks for a teacher here are conveyed through the three development stages of teaching: from traditional transmitting, to the modern transacting, to the present transforming. To help students succeed is to give them a hand on time, just like the touch presented in Michelangelo's painting "The Creation of Adam". Imagine, what would become of Adam without that touch from the supernatural force. For Confucian scholars, a teacher should be able to perform such a touch to prepare students in transformative learning. However, in reality, a significant amount of learning and accumulation is required to reach the point of the touch, when the student is enlightened, or *wu*. Confucian *yincaishijiao* had been believed to be the effective teaching method for students to achieve best learning results.

For Confucius, individualized learning targets different levels of transformation according to students' abilities, social responsibility, personality, age and similar factors. The following story tells how Confucius taught the concept of *Ren* (仁 benevolence) to different students.

Yan Yuan consulted Confucius about *Ren*. Confucius explained: "*Ren* is to comply with the rites by setting restraints on oneself".

Zhonggong asked what *Ren* is. Confucius responded: "Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you".

Sima Niu asked about *Ren*. Confucius said: "*Ren* is just to talk with caution".

In the original passage (see 《论语 颜渊》Confucius), Confucius offered different answers to the same concept of *Ren* to students whose abilities, learning styles, personalities, ages and social status differed. Confucius not only helped them understand *Ren* but also encouraged them to practice it in different ways and at different levels. These three students possessed three different social and learning statuses. As Yan Yuan was Confucius's top student, Confucius wanted him to perform *Ren* at the level of social/political government management. He wanted Zhonggong to practice *Ren* at the inter-personal level, and he believed *Ren* for Sima Niu was to behave himself without disturbing others. The same idea is echoed by such modern transformative learning theorists as Cranton, who says, "Different individuals may engage in transformative learning in different ways; the same individual may engage in transformative learning in different ways in different contexts." (Mezirow 2000. p. 7), but only in Confucius's differentiated teaching we see various levels of transformative teaching effectively performed.

"Reading between/beyond the lines" type of transformative learning

As we see here, transformative learning is, for Chinese scholars, a transformation of an individual that goes beyond the confines of language or any worldly forms.

Sun Qifeng (孙奇逢) said: "The most important aspect of learning is grasping underlying principles that are all presented in the way how one handles things. Thus, there is a saying: 'In study books one must grasp the principle or truth behind language, this is something that is self-evident if or not one is really learned'." (学以认理为主, 而言理即在事上 故其言曰: '读有字书, 却要识没字理', 则公之自得可知矣.)[1]

Wang Bi 王弼shared this idea with *deyiwangyan* (得意忘言when we understand the meaning, we can forget the word). Wang Bi, when working on commentary on the *Book of Changes*, created the principle to deal with the relationship among "work, image and meaning" for the book notary:

[1] Sun Qifeng. *Lixuezongchuan*. https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&res=1977&remap=gb

"Forgetting the words when getting the picture, and forgetting the image when getting the meaning." (得象而忘言；得意而忘象 — 王弼《周易略例・明象》).

Zhuang Zi (庄子), a Taoist scholar shared the same idea in his *Deyuwangquan* (得鱼忘筌): the purpose of making a fish catcher is to catch fish and that is forgotten when fish are caught. (筌者所以在魚，得魚而忘筌 —《莊子·外物》)

Therefore, learning, the core of transformative learning is to forget the tools/vehicles we once used to achieve the learning results.

This idea is another transformative learning approach that can supplement to modern transformative learning theory.

The word *wu* (悟) "enlightenment": Another higher-level transformative learning approach

In *Shuowenjiezi,* Xu Shen explainned the word *wu* thusly, "Enlightenment, feeling from the heart following the sound of wu." (悟，觉也 从心吾声. —《说文解字》) *Wuxin* (悟性) "power of understanding" is generally used to describe a person who is enlightened, thus transformed quickly.

This term originated from Buddhism. The following two poems provide a typical example between an enlightened and unenlightened monk. Shen Xiu (神秀) wrote: The body is like a Bodhi tree, and the heart a bright mirror; you should always diligently clean it, so it does not get dusty. (身是菩提樹, 心如明鏡台, 時時勤拂拭, 勿使惹塵埃 — 《六祖壇經》).

Huineng: (惠能) "The Bodhi is not in the form of a tree to start with, and the heart is not in the form of a mirror. It is formless per se, and can it get dusty?" (菩提本無樹，明鏡亦非台，本來無 一 物，何處惹塵埃 —《六祖壇經》).

Huineng is the one who *wu*-ed or enlightened with the truth of Bodhi and he became the Sixth Ancestor Chan of China.

When we compare Mezirow's words that "transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions" and that "it is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world" (1996, p. 162) we find that *wu* is actually what Mezirow refers to as "a deep, structural shift". The shift indeed "alters our way of being in the world," though for the Buddhists, it is more moving toward a spiritual or supernatural world. In foreign-language teaching settings, the concept of *wu* is not usually applied to learning but the effort to transcend the confines of language (or read between/beyond the lines) is always a driving force to motivate effective learning. Effective individualized teaching always helps students achieve enlightenment in learning.

Classroom practice

For this paper, the Confucian teaching and transformative learning methods were applied to classroom teaching at the Defense Language Institute, and below are the results (work from only one student from each group was selected).

The project was divided into two sets assigned to students of different learning styles. Both groups read the same Chinese text. The first set asked students to draw a conclusion using a linguistic approach. The second set asked students to draw a conclusion from pictures in addition to the language.

Please read the passage written in Chinese below and then do activities

大家知道，如果形容学生胜过老师，后人胜过前人，我们常用 **青出于**蓝而胜于蓝"这句话 如有报道说：
刘翔是孙海平教练一手调教出来的，可谓青出于蓝而胜于蓝 真乃后生可畏！
江山代代人才出，长江后浪推前浪。青出于蓝的事屡见不鲜
为什么用青比学生，蓝比老师呢？它的来源是荀子著名篇章《劝学》中的一句话： **"学不可以已青，取之于**蓝，而胜于蓝；冰，水为之，而寒于水"
这句话用来教导弟子学习永无止境，希望弟子们能够坚持不懈地学习，后代一定超过前辈。 - 节选于《中华词源》

（the sentences in red are the keys of this reading）

Group A Student 1's work:

1) Please write a gist in 1-3 sentences

This is explaining the meaning of a certain phrase in Chinese, by comparing it to a student-teacher relationship. I think the idea is essentially that students are taught by teachers, and then later those students can become teachers; so, teachers beget students and students beget teachers.

2) Please put the sentence into English： "冰，水为之而寒于水 青, 取之于蓝, 而青于蓝"

Ice comes from water, and also can make itself by freezing water.
Green comes from blue, and also makes blue.

3) Please give an example to illustrate the meaning "青出于蓝而胜于蓝"

Student 1 answer: Rain falls from clouds, and when it evaporates the rainwater becomes clouds

Group B Student 2's work:

Activity: Please read the passage above and then study the pictures shown below. Do activities afterwards.

Fig. 1: shows the process of how ice the color blue is extracted from the plant

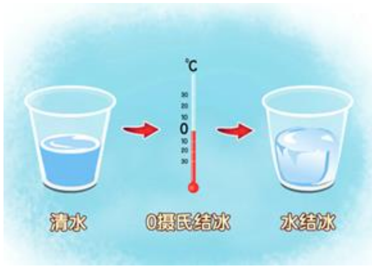

Fig. 2: shows how water is turned into when below zero Celsius degree

1) Please put the sentence into English: "冰，水为之而寒于水 青, 取之于蓝, 而胜于蓝"
   Ice is water turned in to a solid.
   Blue, the name of which was changed from the indigo flower (青) to (蓝色)

2) Please give an example to illustrate the meaning "青出于蓝而胜于蓝"
   In Chinese, Planes first took the name of "飞船" (flying boat), but later also became known as "飞机" (airplane)

3) Please write a gist in 1-3 sentences
   The meaning of "青出于蓝而胜于蓝" is that something completely takes over its predecessor, and this phrase is oft used when a student surpasses their teacher. 青stands for student, while 蓝 stands for the teacher, because the student came from the teacher. 冰，水为之，而寒于水 goes for the hopes that one's child will be able to study well and surpass whatever lies in front of them.

Teacher's note

Recommended translation of the two sentences:

- Blue, subtracted from the indigo plant, is bluer;
- Ice, formed by water, is colder.

The order of the question's arrangement is different according to the students' levels and learning styles. Student 1 is at level 2 and Student 2 is at level 1+. Here is the rational of the question design:

Q1. reading between the line, a gist assessment a top-down approach; Q2. a translation, or a reading the lines assessment to assess how well the student can work from the bottom up a LOTS (lower order thinking skill) approach, and Q3. a reading beyond the line or a HOTs (higher-order thinking skill), practice to see if the moment of enlightenment *wu*, is realized or if real transformative learning takes place.

The main idea of the two sentences is “an appropriately trained learner can be transformed into a better person or surpass his or her teachers.”

Both students are close in their translations to the basic meaning at the “reading the lines” level.

The whole passage elaborates on these two key sentences, and the main idea is expressed in these two lines: that, given some conditions, one thing can be transformed into another, better thing.

The key word is “surpass.” It is obvious that the Group B student understands it with the assistance of the pictures. The teacher’s role of facilitating individualized learning in this activity is clear. Even though the Group B student is at a lower level, his *wuxing* plays a role in his enlightenment/transformation. His translation is not as good as that of the Group A student, but he demonstrates the ability to transcend the confines of language form.

Conclusions

Transformative learning as presented in ancient Chinese texts can be summarized by Zhuang Zi’s *Deyuwangquan*. The core of transformative learning is to forget the tools/vehicles we once used to achieve the learning results. This idea encapsulates what *xue* and *xi* are all about: transitioning from process/reflection to result. Confucian *yincaishijiao* guides the application of transformative learning by paying attention to students’ individuality, and the ultimate goal is to get students *wu*-ed, or enlightened. This case study supports transformative learning theory and Confucius and Zhuangzi’s teachings that linguistic features are like tools or fish catchers to acquire the target or meaning and help students get enlightened or transformed. This re-examination of Confucian teaching theories adds depth and different perspective to the understanding of modern theories like transformative learning.

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Digital Foreign Language Learning in the “Intercultura” Lab

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Abstract

Among the most innovative and challenging strategies in Foreign Language learning digital tools play a strategic role. In particular concerning English as a foreign language as all the basic vocabulary related to ICT is English Language based. Therefore, innovative approaches fostering the use of digital tools are essential in implementing language skills. In the Foreign Language Intercultura Lab of the Comprehensive School I currently teach and that I personally run in school years 2009-2017 this input was thoroughly promoted encouraging both autonomy and teamwork in students. The Lab, provided of laptop stations for each student, all connected to the central teacher station promoted the acquisition of digital skills using language as a tool and the acquisition of “other” competences through language and digital tools. All the subjects in the school curricular educational program concurred to create a portfolio of knowledge for each student built up in foreign language. Using digital and multimedia instruments, virtual platforms, students have been encouraged to produce their own materials in a flipped classroom asset, working in a flexible set-up. In this way, digital learning and foreign language learning are thoroughly involved and combined together in order to produce “something”, to do “something”. Motivation in learning and consequently an increased school success has been achieved so far in these years. The intent is that to provide the most effective and innovative teaching-learning practices in order to promote for the students a better chance for their future social and working life.

Keywords: ICT Based Language Teaching and Learning Approaches, Studies in Second Language Acquisition

1. Introduction

Acquisition of a proper level of second language competences, in particularly English, is one of the most relevant issues education has to face in Europe as well as worldwide in particular as job careers and job opportunities are specifically grounded on it.Regarding this point, education to the second language starts really soon in most educational system, nonetheless Italy is one of the latest in the European framework for level of good foreign language users (English specifically) and particularly, Sicily is the second to last in the Italian context. Actually, although some improvement has been achieved in three years of monitoring by the Ministry of Education, the survey conducted in 2017 by EF (one of the oldest and more accredited language certification centres) stated in the EPI(English Proficiency Index) report, suggests that “in particular in Italy It would be really useful to adopt in public education the most practical communicative aspects of English language, including specific language lessons in all Degree programs and helping adults to develop specific language job competences”.

Therefore, it is necessary a constant update in teaching methodologies and styles to promote success in every learning process. Certainly, the acquisition of a good level of only one Second Language, in particular English, cannot be satisfactory in an ever-changing world where the borders open up and close following the stream of the political issues but this could be a starting point for all multilingual education as well. A good basic assumption is to choose tools and methodologies that can be flexible and near to the daily life of the students to acquire competences and reuse them in an optic of *Long-Life Learning*.

2. The “Intercultura “Lab

This was the hint given to the building up of a Laboratorial space for Second Language learning in our school, the *Istituto Comprensivo Laura Lanza Baronessa di Carini*, a school located in a really social and economic disadvantaged area close to Sicily's chief town Palermo. The Lab as a learning space to promote a better level of acquisition of skills in foreign language was conceived within the framework of our School academic plan based on *Beauty and Innovation*. Sense of Beauty and Innovation are the keys of a new educational program focused on advanced and experimental strategies for disadvantaged students, coming from the lowest social level families. The main goal is how to ensure youngsters that did not choose where to be born, a way to get a concrete better future.

It has been conceived as an open and multidisciplinary lab in which CLIL (Content and Integrated Language Learning), PBL (Project Based Learning) and ICT are the keywords in the process of learning, fostering autonomy and skills together within both school and home work. Students and teachers are free to explore within and without the limit of an educational standard curriculum a field which is not specifically related to teaching a language. In particular this lab has been equipped with laptops, a network managed by the teacher, headsets, projectors, screens, interactive boards and a working table to realize also handcrafts. That implies that digital tools are complementary to other instruments, instruments which in a PBL approach are required as well, such as writing, drawing to create posters, cards or leaflets, cutting and assembling to realize, for instance, plastic models. The benefit of digital tools lies also in the Basic English vocabulary they rely upon and in the easiness to access to info virtually.

Fig. 1: Students in a "filling the gap" online activity in the Lab using specific software

3. Digital tools and foreign language learning

New digital technologies are not the *panacea* of any sort of teaching and learning process; they are learning tools, not learning objectives. Every kind of education bears social aims within. It links in a dialectic connection individual and society; educating the individual, at the same time, achieves the education of the society. This allows supporting the individual growth and at the same timing the thoroughly social improvement. Our Language lab moreover employs the foreign languages not as a goal but as a learning tool in an intercultural dimension. An individual learns languages through their use to accomplish "other" tasks; in this way, the community acquires an intercultural dimension. Of course, the use of ICT tools has to be adapted according to the specific social context. In some social environments an excessive use of ICT can produce an extra exposition of the students to a virtual world they privately abuse. On the other side there are disadvantaged social contexts where without a public-school education to new technologies students wouldn't be adequately trained to a proper use of digital tools. Nonetheless, in the Italian school system, the use of the ICT tools is limited by an unconscious fear by teachers about eventually damages to school devices due to a presumed carelessness by students. Since 2007, Laura Lanza School, on the other side, gave the responsibility of the care and of the use of the school digital equipment to the students themselves. A proper use of ICT tools can offer better learning opportunities to disadvantaged students and is able to open the territory borders through virtual online education. Digital devices, which are kept inside school, bring the educational action beyond its contingency. In this sense ICT are basic to the Intercultura lab. They allow a daily exchange among students belonging to different countries in a *peer education* asset through the net, so that learning a second language can be detached from a formal approach and be enriched in a practical way, more appealing and interesting. The best contribute is setting aside the role of the teacher on behalf of the role of the student as a learner. Each teacher becomes a facilitator of learning and is not a lecturer any longer as it has been promoted for years although a strong central resistance; his/her task is only to check the right direction the students' autonomy tends to. On this assumption, ICT tools are considered a learning transversal instrument of acquisition of languages and different multidisciplinary contents as well. The use of laptops is associated with the use of specific software not only to write and to listen to real materials in foreign languages, as YouTube videos or movies in original languages, but also to produce new contents. Different tools are exploited also to facilitate learning processes and manipulating contents. Software to build up mind maps (Mindmup, Mindomo, Coggle etc.), online Quizzes and questionnaires (Kahoot, Edmodo tests) as well as virtual classroom platforms engage both students and teachers in researching, exploring, developing, sharing and creating new contents related to different topics, topics linked to the whole Educational Curricula (Science, History, Geography, Literature, Arts, Technology). The use of virtual classrooms, therefore, allows new perspectives, facilitating the exchange of information, a closer relation and feedback by the teachers, a follow up at home which becomes really meaningful in a context where home support in learning processes is very poor. Permitting on the other side the students to employ their mobiles (BYOD) for educational purposes, next to a laptop or a personal computer, affords this generation of digital "touchiest" (users of digital "touch" dispositive), to compare the use of the same software on different devices and to realize similarities and differences acquiring wider competences, such as typing on a keyboard, saving files and creating folders, competences which can be expendable in their future job field, whatever it could be.

Fig. 2: Students use virtual class Edmodo both on their mobile and on their laptop

In this way they are also leaded to reflect on the practical use of a vocabulary they already know without being aware and to adapt it to a context other than usual: for instance, words such as *files*, *upload*, *download* etc. which previously have been unconsciously employed are properly comprehended. The contents are transversal to most disciplines, exploited and remastered through these tools, promoting the acquisition of specific vocabulary. Most of the tools are visual, like Multimedia Presentations or Videos, since building up both images and texts makes learning foreign language and contents easier; a brainstorming at the beginning of a new project to carry on can be discussed and then realized with *Mentimeter*, another software giving immediate visual feedback and collecting results of polls and ideas. Uploading images and files, mp3 allows the students to feel confident with both language and ICT tools. All this increases interest and motivation as it is not for its own sake. All the subjects in the school curricular educational program contribute to create a *portfolio* of knowledge for each student in foreign language.

In order to enhance writing and reading skills the use of writing software has proven to be very useful, also to cope with writing or reading difficulties more disadvantaged students could face. The employ of the spell checker matches the correct spelling and the correct phoneme, improving in a much affordable way the quality of written skills.

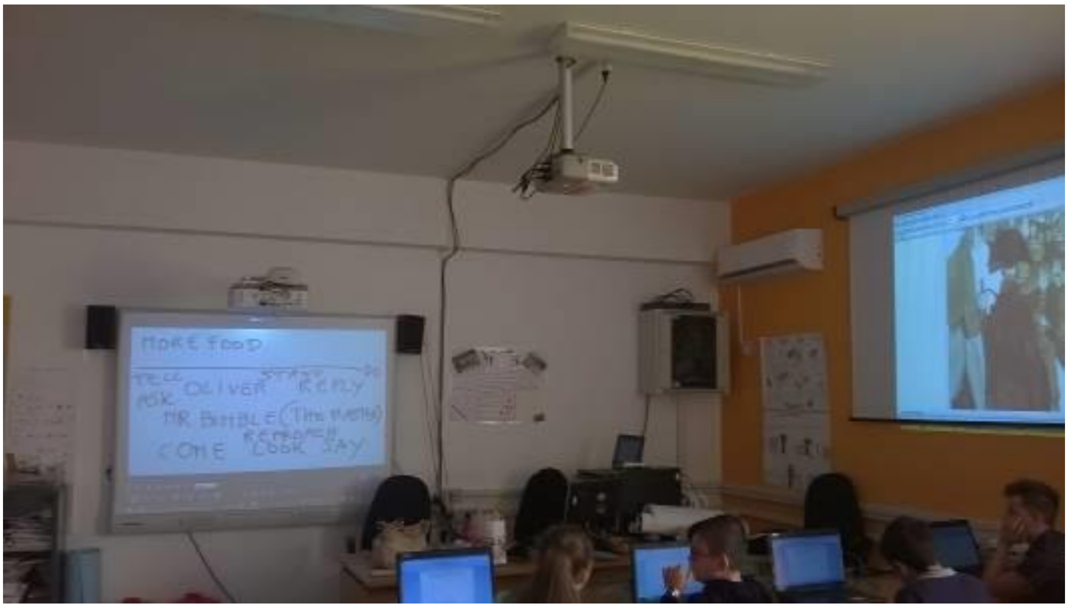

Fig. 2: Students in story writing activities using another online pad collaborative tool

3. Conclusions

Despite the disadvantaged context, in around nine years of experimentation and implementation of innovative methodologies based on ICT, the level of acquisition of foreign languages, in particular English has increased year by year among our students in Laura Lanza School as well as the level of interest and motivation. A Survey carried out in our school in 2016 promoted by the Ministry of Education together with *Cambridge English Language Assessment* using CBT has given a positive feedback in comparison to the National benchmark of proper standard level of English as a Second Language at the end of low secondary school in Italy. This means we are on the right pathway and it is valuable to pursue it onward.

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Digital Game-Based Language Learning in 3D Immersive Environments: The GUINEVERE Project

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Abstract

GUINEVERE (Games Used IN Engaging Virtual Environments for Real-time language Education) is a two-year European Commission (EC) project that investigates the potential of digital game-based learning in 3D immersive environments focusing on foreign language learning (2017-2019). The project responds to the latest "Recommendation from the European Commission on Languages" (2018) in that it explores how game-based learning and virtual learning environments may be used as digital tools to develop collaborative and creative learning environments. As the project approaches the interim period, this paper provides an overview of its activities and planned Intellectual Outputs (IOs). OpenSim is one of three platforms used in the project, alongside Minecraft and Second Life to provide a variety of games for students in the different languages of the project partners (English, German, Italian, Turkish). All of the virtual world islands provide playgrounds for young learners where they can explore a variety of collaborative and individual games. The project provides a critical overview of the key research literature in the field and explores some of its objectives (to identify guidelines for teachers on how to use immersive tools with their students; a needs analysis addressed to teachers and students from the partner countries; field tests on immersive games; and the creation of a new mobile application for playing immersive games for language learning). The final Intellectual Output of the project will be a teacher training course aimed at providing technical and pedagogical support for teachers to develop immersive worlds and games for language learning.

Keywords: Language learning, virtual worlds, game-based learning, immersive worlds, virtual learning environments, games

1. Introduction

Although the use of digital games has been explored by numerous research projects it is still not clear how best to integrate them in effective learning environments [6]. Indeed, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the increasing use of such games may often be tantamount to an unhealthy form of addiction. Educators who argue that games may in fact have many positive factors, namely, increased levels of motivation, creativity, agency and enjoyment during learning, require more research to examine how best to achieve favourable outcomes while mitigating the physical and psychological risks. This paper reports on a two-year European Commission funded project called

GUINEVERE (Games Used IN Engaging Virtual Environments for Real-time language Education), currently approaching the interim stage, which investigates the Erasmus+ challenge of promoting the importance of language learning in addition to learners' mother tongue by harnessing the potential of digital technologies to develop play, creativity and dialogical thinking to learn new languages and to generate understanding of new cultures [2]. The project examines digital play in authentic immersive environments across three different online platforms, Second Life (SL), OpenSim (OS) and Minecraft (MC), in primary and secondary schools. Through the GUINEVERE project language teachers and learners will be trained to create their own digital games by transferring them to immersive environments in virtual worlds, augmented and virtual reality game platforms, and casual games for mobile devices. The skills which teachers need to master are building, coding, adding sound, texture and scripts, recycling 3D objects and designing games, role-plays, simulations and scenarios.

Moreover, by creating a teacher training course using an e-learning platform the project aims to develop a MOOC (massive open online course) that can be used, adapted and re-used by teachers and teacher trainers at no extra cost.

2. Background

Immersive game-play is a social phenomenon involving millions of users around the world on a daily basis. Using the affordances of virtual and online teaching environments GUINEVERE aims to draw on well-known face-to-face games, transferring them to the virtual world to create highly engaging and immersive simulations for learners to participate in problem- and project-based learning approaches at a distance [1], [7], [9]. Having trained teachers to create the games, the project will use machinima (recorded in-world videos) to demonstrate how to use and interact with them in a learning context. In this respect, GUINEVERE builds on and develops from a series of previous EU Lifelong Learning Programme projects (e.g., LANCELOT, NIFLAR, AVALON, EUROVERSITY and CAMELOT). These projects share a number of characteristics such as how to use virtual classroom/video conferencing technology for language teaching, and to create authentic and interactive contexts for foreign language learners using task-based language teaching (TBLT) [4].

GUINEVERE further develops these past projects with respect to digital games and the second part of this paper provides a status report on GUINEVERE's first five intellectual outputs (IO1-5) at its interim point.

3. Integrating Games in 3D Worlds

3.1 Theory of Games Design and Design of Global Simulations

The first part of the project aimed to construct a sound overview about how and why to make use of games in 2D and 3D virtual environments for language learning in order to apply relevant theories of game design [3]. Based on the need's analysis and the triangulated data, an authoritative review of the research literature on the theory of game design was undertaken. A needs analysis was also undertaken to collect data through questionnaires, e-mail correspondence and interviews to evaluate the potential for the implementation of foreign language learning activities and games in 3D VWs and the data were used to develop a framework for the use of gamification in the field. Questionnaires collected data from teachers and teacher-trainers, and from students, specifically related to feedback on the implementation of gamification. The needs analysis provided a framework for foreign language instruction, foreign language learning, and participant interaction in 3D VWs and clarified the linguistic contexts that could be used to create games for classroom use. The analysis also provided a rationale for including the sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language in gamification and foreign language instruction.

3.2 Summary of Practitioner Experience of Games in Virtual Worlds

GUINEVERE's methodological approach triangulates findings based on a thorough understanding of the research on virtual worlds and practitioner perspectives arising from a summary of their experience of gaming environments. Data for the latter have been taken from several workshops with language educators and primary and secondary school teachers that have taken place since 2016 with the aim of exploring the creation of games in the virtual world of Second Life and OpenSim. EVO ViLLAGE is one of approximately 15 EVO sessions, which is an initiative of the TESOL CALL-IS (Computer Assisted Language Learning Interest Section) and takes place annually over a period of 5 weeks with approximately 3,000 English teachers. Up to 15 sessions are offered by volunteers who conduct free of charge workshops in various virtual learning environments. ViLLAGE stands for Virtual Language Learning and Gaming Environment and was conducted with approximately 40 participants, mostly English teachers in many parts of the world. Some of these participants did not have any previous virtual worlds experience. They were brought up to date using the training videos developed in the CAMELOT project in order to develop their technical and pedagogical knowledge. The goal of EVO ViLLAGE, which was run by a group of volunteer moderators in the virtual world of Second Life, was to train the participants to create their own games. These language learning activity games ranged from board games to global simulations. Participants were shown how to build and script from scratch and developed a wide array of games, maizes, treasure hunts, quiz games, role playing games, board games, objects which emit sounds when touched and accompanying machinima (digital training videos to explain games rules). While identifying the implications of this activity, the project also reports on some of the challenges that arose from using the complex technology involved, and the need for more familiarity with game design to understand effective game development.

3.3 Categorizing of Games

Arising from a solid understanding of the research base the next part of the project aimed to help teachers and trainees to systemize the use of games and encourage them to create and use these teaching tools in their didactical work. The goal of this work was to analyse and categorise selected games for language learning and identify their suitability and adaptability for the use in 3D virtual language learning. One way of classifying games was to specify linguistic contexts to support teachers with regard to their usability and adaptability in their teaching curricula. This included investigating the selected games with regard to their goals, teaching objectives, the skills they required, and elements of language to be practiced, as defined in the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) at levels A1-C2: listening/understanding, spoken interaction/speaking with other people, spoken production/making announcements and speeches, reading and writing. Further classifications of games emerged during this phase and included: gap filler, warm up, competitive, skill-based, discussion-based, recounting something, guessing activities, question and answers, mix and match, carrying out instructions, spelling activities, grammar and phonetics. Finally, the games were analysed with regard to complexity, availability of comprehensive rules, time needed for the game, information about minimal and maximum number of players (individuals, groups), information on proficiency level, procedure and suitability, preparation time, re-usability, and adaptability [5], [6].

3.4 Guidelines for Language Teachers

The final part of year 1 of the project focused on producing an online document that provides guidelines and recommendations for educators and administrators who are considering and willing to use games in learning events or conduct language learning with games on 3D environments. It draws on information from the need's analysis and other best practices in the field of foreign language learning and provides guidelines for foreign language instruction, foreign language learning, and participant interaction in games and 3D virtual learning environments. It clarifies and frames the linguistic contexts which could be used in designing the games for classroom application and also provides a rationale for including the sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language learning in immersive games and foreign language instruction.

4. Conclusions

Since coming to prominence over the last decade immersive learning has gone through several iterations of popularity but has often been marginalised in educational environments due to the cost and expertise required, as well as the mismatch between the speed at which technological innovations develop and the slow speed of curriculum change [5]. A related focus of the GUINEVERE project in this respect is investigating healthy and productive forms of digital play and to present teachers and learners with the opportunity to explore important forms of digital and collaborative literacy. The GUINEVERE project is a timely exploration of the affordances and challenges of digital game-based language learning in the new context of immersive environments and all of its deliverables will be made freely available to teachers and learners via its website (http://guinevereproject.eu/). Its concerns have been shaped to date by the critical digital pedagogy perspective [8] in that it aims to consider mainstream learners' use of games as well as include participants from groups who are typically disengaged by traditional forms of education and to explore themes related to disadvantaged learners to connect the themes of learning, creativity, health, well-being and inclusivity in education.

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Educational Technology for New Learning Methods and their Impact on Children's Language and Intercultural Competencies

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Abstract

Digital media are used in all areas of life and children are used to handle all kinds of devices easily. Although there are risks and concerns, like distractions and addictions, advantages of these media are obvious: direct two-way communication, interaction and multiple ways of dealing with information and knowledge. This, as well as gamification elements may activate children's intrinsic motivation to learn. The focus of my doctoral research project is on studying how digital media can play a role in gaining intercultural and second language skills, because these competencies are becoming more important in times of globalization. With this project I would like to contribute to the agenda on researching about the preparation of children for those actual and upcoming challenges.
Different sorts of multimedia are already used in the classrooms but many learners stay passive and have no possibility to learn and discover on their own. Today, however, there is a huge variety of Electronic Media and dealing with a smartphone or a tablet seems to be taken for granted for most children. But why do we not use all these possibilities more intensively in a positive way, when it is about encouraging children's enthusiasm for learning?
Learner's differ very much from each other regarding their needs, motivations and learning styles. With digital media we have the chance to offer each learner an appropriate way to fulfil their needs. Moreover, the foreign language and intercultural skills of youths can profit from connecting with far-away living native speakers, other learners and language teachers. This requires not only a difference in the technical infrastructure of schools but also a trust in autonomous work of individuals as well as a change in the student-teacher and the student-student relationship.
In this presentation I will be analyzing tools and activities that may have a role in finding out how we can use digital media to overcome these barriers.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Personalised Language Learning, Language Exchange, Language Learning Anxiety

1. Introduction

Globalization with its effects is one of the central topics of the 21st century worldwide. We travel to the remotest places, since the modern means of transport make it possible. We consume products which were produced and traded in different parts of the world, and which were transported around the globe. At the same time, the interdependencies have become so complex that we can no longer keep track of some of them. Every day we see or hear news dealing with climate change, wars, terrorism and many other factors that force people to leave their home country. At the same time, we are seeing isolation movements and an increasing nationalism and, in the European Union, where controls at internal borders are once again the subject of discussion.

In addition to increasingly complex interrelationships, we are experiencing a drastic increase in the speed of information. Today, information is spreading rapidly over the Internet, social media are used worldwide in all areas of life. Not only politicians and large companies are permanently connected in this way, but also journalists and people individually. In this context, today's expectations of employees also include spatial and international mobility, and constant media accessibility. Against this background, intercultural and communication skills in foreign languages are becoming more important than ever before. Individuals of all ages are also used to constant accessibility, as they interact with newly emerging media, which are integrated into their daily lives.

These developments place completely different demands on raising young generations. With ever-increasing private and professional networking, it is important to be able to resolve emerging political and interpersonal tensions and to communicate peacefully. How can young people be prepared for these challenges of globalization and digitalisation? My research project is dedicated to the question of how new technologies can be used to impart young people abilities in the field of foreign languages acquisition and intercultural competence development.

2. Language learning context in Europe

Language learning is a central part of the curriculum in schools across Europe. However, "There are considerable differences in the availability of and opportunities for language learning (duration, teaching/learning time, starting ages, and range of foreign languages) both for the first and the second foreign language." Moreover, the countries' ambitions and outcomes differ very much from each other but "there is no close relationship between the duration of learning or teaching time and the competences achieved by students". [1]

In its meeting in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017, the European Commission stated that 50% of EU citizens do not speak any language other than their mother tongue and that only 25% of EU citizens are capable of speaking two foreign languages. And although all Member States have invested considerable resources, there is a lack of efficiency in the compulsory teaching of foreign languages. To remedy this, the European Commission recommends the "Mother Tongue plus 2 by 2025" programme and "Increasing the efficiency of language teaching and learning by systematically supporting the introduction of innovative methods such as "bilingual teaching" and the use of digital tools". [2]

3. Technological Progress and Translation

Digital tools for learning languages? Why should we not be using automatic digital translators, which are already able to translate a conversation simultaneously into another language? These technological developments are becoming increasingly mature. Do they make language learning unnecessary?

According to an article in the German edition of the magazine "Technology Review" [3], the automatic translator, which produces the most appropriate translations, is "DeepL". In blind tests, the results were chosen as the best translation three times as often as the results of other translators. To achieve these results, the translating tool works with already existing translations, made by human beings. [3]

So, the work of translators even gains more importance because they are not only used for the specific translation itself but even for improving the translating programme. Furthermore, human translators are even able to understand dialects, slangs and proverbs as well as complex contexts in the particular field of expertise, and can react to cultural differences intuitively. However, as the majority of people is not working in the field of translation, might this issue be irrelevant to them?

Boroditsky, Schmidt and Phillips [4] conducted a study, which showed, that languages with a gender for nouns are giving the speaker different connotations about the word. "For example, the word for 'key' is masculine in German and feminine in Spanish. German speakers described keys as *hard, heavy, jagged, metal, serrated* and *useful*, while Spanish speakers said they were *golden, intricate, little, lovely, shiny,* and *tiny*. The word for 'bridge', on the other hand, is feminine in German and masculine in Spanish. German speakers described bridges as *beautiful, elegant, fragile, peaceful, pretty,* and *slender*, while Spanish speakers said they were *big, dangerous, long, strong, sturdy*, and *towering*." [4]

So, studying a new language might open up a new way of thinking to the learner, a key to understanding another culture better. The need to learn other languages and cultural codes – and thus new ways of thinking – is essential in an increasingly connected and complex world. Technologies might help meet these actual and upcoming challenges.

4. Modern Language Learning: A proposal

Language teaching in today's classrooms usually has the same content and procedures for all students. However, digital tools offer the possibility of redesigning the lessons in such a way that the individual student's needs can be addressed in a better way. In this context, I suggest the use of a language learning toolbox, which contains various materials and tools available online and offline, which can be precisely tailored to the respective student. An essential factor here is the motivation of the individual. Pupils can feel addressed by completely different learning approaches and with the combination of different teaching aids this intrinsic motivation can be activated in such a way that the student's greatest learning success is made possible.

But what can these tools look like in practice? They can be anything that can exert a linguistic and cultural influence on us, which means everything we come into contact with in our lives. For example, one student may benefit greatly from personal or virtual contact with native speakers, while others may be more interested in music or literature from the respective culture.

Digital tools like smartphone are going to play an important role in this scenario, as it reflects students' everyday reality. For example, in Germany, nearly all adolescents already have a smartphone and are therefore used to handle it easily. [5]

This new approach must consider that the changed form of teaching also influences the relationships between teachers and pupils as well as among pupils. Students can take the opportunity to teach skills which they have already gained to other students. In addition, supported by their toolbox, students can explore new content on their own or in groups. The teacher acts as a mentor, a personal trainer who advises the students on which learning content and which learning method is suitable for their needs.

5. Challenges and related recommendations for action arising from this proposal

5.1 Structural

The curriculum must be flexible enough to allow future emerging technologies and related new teaching methods to be implemented from the outset. New laws in this area, as well as data protection concerns, can lead to large bureaucratic processes. The coordination of possible partner schools abroad can be demanding in terms of time and organization.

5.2 Personnel

Teachers have to adapt to their new tasks and to changed teacher-student relationships. In order to be able to react to constant new challenges, continuous teacher training is necessary. In addition, schools need persons responsible for questions in the multimedia area who set up the necessary infrastructure on the one hand and react promptly to technical problems on the other hand in order to facilitate smooth teaching.

5.3 Technical

A stable Internet connection is essential for the implementation of modern teaching methods. Most young people already have their own mobile devices. [5]

Using these would not only be inexpensive, but also convenient, since handling these devices is already a matter of course for teenagers. For students who do not have their own equipment, access should be ensured, for example through a pool solution. Access to equipment and the Internet should also be guaranteed outside school hours in order to be able to complete homework or exercises.

5.4 Financial

A stable Internet connection, costs for programmes, apps and other materials, as well as for the training of teachers have to be provided.

5.5 Psychological

Psychological factors play a major role in the use of digital media: the openness of teachers and students regarding new teaching methods is particularly important. Providing more exchange both online and offline does not only support the language learning but also the understanding of other cultures. Programmes such as Erasmus for teachers benefit not only the teachers themselves, but also the institutions where they teach, as well as pupils and parents. [6]

Digital technologies can offer new freedom, but can also lead to distraction and a lack of orientation among teachers and students. Teachers should therefore be trained in dealing with cyberbullying.

Moreover, teachers must respond empathetically to students who suffer from language speaking anxiety.

6. Intervention and data collection

The target group consists of students of an age between 13 and 15 years, who are studying the target language as a (at least) second foreign language. The language should be taught already for at least six months and not longer than two years. The current level of the students' language level should be determined on the basis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Furthermore, the students' and teachers' opinions about their language classes as well as their self-assessment, including questions about language speaking anxiety, and their awareness about cultural differences need to be found out, using questionnaires and one-to-one interviews.

After appropriate teacher training, the language learning toolbox will be implemented in one group, while another group continues with the former teaching concept.

7. Expected outcomes

After the experiment has been carried out, the tests and questions are repeated, and the data will be analysed. A better performance in the foreign language and intercultural competencies as well as a higher motivation and less language learning anxiety of the group using the new concept is expected.

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Effect of Academic Self-Efficacy on Academic Achievement of Online Foreign Language Learning: A Preliminary Cross-Sectional Study in Japanese Higher Education Environment

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Abstract

*A number of earlier studies have reported that self-efficacy and academic achievement are correlated. However, although many self-efficacy scales exist, the correlation between academic achievement and such self-efficacy scales has not been tested so far. In particular, there are only a few studies on the relation between academic achievement of foreign language learning with information, communication, and technology (ICT) and self-efficacy scales. The present study examines whether general and academic self-efficacy scales differ from each other in correlating academic achievement of foreign language learning with ICT in a higher education environment. General and academic self-efficacy scales were measured for 279 Japanese college students. Their test scores (sentence production and vocabulary) of foreign language learning courses in which Moodle was used were also obtained. First, these correlations were analyzed. Then, if a correlation of the test scores with either general self-efficacy or academic self-efficacy was found, the relation was tested for a significant correlation pattern. Academic self-efficacy statistically correlated with both sentence test and vocabulary test scores. In contrast, general self-efficacy correlated with neither of the test scores. No significant interaction was noted between general self-efficacy*academic self-efficacy for both sentence test and vocabulary test scores. Although there is no statistical interaction between general self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy correlating with academic achievement of foreign language learning with ICT, academic self-efficacy is more likely to explain academic achievement in foreign language education in a college setting with ICT than general self-efficacy. This also implies that academic self-efficacy can be more effectively applicable than general self-efficacy to foreign language learning among Japanese college students.*

Keywords: self-efficacy, foreign language learning, academic achievement, e-learning, ICT, higher education

1. Introduction

Educational psychology assumes that self-efficacy is one of the key factors in learning. Self-efficacy refers to one’s belief in his/her own ability to meet challenges and successfully accomplish a task [1-3]. Hence, self-efficacy relates to learners’ motivation based on their belief or desire in their own capacity to grow, achieve, and develop.

Several studies have found that self-efficacy positively correlates with academic achievement [4-6].

Majority have reported that learners with higher self-efficacy demonstrate higher academic achievement. Recent studies have clarified that the relation between self-efficacy and academic achievement can be longitudinally reasoned to the enhancement of self-efficacy [7].

However, there is no clarity on the effects of self-efficacy on online learners’ academic achievement. The development of information, communication, and technology (ICT) has led to the rampant use of online learning methods in education and learning in various environments such as primary, secondary, and high schools as well as higher education.

There are many common features in lecture-based education and online education, albeit with a few differences. For example, in an online learning environment, learners may pay attention not to the explanation but to a task because they complete the task mainly through quiz-based contents, which is different from a general/lecture-based learning environment like attending a class.

Several empirical studies have investigated the relation between self-efficacy and academic achievement in online learning environment, and a meta-analysis has also been published [8].

However, generalization of the results or trends is unknown. For example, Broadbent and Poon (2017) [8] did not include any studies from Japan. There is vast variation in foreign language educational environment and learners’ characteristics [9-10], and even more distinctive in Japan, owing to the cultural characteristics that vastly differ from other countries. Therefore, for an in-depth understanding of the relation between learners' self-efficacy in an online learning context and academic achievement, the present study investigates whether self-efficacy is correlated with academic achievement in the context of online learning of a foreign language in Japanese college students.

As a result, the present study tests whether the academic self-efficacy scale developed in the United States [11] is applicable to Japanese college students by comparing the general self-efficacy scale [12]. While several earlier studies have reported that academic self-efficacy was correlated with academic performance [4-6], a few studies have shown that there was a significant correlation between general self-efficacy and academic performance [13-14]. If this academic self-efficacy scale can be generalized to all learners across countries or cultures, the present study should demonstrate more applicability of the academic self-efficacy scale than the general self-efficacy scale even in the online learning environment, as the academic self-efficacy scale is more attuned to academic achievement than the general self-efficacy scale is.

2. Methods

Self-efficacy scales and test scores (sentence production test and vocabulary test) of foreign language learning courses were collected from 279 Japanese college students (124 males and 155 females aged 19-31 years, with average age of 20.26 years). Moodle, an open source learning platform that students used for taking the English learning course, was used to collect these data. The students were assigned to one of several classes, but the same textbook and course materials were used for all. The course schedule was also identical. They had to take a mini-test for each class, and there were two types of tests: sentence comprehension and vocabulary. In the present study, MLSQ [11] was used as the academic self-efficacy scale, and general self-efficacy [12] was used a general self-efficacy scale. The course duration was 15 weeks, one class per week. The students could freely undertake the practice contents but finish the tasks in the stipulated time (i.e., the end of the 15th week). All the participants were informed about the method and deadline in the first lecture.

Simple data analyses were carried out to find the correlations. If either general self-efficacy or academic self-efficacy was correlated with the test scores, their interaction was tested by using the generalized linear model to determine whether a significant correlation pattern existed. These two factors were also tested to confirm whether age and gender affect these correlation results.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the data. The correlation analysis was run to test the influence of age and gender on academic performance. Non-parametric correlation was used because of non-normal distribution in academic performances. Table 2 shows these results. Since there was a statistical correlation between academic self-efficacy and academic performance but not between general self-efficacy and academic performance, the interaction was tested by using generalized linear modeling. Academic self-efficacy statistically correlated with both sentence test (Wald chi-squared test = 5.6, p <0.017) and vocabulary test scores (Wald chi-squared test = 8.66, p <0.003). In contrast, general self-efficacy correlated with neither sentence test (Wald chi-squared test = 0.89, p=0.34) nor vocabulary test scores (Wald chi-squared test = 1.64, p=0.19). However, there was no significant interaction between general self-efficacy*academic self-efficacy on academic achievements (sentence test: p=0.17, vocabulary test: p=0.08). This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between general self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy in terms of the explanation of academic achievements.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Only academic self-efficacy correlated with academic performance of both sentence and vocabulary tests, and no statistical significance was shown in the correlation between general self-efficacy and the academic performances. With regard to the relation between academic self-efficacy and academic achievements, the study results agree with majority of the earlier findings [4-6].

However, in the generalized linear model, there was no significant interaction between general self-efficacy* academic self-efficacy on academic achievements.

Considered together, these results imply that while there is no significant difference, academic self-efficacy is more likely to explain academic achievements in college foreign language education setting with ICT than general self-efficacy and that academic self-efficacy can be more effectively applicable even to foreign language learning among Japanese college students than general self-efficacy. This implies that academic self-efficacy scale originally developed in United States may be generalized across all countries or cultures. To fully understand the importance or role of self-efficacy on academic achievements, future studies need to test the applicability through experiments conducted in various countries and cultures.

Table 1: Data of general self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, academic performances, age, and gender

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Male mean	Female mean
Sentence test scores	71.3	18.4	20	100	68.3	77.2
Vocabulary test scores	65.6	21.7	8	99	65.4	71.5
general self-efficacy	2.73	0.55	1	4	2.78	2.63
academic self-efficacy	2.50	0.33	1	3	2.51	2.45
age	20.2	1.15	19	31	20.2	20.1

Table 2: Results of correlations among general self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, academic performances, age, and gender

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. sentence test	1					
2. vocabulary test	0.79**	1				
3. general self-efficacy	0.29	0.05	1			
4. academic self-efficacy	0.18**	0.20**	0.60**	1		
5. age	0.65	0.05	0.03	0.02	1	
6. gender (male=1, female=0)	-0.21**	-0.18**	0.15*	0.08	0.10	1

**p<0.01, *p<0.05

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Effects of Equal and Expanding Spacing Techniques on EFL Learners' Immediate and Delayed Vocabulary Retrieval

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Abstract

The spacing effect, which refers to the distribution of learning across time, is assumed to lead to better vocabulary retrieval as compared to immediate repetition of words. This study investigated the impact of using digital flashcards and wordlist memorization for vocabulary learning through equal and expanding spacing conditions. The participants consisted of 60 homogeneous A2 level EFL learners randomly assigned to two control and two experimental groups. The target words of the study consisted of 20 unknown B1 level words. The control groups studied and practiced the new words using a wordlist containing all the target words, their definitions, and example sentences, while the two experimental groups studied the same words using the Cram.com website, whereby 20 digital flashcards were prepared with each word on one side and the related picture and definition on the other side. The words were presented five times in each class. In the equal spacing control and experimental groups, the words were recycled once a week, while in the expanding spacing groups they were recycled over intervals of 2, 5, 7, and 13 days. At the end of the treatment, all the participants took two immediate multiple choice and gap-filling posttests. After a two-month interval, five members of each group were randomly selected and given three delayed multiple choice, gap filling, and sentence making tests testing their knowledge of the same words. The results indicated no statistically significant differences between the four groups' mean scores on the immediate and delayed vocabulary posttests. Moreover, there was no statistically significant difference between each group's mean scores on the immediate and delayed vocabulary posttests, suggesting that their uptake had turned into the acquisition of target words, giving credence to the efficiency of repetition in the process of vocabulary learning irrespective of the type of spacing condition and the use of more modern or traditional techniques.

Keywords: Vocabulary learning; teaching techniques

1. Introduction

Vocabulary learning plays a crucial role in both L1 and L2 language acquisition, and any defect in this area would lead to communication breakdown [1], as the knowledge of grammar cannot guarantee accomplishments in the conveyance of the message [2]. Clearly, successful communication is the primary concern of all L2 learners, highlighting the role of vocabulary knowledge not only in comprehension but also in production. Thus, it is necessary for teachers to employ the most efficient strategies to enhance vocabulary learning and to train more autonomous individuals.

A critical factor regarding vocabulary learning is how frequently the words are repeated, and how efficiently they can be retrieved, implying that exposure frequency plays a key role in vocabulary retention both in L1 and L2 acquisition [3]. Research findings indicate that the more frequently the learners are exposed to a word, the more probable it is for them to learn it [4 and 5].

2. The Role of Memory in Vocabulary Acquisition

Recent studies on vocabulary learning underscore the significance of inter-word connections and repetition for better retrieval and, thus, learning of a word [6]. Undoubtedly, the role of working memory as the main component for maintenance and retrieval of all incoming information cannot be ignored here. It refers to a complex storage system which is "responsible for temporary maintenance of task-relevant information while performing cognitive tasks" [7]. Based on the most commonly cited model of working memory proposed by Baddeley in 1974, learning occurs in working memory, and repetition and rehearsal can facilitate learning as they can transfer the learned knowledge from working memory to long-term memory [6].

The information that moves into long term memory is not recalled easily, which might be due to the form which information takes within this space. Some researchers believe that information is stored in a visual form; some focus on the verbal form; some insist that it is stored depending on its meaning, and some claim that richness of meaning is also critical in this process [8].

3. Spaced Repetition

Repetition is a useful technique for word acquisition; however, there is no consensus regarding the number of exposures to new words and the interval among exposures. For instance, Waring and Takaki [9] report that for a 50% chance of word retrieval, at least eight encounters are required. They add that more frequent exposure, even up to 20 times, make a slight difference in the results. Webb [10] also states that 10 encounters could guarantee a reasonably large learning gain.

Spacing is defined as presenting some material to the learners, waiting for a time interval, and presenting it again, be it a few repetitions or many [11]. In a study comparing equal (3-3-3-3) and expanded spacing (0-1-3-8) conditions, Landauer and Bjork [12] concluded that expanded spacing led to higher retrieval. Schuetze [13] acknowledged that in L2 acquisition, it is necessary to keep words in long-term memory for a more extended period and retrieve them later, thus the point is to determine the best interval for the optimal retrieval of words [3].

4. Method

4.1 Research Question

Are there any differences between the effects of equal and expanding spacing techniques on EFL learners' immediate and delayed vocabulary retrieval?

4.2 Instruments

- An immediate vocabulary MC posttest
- An immediate vocabulary gap filling posttest
- A delayed vocabulary MC posttest
- A delayed vocabulary gap filling posttest
- A delayed sentence making posttest

4.3 Participants

The participants were 60 male and female Iranian A2 level EFL learners between 18 to 40 years old in two control and two experimental groups at a language school in Tehran.

5. Procedure

All the participants had taken the same achievement and interview tests before entering the pre-intermediate level. Initially, given the students' proficiency level (A2), a test of 50 B1 level words (in the form of wordlist) was given to them to choose 20 words which were completely unknown to all the participants. The new words were presented to both control groups using a wordlist containing all the target words. The two experimental groups studied the words using the Cram.com website, whereby 20 digital flashcards were prepared with each word written on one side and the related picture and definition on the other side. The target words were recycled five times in each class. In the equal spacing control and experimental groups, the words were repeated once a week, while in the expanding spacing groups they were recycled over intervals of 2, 5, 7, and 13 days. The participants of four groups took two immediate MC and gap-filling posttests at the end of the treatment. After a two-month interval, five members of each group were randomly selected and given three delayed multiple choice, gap filling, and sentence making tests to determine the degree of their retrieval of the target 20 words.

6. Results

The immediate MC and gap filling post-tests were given three days after the last session of the instruction to measure the participants' recall of the target words. The ANOVA results revealed no significant differences between the mean scores of the word list memorization and digital flash-card groups, both in equal and expanding spacing conditions (Table 1). However, both groups had significantly improved their word knowledge. It is noted that the expanding spacing wordlist group obtained the highest mean score on both MC (M=18.53) and gap filling tests (M=18.13).

Table 1: ANOVA for Immediate Post-Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
MC	Between Groups	10.933	3	3.644	.453	.716
	Within Groups	450.800	56	8.050		
Fills in the Gaps	Between Groups	29.200	3	9.733	.635	.595
	Within Groups	857.733	56	15.317		

To check the effects of using wordlist memorization and digital flashcards on long-term retention of words, three delayed tests were admintered after 45 days (the MC and gap filling tests, as well as a sentence making test). With F=1.1, *P*=0.37 for delayed MC tests and F=0.54, *P*=0.657 for delayed gap filling tests, it was concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the four groups on both receptive tests. Furthermore, with F=1.3, *P*=0.30, no significant difference was observed between their mean scores on the productive test (Table 2). However, the students who learned the words by digital flashcards under the expanding condition achieved the highest mean on all the three delayed posttests.

Table 2: ANOVA for Delayed Post-Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
MC	Between Groups	59.600	3	19.867	1.102	.377
	Within Groups	288.400	16	18.025		
Fills in the Gaps	Between Groups	24.200	3	8.067	.548	.657
	Within Groups	235.600	16	14.725		
Sentence Making	Between Groups	70.150	3	23.383	1.319	.303
	Within Groups	283.600	16	17.725		

The results of another ANOVA revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the four groups on the immediate and delayed MC, gap filling, and sentence making tests.

7. Conclusions and Discussion

The obtained results indicated the presence of no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the participants under the equal and expanding spacing conditions. Moreover, there was no statistically significant difference between their mean scores on the immediate and delayed vocabulary posttests, suggesting that the participants' uptake of the 20 words in all four groups had immediately turned into the acquisition of the words. In other words, despite the types and times of recycling the target words in each group, the participants had the same amount of retrieval, which once more highlighted the significance of repeated exposure to data in vocabulary learning.

Similarly, Nakata [14] found no significant differences between the effects of using equal and expanding conditions in his study of 128 Japanese college students who studied 20 English-Japanese word pairs. In another study, Dizon and Tang [15] compared the efficacy of digital flashcards versus paper flashcards to improve receptive and productive L2 vocabulary learning. They concluded that, although both groups had made significant improvement in this regard, the difference between their gains was not significant. However, the findings of a 10-item survey with closed and Likert-scale questions showed that the participants preferred digital flashcards to paper ones. Finally, Jo [16] found out that the long-term retention of concrete and abstract words was not influenced by the choice of flashcards or wordlists.

The findings of this study highlight the primary significance and efficiency of repetition in the process of vocabulary acquisition irrespective of the type of spacing condition and the use of more modern or traditional techniques. Given the results of this study and many others, it seems that, even in crowded classrooms lacking modern facilities, students can learn new words effectively only by employing some simple techniques like wordlist memorization provided that they have enough exposure to input.

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EFL College Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of the Nature and Causes of Plagiarism

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Abstract

Plagiarism has recently turned into a major concern for academics and academic institutions. The problem seems to have become so widespread that several types of anti-plagiarism software have been developed to check the originality of scholarly papers and students' assignments. Unfortunately, it appears that this unethical strategy is steadily increasing across college and university students in higher education settings and within other groups such as scholarly and scientific communities, political offices, and journalistic groups. Nevertheless, the reasons continue to be obscure. In reality, available statistical findings do not provide a very clear picture of the scale and nature of plagiarism itself and the problems associated with it. Neither do they clarify the extent to which this phenomenon is changing through time or is different from country to country, from subject to subject, or among undergraduate and graduate students. It is assumed that if students are made aware of the consequences of plagiarism, they will exercise some caution in resorting to it while writing an important paper which is going to be published. Despite the great attention paid to this issue in academic journals and settings, plagiarism still occurs at large, and many students, scholars, and even politicians are still accused of committing it. Some may claim ignorance, and some could be breaking the rule to meet deadlines. Accordingly, the present study was carried out to investigate EFL college teachers' and students' perceptions of the nature and causes of plagiarism. The participants consisted of 20 EFL university professors and 40 university students studying TEFL at MA and PhD levels. They received a Likert-Scale 30-item questionnaire enquiring about the nature of plagiarism in the view of the respondents and their attitude in this regard. The results demonstrated that both groups were equally aware of the nature of plagiarism and the related ethical issues, while the students had considerably different standpoints regarding the excuses and punishments for plagiarism.

Keywords: Perception, Plagiarism, Nature, Admission, Academic

1. Introduction

Raising awareness about and taking preventative measures against academic transgression and scientific misconduct have always been a priority in academic and scientific circles. However, plagiarism still frequently takes place. It is defined as the illegal use of another's work, ideas, methods, or words without citing the original author [1]. While the majority of research in this area has focused on plagiarism in English-speaking contexts, cultural differences and particularities of L2 academic writing in S/FL contexts have been recognized as contributing factors to plagiarism as well. A growing body of literature demonstrates that plagiarism is perceived differently in various cultures due to deeper values that differ among Eastern and Western societies. For example, it is claimed that in Asian societies memorizing and word-for-word copying are considered valued methods of learning [2], while paraphrasing is seen as changing the truth [3]. Perceptions of plagiarism are so different in Eastern academic societies that knowledge is believed to belong to all, and what authors say is accepted as fact and, thus, critical treatment of sources is seen as a disrespectful conduct [4].

Nevertheless, solely focusing on cultural differences as the main factor leading to plagiarism might disguise the complicated nature of this act. Some attribute the reason for committing plagiarism to insufficient language and general study skills in foreign language studies programs [5]. Considering the poverty of research in this filed in Iran, the current paper seeks to shed some light on Iranian EFL learners' and teachers' perceptions regarding the nature and causes of plagiarism.

2. Literature Review

Babbie [6] defines plagiarism as "the presentation of another's words or ideas as your own."

Howard [7] identifies four types of plagiarism; (1) submission of someone else's written work as one's own, (2) patchwriting i.e. blending others' sentences with one's own, (3) not citing the sources, and (4) not using quotations while using direct quotes. The second type, patchwriting, is the hardest to prevent as the presentation of the plagiarized work can occur in an alternate scientific community [8].

Another source for plagiarism is the internet, the content of which is often perceived by students to belong to the public and, thus, not in need of acknowledgement when used [7]. While Freedman [8] sees internet as a critical contributor to the rise of plagiarism, DeVoss and Rosati [9] assert that merely blaming the internet is a "failure to recognize and reward originality."

Plagiarism, in general, and perceptions of students and faculty towards it, in particular, have been widely studied. McCabe [10] conducted an extensive study on the perceptions of over 90,000 participants including students and teachers in US and Canadian universities. He reported a low acceptance of paper-based plagiarism while observing a serious stance against copy-and-paste plagiarism using the internet among participants. Based on a survey of US college student's perceptions, Fish and Hura [11] reported that the participants thought other students are more likely to commit plagiarism than they are. They also suggested that some types of plagiarism are thought to be more serious than others; indicating that communication of punitive consequences of plagiarism to students leads to an elevated level of awareness. Pritchett [12] compared the perceptions of undergraduate students and faculty members; reporting no significant difference among them while showing a significant difference among male and female members of faculty. She demonstrated that faculty members generally regarded plagiarism as a serious offence more than the students. Roig [13] investigated professors' ability to detect plagiarism in students' paraphrased texts. He reported that even experts may make errors distinguishing plagiarism. The findings of a similar study of university instructors' perceptions of student self-plagiarism revealed that instructors did not have a clear understanding of the issue [14].

In a Canadian study [15], interviews with international graduate students and disciplinary professors on the role of student-professor relationship dynamics on student text production showed that it is, ultimately, the graduate students' responsibility to develop practical research skills and to learn to abide by plagiarism policies. Another study [16] examined Indonesian international students' understanding of plagiarism and reported that for the majority of the participants the concept was a "completely unknown" and foreign notion. Two other Australian studies [17] indicate that providing students with in-class and online training modules on the subject leads to significantly lower levels of plagiarism. While Hu [18] reported that, not only in China but also in Italy, patch-writing is encouraged among students of disciplines such as history and science, Rinnert and Kobayashi [19] stated that Japanese students across a variety of disciplines lack proper training on plagiarism and authorship.

Studies on the use of anti-plagiarism software report significant decreases in student plagiarism after introduction of such software into the grading process [20].

The findings of a study of the perceptions of faculty members towards plagiarism and self-plagiarism at a medical school in Iran [21] indicated that there is a need for clear warnings against plagiarism and a need for the use of plagiarism detection software. Another study of the roots and consequences of academic cheating among Iranian Medical students [22] concluded that both individual and communal factors lead to student plagiarism. In a study of the motives behind academic dishonesty in Iran, Darouian and Faghihi [23] identified the following major factors: (1) credentialism, (2) preferring quantity over quality in academic writing, and (3) lack of preventative measures. Moreover, an extensive survey of 500 EFL master's students in 28 universities across Iran [24] demonstrated that plagiarism was prevalent among the participants, and that their perceptions of the seriousness of plagiarism predicted their rates of plagiarism. Finally, in his study of nearly 100 undergraduate and graduate TEFL students Sabbaghan [25] reported that, while the participants discerned direct copying as plagiarism, they tolerated paraphrased statements. The current study has sought to further this line of inquiry.

3. The Study

3.1 Research Questions

1. What are EFL college students' perceptions of the nature and causes of plagiarism?
2. What are EFL college teachers' perceptions of the nature and causes of plagiarism?

3.2 Participants
Twenty EFL university professors and 40 Iranian MA and PhD students (both male and female) in the field of TEFL participated in the study.

3.3 Instruments
An English questionnaire addressing the nature and concept of plagiarism was used to collect the required data. The questionnaire consisted of 30 statements with which the participants agreed or disagreed on a Likert-scale basis. Each statement was followed by five choices, as follows: (1) Strongly Disagree (SD=1), (2) Disagree (D=2), (3) Neutral (NS=3), (4) Agree (A=4), and (5) Strongly Agree (SA=5). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the questionnaire was equal to .847.

3.4 Procedure
After the random selection of the participants, the purposes and premises of the study were clarified for them in order to obtain unbiased responses. Then they were asked to fill out the plagiarism questionnaire. The participants were assured about the confidentiality of their data.

4. Data collection and results

In processing the results, the questionnaire items were grouped into four categories: (1) knowledge of the concept of plagiarism, (2) excuses for justification of plagiarism, (3) punishments for plagiarism, and (4) academic ethics. Table 1 illustrates the average percentage scores per question category for both teachers and students.

Table 1: Percentages for both Groups, Total and per Question Category

	Knowledge %	**Excuses %**	**Punishment %**	**Ethics %**	**Total %**
Teachers	67.08	75.83	76.88	74.06	73.75
Students	63.33	58.75	61.88	70.63	63.33

As Table 1 shows, teachers did not show an in-depth understanding of all aspects of plagiarism.

About 75% of them believed in accepting some excuses for justifying plagiarism, and they seemed to agree with punishing plagiarism and observing ethical codes in academic writing. Surprisingly enough, the students scored as low as teachers on their knowledge of plagiarism; however, they did not seem to agree strongly regarding acceptance of excuses for plagiarism. Their scores on the necessity of punishing plagiarism was lower than teachers, while they followed their teachers regarding ethics.

5. Discussions

The results of this study are similar to what other researchers have found in studies on plagiarism in both EFL contexts and Eastern cultures in that both teachers and students seem to lack a solid understanding of the nature of plagiarism and the ways to treat it. This finding might be attributed to the Eastern values of knowledge preservation and dissemination. However, as acknowledged previously, cultural roots alone cannot justify this issue. The participants' average score on the knowledge category can be clearly explained by referring to their teachers' lack of a solid grounding regarding plagiarism. Nevertheless, the teachers' improper perceptions towards plagiarism might have stemmed from lack of training, contextual disincentives, and a general departure from taking the issue seriously in an environment where their cohorts show little to no effort in doing the same, which demands appropriate remedy. One step in this regard is to develop policies in academic environments that require taking serious disciplinary actions against violators of academic codes of conduct. These policies might exist on paper, but they are rarely exercised fully and practically. Another positive measure is to organize related events, workshops, and training courses for both teachers and students to provide them with a more profound of plagiarism and the strategies used to avoid it.

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ICT for Language Learning: A Modern Colombian Education

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Abstract

Education is a constant change, and teachers must keep up with those changes. Gonzalez (2015) said, professors must keep up with trends in teaching. And according to Valencia, Enriquez, & Agredo, (2017), the challenge of education is becoming more and more challenging, spaces and times have changed, the actors involved in the different training processes have pronounced variants. Colombia is a country which has been working really well in promoting the integration of technology in education, every year the governments make an important effort in the creation of different strategies in the management of technology in the academia. And all these have led universities to implement a variety of ideas to help educational processes, and to work really hard in the integration of technology in Education. Teachers have become really conscious of the importance of having the necessary skills in today's technological era. They thoroughly understand how teaching has changed and the very importance of integrating technology in their teaching processes. Many teachers would agree with Gonzalez (2015) who said that achieving significant value of technology as an academic tool in classes is really important and can make a difference in learning. The integration of technology in modern education has given teachers a very powerful tool to work with, and students are obtaining great benefits from it. ICT for language learning has become a significant part of many teaching and learning processes. People deal with technology every day, everywhere and it is just part of our lives nowadays. Integrating ICT in Colombian education has helped students increase their learning level, fulfilling academic expectations in a very active way. In this research the integration of technology in education was approached using different strategies and a variety of tools available nowadays. All of this, having in mind at all times that the most important issue are the students and the teaching and learning processes.

Keywords: Education, technology, teachers, integration

1. Introduction

We are immersed in a period where technology is part of daily life to facilitate tasks; For example, we have cell phones, tablets, smartphones, academic platforms, web sites, among others. All these help the performance of different activities. That is, technology is present in different fields such as education, economic, political, among others; which, try to facilitate the development of activities in human beings. González (2015) mentioned that the impact of technology is visible not only in commerce, business and science but that education is one of the most permeated fields by this phenomenon.

It is important to highlight that technology does not have an exact date of incorporation as a disciplinary field; however, it is linked to the industrial age. In the 21st century, technological devices were implemented for the development of different activities, among them artisanal, agricultural, textile, etc. where factories were equipped with machinery and equipment to carry out activities more efficiently and minimizing costs (Cardoso and Morales, 2017).

Villota, Villota and Bámaca, (2017, p. 438) stated that:

> Digital advances allowed access to communication technologies, telematics, visual networks, information technology and communication, allowing innovation in educational processes.

Technology used in education allows the strengthening of the teaching and learning process of curricular contents. Different technologies implemented by the teacher in the students learning process facilitate the appropriation of curricular contents. The integration of technology in Latin American countries in the field of education is still recent as it grows by leaps and bounds where each change needs to be socialized with the teacher and the students through digital literacy programs.

The governments of Latin American countries are working on processes to promote literacy programs that help the teacher to manipulate ICT resources in order to be integrated into pedagogical practice, that is, national governments are in the process of integrating new regulations that facilitate this literacy related to cyberspace particularly with ICT (Villota, *et al*., 2017, Villota and Villota, 2018).

There are different studies where the integration of ICT and school learning sare addressed, which are linked to the student's learning processes guided by the teacher (Valencia, Enríquez y Agredo, 2017; Ertmer y Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010; Villota y Villota, 2018; Arancibia, Casanova, Soto, 2016; Valencia, Enríquez y Freire, 2018; Valencia, Enríquez y Acosta, 2018). Therefore, it is very important not only to study how the student learns through the implementation of ICT but how they are used, appropriate and internalized by the teacher and the student in the teaching and learning process.

The process where the teacher plans classroom acitivities is investigative since it requires to examine different elements such as strategy, content, implementation of ICT resources among others (Enríquez, Oliveira and Valencia, 2017, Enríquez, Oliveira and Valencia, 2018; Villota, 2016).

However, those elements such as teaching and learning strategies can be enriched by the implementation of technologies in the pedagogical practice of the teacher, without thinking that these only serve to be integrated in distance education but, on the contrary, can be used in the classes face-to-face with the purpose of strengthening student learning.

2. Methodology

This was a qualitative descriptive research; the general objective was to integrate technology in the learning and teaching process of English as a foreign language. Researchers used technological aids available in a virtual platform of the university, selected web pages, and with the application of hardware and software, it was also possible to select different activities in which students had to work on.

Some of the websites used offered the possibility of using virtual classrooms, through which it was possible to have the necessary oral interaction proposed in this research, and which also offered a variety of exercises and activities that were quite fun and interesting for students; as well as multiple exercises online and also many links that provided the opportunity to have a wide range of exercises for the constant reinforcement of the English language. As Gonzalez, Villota, & Villota (2017) stated, there is a range of strategies used by the teacher, which undoubtedly help the learning process.

3 Conclusions

Education changes at accelerate rhythms, and its global tendency makes it work with new tools every day. The integration of technology in the teaching and learning processes has a great impact in the final educational results.

This project demonstrated that the integration of technology in different ways helped increase the learning of students, allowing in a relatively short period of time the increasing in their level in class. It also increased the level of understanding, motivation and interest.

The research showed that despite the implementation of a new way of teaching a language, it is necessary to establish synchronic times that allow the interaction of both the teacher and the student.

As a final conclusion, it can be stated that in today's modern society the integration of technology in education is having a great impact, and it is helping education to obtain much better results in all the academic processes. Teachers are increasing their competences in this area which give students a more reliable and quality of education.

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Implementing a Teacher Training Program Supported by ICT

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Abstract

The University of Veracruz has 6 Language Centers in different cities of the State of Veracruz in Mexico. Their main mission consists of fostering language learning acquisition through a wide variety on language courses aimed at university students as well as people from the community of each city. Through the years, these Centers have also committed to meet the different demands of society. Among them, we found the necessity to support English language teachers from upper secondary education to improve their language level and their teaching-learning strategies in order to perform more effectively in their own institutions by making use of the new information and communication technologies.
For this reason, a group of teachers of the 6 Language centers carried out a very hard work in the creation and implementation of a teacher training certification course for English as a second language teachers.
This paper describes the implementation of this certification program in the Language Center of Poza Rica, Mexico as well as the work and tasks done in the module "Fundamentals of Instructional design and assessment of English language. It mainly aims at comparing the results obtained by two generations of students who work with different educative platforms. Findings suggest similar behaviors regarding knowledge acquisition".

Keywords: Teacher training, language teaching, ICT

1. Introduction

Some people say they could never be teachers because they are not patient enough to teach someone. Other people say it is a very easy job because teachers usually work from Monday to Friday and have lots of vacation periods. In our opinion, if a person has the vocation for teaching, it will be the easiest and most enjoyable job in the world.

According to Harmer (2002) [1], teachers describe themselves like actors because they are always on stage, like orchestral conductors because they direct conversations, and even like gardeners because they plant the seeds and watch them grow.

But, what makes a good teacher? Harmer (2001) [2] asked this question to a variety of people such as teacher trainers, teachers, and students. Here are some of their answers:

- "A good teacher makes his/her lessons interesting";
- "A good teacher must love his/her job";
- "Good teachers have a lot of knowledge, not only of their subject";
- "A good teacher is someone who has an affinity with his/her students";
- "She/he should be able to correct students without offending them".

In summary, Harmer (2001) simply responds the question by stating that "good teachers care more about their students' learning than they do about their own teaching" (p. 3). These kinds of teachers are the ones who worry about preparing themselves and being up to date by doing research, attending to academic events and of course getting the necessary training for improving their teaching methods and techniques.

The implementing of teacher training courses becomes necessary because "teachers have a direct effect on educating the individuals in all the sectors and, so designing the societies. For this reason, teacher training process has been regarded as one of the most important issues of the education system" (Kıldan, İbret, Pektaş, Aydınözü, İncikabı, & Recepoğlu, (2013) [3].

In the field of language teaching, "there has been an increased demand for language teachers due to 'the age of communication' and the consequent need to train these teachers" (Wallace, 1997, p. 2) [5].

Therefore, the Universidad Veracruzana (UV), has prepared different graduate programs to help language teachers to improve their teaching methods and techniques in order to offer better language courses in all its schools.

2. Teacher training programs at Universidad Veracruzana (UV)

The University of Veracruz has about 90 graduate programs such as: specialties, master's degrees and Doctoral programs in the 5 different regions where the University is located (see Fig. 1).

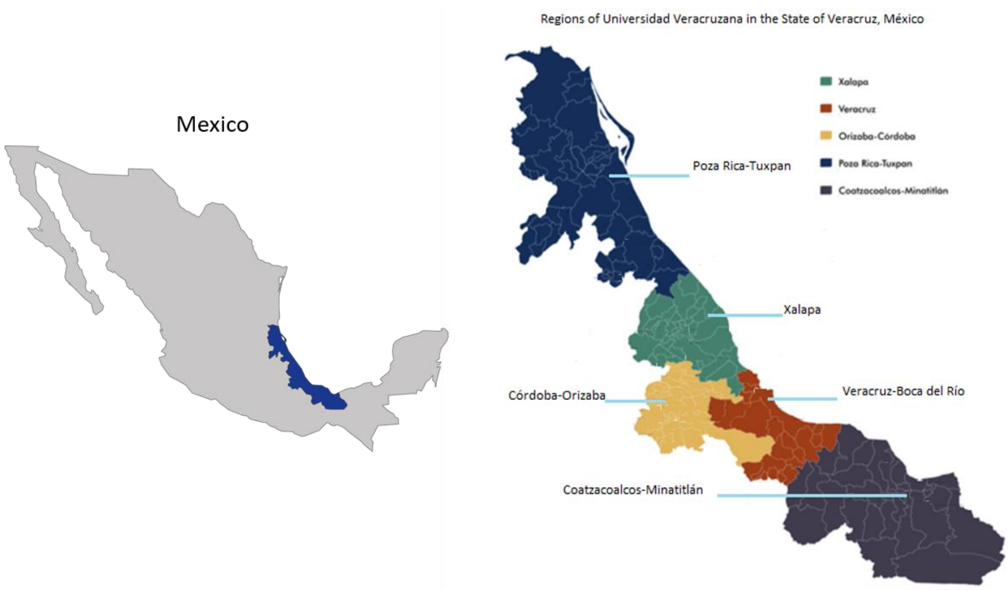

Fig. 1: UV's Regions in the State of Veracruz

Most of University's degree programs that help training teachers belong to the area of Humanities.

Among the foreign language programs, we can find one Doctoral Program in Language Science and two Master Degrees, one in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and the other in French Didactics (Universidad Veracruzana, 2018) [4].

These professional education opportunities are mostly centred in the city of Xalapa, which is the Capital City of the State of Veracruz. So, applicants have to move from their cities to study one of these programs carrying them time and economic problems. For this reason, the UV International Office and the Language Centres started a collaboration agreement with the Office of High School Education in the State of Veracruz to develop a special teacher training program for high school teachers of English from all over the State due to the needs these teachers had to regularize their professional profile. This program was called Diploma in Training and Certification of Language Teachers.

3. Diploma in Training and Certification of Language Teachers

The importance of this Diploma is derived from the impact of globalization on Mexican national education that is tangible in the Educational Reform of 2013 and in the design of current educational programs based on the Competency approach. So, the need for training teachers in Secondary schools' results from their various profiles, which require updating methodologies, language skills and competencies for teaching English as a foreign language.

Therefore, the meetings to develop the Diploma in Training and Certification of Language Teachers started October 2015 with a group of English Teachers from the different Languages Centres to determine the Diploma's important details such as: aim, modality, modules, registration requirements, and total length.

The Diploma aimed at updating the Secondary School English teachers to help them improve the educational quality of their teaching through language enrichment and specialized pedagogical training. The total length of the program was 270 hours after which most graduates were able to speak English in a B2 level (according to the Common European Framework) and developed pedagogical skills and teaching competences to have a better performance as English teachers and also making a creative use of the Information and Communication Technologies.

It was a multimodal program with in-person, online and autonomous sessions divided in 4 modules:

- Module 1. Language Enrichment;
- Module 2. Training for EXAVER III (The institutional B2 Certificate of English);
- Module 3. Principles of teaching-learning in EFL;
- Module 4. Instructional Design and Assessment of the English Language.

In March 2016, the Poza Rica Language Centre opened this program for the first time with a group of students who were English teachers at different schools from the north area of the State of Veracruz. Most students of these group were able to finish all the modules of the Diploma on December of the same year. In 2017, the second generation of teachers signed up and completed the program. These two cases of teacher preparation experiences are presented and compared regarding the last module of the program which is described in the next section.

4. Two cases of teacher training supported by ICT

The fourth module of the Diploma was named "Instructional Design and Assessment of the English Language". It aimed at strengthening the elaboration of an instructional design and learning materials applying the principles of teaching, planning and evaluation, considering techniques and teaching activities centred on learning and the management of learning groups including the use of resources and multimodal didactic means to favour the development of communicative competence in the target language.

It involved the teachers' preparation through one in-person session every Saturday and the rest of the work through ICT and educative platforms. During the in-person sessions, teachers were introduced to different and very important subjects such as: Instructional design, effective planning, group management, motivation in the classroom, selection and evaluation of textbooks and didactic materials, principles for language assessment, item writing, assessment of language abilities, among others. So, teachers were able to discuss, debate and share their own experiences on these topics.

The in-person sessions were presented in the same form to both of the cases described before (Group 2016 and Group 2017) but, the asynchronous work mediated by ICT was different. The first group (2016) worked with our institutional platform called Eminus, and the second group (2017) worked through Google Drive.

4.1 Asynchronous work through Eminus platform

When Group 2016 started the fourth module of the Diploma, they have previously work with the Eminus Platform, so it was really easy for them to keep working this way. The work dynamics consisted of signing in to find the different tasks they had to do, download the instructions and materials and upload their tasks. For questions or doubts, students use the platform forums in order to share them with the instructor and their classmates so, feedback was for everyone.

4.2 Asynchronous work through Google Drive

Group 2017 was not able to work with Eminus because the module started two weeks later so, it was not possible for them to take the induction training for the platform. So, we decided to work through Google Drive with the agreement of being aware of the e-mails sent by the instructor. Those E-mails contained the tasks with their corresponding instructions and materials for students to send the finished tasks back. For questions or doubts about the tasks, these students used a WhatsApp group.

5. Comparative

Tables 1 and 2 below present the main similarities and differences found in Group 2016 and Group 2017.

Table 1: Similarities

Similarities
In both generations:
Eight students were able to finish Module 4 of the Diploma,
Most students were English teachers at the city of Poza Rica.
Most students were women.
Most students were not familiarized with the module's contents.
Arithmetic mean of students' grades was 8.75
Both generations were enthusiastic to work online

Table 2: Differences

Differences	
Generation 2016	Generation 2017
Teachers had a higher level of English.	Teachers had a lower level of English.
All students did a good management of their tasks in the Eminus Platform.	Most students did a good management of their tasks in Google drive.
Most students uploaded their tasks, and homework on the deadline.	Most students sent their tasks, homework and extra class work after the deadline.
Not many questions or doubts about the tasks and homework were posted in the Eminus forum.	Many questions or doubts about the tasks and homework posted in the WhatsApp group
Regular grades in final written exam	Good grades in final written exam

6. Conclusions

This paper described the implementation of a Diploma in Training and Certification of Language Teachers at the Poza Rica Language Centre in México and presented a brief comparative with similarities and differences of the results obtained by two generations of students who worked with different educative platforms.

The groups were very similar in number of students, gender, and the city where they work. Both of them haven't read before about the contents of module so, they learned a lot of techniques and methodologies. Even though both groups were keen to work online, one of them (2017) experienced more problems than the other (2016) working this way. As you can see on table 2, students from group 2017 were not able to deliver their tasks on time and had great difficulty on understanding the same instructions given to group 2016. It was possible to notice a higher level of language management through essays and presentations in group 2016 then in group 2017. However, both of them obtained the same arithmetic mean in their final grades due to a better performance on group 2017 on the final written exam.

In conclusion, as the use of different platforms to manage students' on-line work did not affect their final grades, it is important to keep promoting these kinds of educative resources to help teachers make a creative use of the Information and Communication Technologies and foster the autonomous learning, so they can do the same with their own students.

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In Italia con Giacomo: Developing a Blended Learning Course in Italian Language and Culture

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Abstract

This paper describes the context, structure, content and creation process related to a novel blended learning course on Italian culture, language structures and communication skills developed for beginners enrolled at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. The course is delivered through a combination of two hours in class per week and an app available online through fixed and portable digital devices for ease of access and flexibility. The in-class component focuses on oral and written production, fostering the development of individual language and communication strategies. The app component, 'In Italia con Giacomo', takes learners on a linguistic road trip of Italy with Giacomo, a 2018 model electric Vespa. Giacomo acts as the learner's travelling companion and language guide, and as they travel together the learner encounters the language and culture of key Italian destinations. The paper also explores considerations in relation to assessment of blended learning courses within the confines of a very structured and limiting university course assessment system.

Keywords: Blended learning

Introduction

In recent decades, the experience of teaching and learning languages has changed dramatically, and one of the strongest drivers of this change has been the recognition of the role that intercultural communicative competence plays in successful linguistic interactions [1]. The established goal of communicative language teaching – an effective interchange of information – has been augmented to include 'the ability to decentre and take up the other's perspective on their own culture, anticipating and where possible, resolving dysfunctions in communication and behaviour' [1, p. 42]. Krasner demonstrated that linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language [2], and Peterson and Coltrane showed that learners need to be aware of the culturally appropriate ways to address people, disagree with someone, express gratitude or make requests [3].

As foreign language teaching has evolved in this direction, the expectations on teachers have increased, such that they are now encouraged to contextualise a 'foreign linguistic code' against 'the socio-cultural background associated with the foreign language and to promote the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence' [4, p. 92]. Foreign language teachers therefore need additional knowledge, attitudes, competencies and skills to support the intercultural learning process [5].

In recognition of these developments and in order broaden the scope of my teaching practice, in 2017 I applied for and received a small grant from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The funding was to enable the development of a pilot blending learning course to be offered alongside the two existing first-year 'Italian Language for Beginners' papers at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. As well as overseeing the development of the course, I have designed the course structure and content, and am writing the course materials. As the pilot course has an app-based component, I have enlisted a code writer, an audio-visual technician from the university, and a graphic designer to assist me. The new course will be taught for the first time in the first semester of the next academic year (beginning March 2019) and as such is currently a work in progress.

The pilot course will be the second blended learning course in a foreign language to be developed in-house and introduced by the School of Cultures, Languages and Linguistics at the University of Auckland. The first, entitled 'Introductory French', was first taught in 2015 and has proved to be a highly successful didactic offering. One of the many advantages of blended learning is it can be tailored to suit many contexts, and the Italian context differs from the French in that the language is not taught in New Zealand schools, and there is comparatively little awareness of contemporary Italian language and society. The pilot course described here differs from Introductory French in two crucial aspects: (1) learners can access the app component, called ‘In Italia con Giacomo’, on all fixed or portable digital devices; and (2) ‘In Italia con Giacomo’ uses a narrative structure with a protagonist who accompanies the learner on a virtual tour of Italy.

Blending Narrative with Blended Learning

The importance of using narratives and storytelling when teaching a foreign language is well established [6]. According to Daniel, ‘Narrative is the natural way in which humans organise information, and storytelling is the most immediate (and fundamental) means by which that narrative is communicated’ [7, p. 3]. When a teacher narrates a story, ideal language learning conditions can be created because the story functions as a springboard for a variety of language learning activities [8].

As an instructional methodology that leverages technology to provide a more personalised approach to learning, blending learning gives students control over the time, place, path and pace of their learning [9]. By combining the use of narrative with blending learning, ‘In Italia con Giacomo’ gives learners the ability to insert themselves into the narrative in a way designed to maximise their engagement. Giacomo is a 2018 model electric Vespa who accompanies the learner on an exploration of Italy and the Italian language. Giacomo and the student travel Italy from north to south, making 11 stops on the way. Starting from Aosta, they visit Torino, Vernazza, Bergamo, Ravenna, Urbino, Assisi, Viterbo, Salerno, Lecce, Reggio Calabria and finally Palermo. When the pair arrive at a new destination, Giacomo takes the learner on a 5-minute visual tour of the city. Through the language interactions that take place between Giacomo and the learner over 11 weeks, Giacomo shares insights into the dynamics of his family and the personalities of his relatives. The narrative draws on the historical and cultural context of Vespas in Italian society, cinema and everyday life, which helps to establish an intercultural communicative connection between the learner and Giacomo. The learner gradually becomes conscious of the sibling rivalry between Giacomo’s brothers and sisters; the strong protective affection that characterises Giacomo as the oldest child; the highs and lows of travelling; and the small family achievements and events such as birthdays and school tests that punctuate family life. But most of all, Giacomo is able to share the pleasure of discovery and encourage the learner to see Italian places and people through his eyes, those of an insider.

Over 30 years of foreign language teaching have reinforced in me the belief that deeper learning is achieved when learners are encouraged to develop a degree of personal and emotional involvement with the material they engage with. In the past, I’ve often struggled with resources developed for the American or European market that address learner needs, characteristics and beliefs that do not reflect those of the students in my classes. I have therefore been developing my own context-specific resources for many years. Given the fact that Auckland, where I teach, is nearly 20,000 kilometres from Rome, it is more difficult for my students to experience Italy in the flesh than it is for most learners of Italian. The wide-ranging innovations of the digital era have had a profound impact on how I approach my teaching, and the advances in app technology have enabled me to realise a long-held dream with ‘In Italia con Giacomo’.

Course Structure and Assessment

Like the two existing ‘Italian Language for Beginners’ courses, the blended learning course will cover the language structures and communication skills of the A1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. While the two existing papers require a total of 4 class hours weekly, usually once a day, students who enrol in the new blended learning course will be required to attend class for just one 2-hour session per week. The in-class component focuses on individual learning needs, leading to production through task-based activities and a portfolio.

The remainder of course learning will take place through the online app-based component accessible from all fixed and portable digital devices. Each week the learner needs to complete all the activities in the 4 lessons in order to get 3 points and take Giacomo to his next destination. The learner also needs to complete a weekly online quiz, which tests the material covered in the 4 lessons.

Completing the quiz successfully ‘recharges’ Giacomo with enough electricity for the next leg of the trip.

My original intention was that the nature of assessment for this blending learning course would contribute to ‘improving how we deal with content, social interaction, reflection, higher order thinking, problem solving, collaborative learning’ [10, p. 248]. However, I had to justify and reframe my assessment proposals many times in order to meet the university’s requirements and secure permission to teach the course. Most of all, I had to justify my use of formative assessment (i.e., with marks attached) related to the online material and in-class production.

Ultimately, the following assessment structure was approved, which in my opinion puts rather a heavy burden on the learner:

- 12% 2×50-minute in-class written tests
- 10% Portfolio, made up of weekly written in-class production
- 33% 11×4-hour online interactive activities (within app)
- 15% 10×1-hour summative digital tests
- 10% Final 10-minute oral exam
- 20% Final 2-hour written exam

Passing the course will allow students to progress to the next level of Italian language acquisition at the University of Auckland. The course will be formally evaluated through university channels, alongside other blended learning courses already in existence within the School of Cultures, Languages and Linguistics of the Faculty of Arts.

The Journey Continues

As noted in the Introduction, the pilot blended learning course is currently a work in progress, and is on track to be launched at the start of the next academic year. The development has progressed alongside my normal teaching workload and, despite taking up nearly all of my spare time, has been and continues to be an immensely rewarding experience. In terms of course content, I have sought to do justice to both the traditional and innovative aspects of contemporary Italian society, which Giacomo, as an electric Vespa, is intended to embody. Interweaving the language skills development that occurs in the in-class component with that in the app has been both challenging and stimulating.

Whether or not I achieve all my objectives, there is no doubt that embarking on this journey has breathed new life and inspiration into my teaching.

Acknowledgement

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LinguApp: Bridging the Language Gap

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Abstract

Learning and teaching a second language is nowadays a priority as well as one of the most relevant educational objectives for most international institutions. The predominance of English in this paradigm is undisputed, as it is the lingua franca for international business, cultural and academic exchange, and for the dissemination of science. The effective and efficient learning of a second language constitutes a foundation of inestimable value to help peoples to live together in peace: "Throughout the last decade, European multilingualism policy has been guided by the objective set by the Barcelona Council of March 2002, which called for the improvement of mastery of basic skills, in particular, by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age", which aligns with the objectives of Horizon 2020. Furthermore, the Preface to the Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe (2012) "underlines the necessity to enable citizens to communicate in two languages in addition to their mother tongue, as well as the need to promote language teaching and provide migrants with opportunities to learn the language of the host country". Therefore, to assure universal access to second language learning is a priority for most international institutions, but such access is biased by economic and social differences (in terms of possibilities and resources). This phenomenon, named the language gap "has spawned multiple scholarly trajectories that aim to point out linguistic inferiorities in characteristics like communicative quality, language processing, and overall health" (Johnson & Zentella, 2017, p. 1). The main objective of our study is to introduce the foundations of a competitive research project, LinguApp (PRY 208/17), funded by Fundación Andaluza Centro de Estudios Andaluces (PRY208/17) from Junta de Andalucía (Spain), whose main goal is to contribute to avoid the language gap. LinguApp, designed and thought as a universal and free accessed web app (called MentorLang), will contribute to offer the autonomous learner the necessary orientation and counselling for the successful learning of English or Spanish as a second language, contributing thus to minimize the impact of the language gap.

Keywords: Language gap, second language learning, orientation, counselling, web app

1. Introduction

Language learning is a priority set by most educational international policies. In this paradigm, the predominance of English is recognized in the literature as the language of exchange for science, culture, information and business. Nevertheless, access to second language learning is not uniform, as socio-economic differences can impact on both academic achievement and language acquisition.

Jonhson & Zentella (2017, p. 1) [1] state: "Gap discourses have facilitated the way language use within economically disadvantaged communities is simultaneously blamed for academic disparities and targeted for remediation." Additionally, language has been reported as a key element to improve the individual's socio-economic status (SES). Schluessel (2007) [2], Tsung (2009) [3], and Zelasko & Antúnez (2000) [4] underlined the possibilities that good commandment of second languages opens for bilingual university graduates, who will improve their options to get a position in the international arena. Innovation and Communication Technologies (ICT) in 21st century society have made language learning ubiquitous and autonomous for many sectors of the population, regardless their SES. But autonomous language learning faces a number of difficulties, among which we can identify: a. Risk of abandonment (Lin, Warschauer & Blake, 2016 [5]; Nunan, 2013 [6]); and b. Lack of motivation caused by feelings of loneliness and isolation (Duranton & Mason, 2012) [7].

Therefore, the need of expert aid in autonomous language learning processes has become a must to which the research project described herein, *LinguApp*, wishes to contribute.

2. Theoretical backdrop

Innovation in second language learning in 21st century is deeply connected to Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL). CALL was coined by Davies & Steel in 1981 [8], and it has evolved significantly since then. CALL is quite a transparent term and it has been defined profusely in the literature. Additionally, some other derived acronyms have appeared which are connected to CALL (e.g. Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI), Computer-Assisted Learning (CAL), Computer-Assisted Language Instruction (CALI), Computer-Assisted Language Teaching (CALT), and Computer-Based Training (CBT), among others). Parmaxi & Zaphiris [9] (2016, p. 4) state: “Research conducted in the area of Web 2.0 technologies in CALL is grounded either in generic learning theories or in SLA theories”. On the other hand, TELL refers to the use of any technology (not only computers) to language learning. The advantages of the use of ICT (both TELL and CALL) to acquire and improve second languages are numerous, among which we can consider the following ones: ubiquity, flexibility, variety (of second languages, registers and codes), and updated contents, among others.

Autonomy is one of the most salient features of CALL and TELL, as the learner has the freedom to choose resources, to plan and schedule the time devoted to learning, and to set the pace and goals of language learning. Additionally, regarding CALL research highlights that “it can increase motivation to learn and consequently increases learning effectiveness” (Sanprasert, 2010, p. 109) [10].

Nevertheless, autonomy in turn can result in a threat to this paradigm: both low motivation and responsibility can impact negatively on this type of learning as they can lead to abandonment.

Autonomous learning can benefit from professional counselling and guidance of language teachers, who can aid the process by setting appropriate paths and offering some kind of reward to the learner along specific stages. Deci & Ryan (1991) [11] linked learner’s autonomy to “relatedness needs”, referring to the needs for contact, support, counselling and even community.

3. LinguApp: A research project to bridge the language gap

LinguApp: Ensuring Universal and Inclusive Access to Second Language Learning (*LinguApp* hereinafter) is a research project (Reference No. PRY208/17) granted by *Fundación Andaluza Centro de Estudios Andaluces* (Consejería de la Presidencia – Junta de Andalucía) in its 2017 competitive call.

The project stems from the theoretical bases herein analysed: CALL and TELL, where individual learning of second languages is only understood nowadays if it is carried out online. Therefore, the combination of autonomy (specifically determined by responsibility and motivation), digital competences, and appropriate guidance from experts should lead to a higher level of success in the area by minimising the negative impact of the drawbacks identified by the literature.

The main objective of *LinguApp* is to design and implement a free web app which can offer the user the possibility to access a selected variety of language learning websites.

The selection of specific language learning webs has been done according to the following research criteria: a. Quality of both contents and technical features. b. Stability, so that consistency and permanence in time are ensured. c. Gratuity, as only free-access websites are eligible within the project’s goals.

Thus, *LinguApp* researchers are designing a web app (called *MentorLang*) whose main purpose is to guide the user through an accompanied learning process where specific parameters (e.g. learner’s personal features, records, achievements and content choices) are considered to offer the best options according to:

1. User’s learning objectives (set at the beginning of the process and introduced in the web app).
2. Initial language level.
3. Foreseen time for learning (measured in hours per week).
4. Desired deadline to achieve the objectives set.

Then, one of the secondary objectives of *LinguApp* (which stems from the main objective set above) is to offer professional guidance and counselling (from expert language teachers) to autonomous language learners, so that the risk of abandonment induced by lack of guidance and feelings of loneliness and isolation can be reduced to their minimum. Moreover, the careful selection of websites made by *LinguApp* researchers can contribute to reduce the risk of bad language use, as learners will mostly use those websites which offer appropriate feedback (especially in the lower levels of the CEFR).

4. Discussion

The evolvement of autonomous second language learning stems from innovation, where CALL and TELL plays a fundamental role. When TELL is adequately implemented, research suggests that it increases motivation, global collaboration, empowerment and student-centred learning, construction of knowledge, global understanding, intercultural awareness and digital citizenship (Tafazoli, Gómez & Huertas, 2018) [12]. Nevertheless, some of the drawbacks affecting the process (e.g. lack of motivation and risk of abandonment) make guidance from the experts (language teachers) a need that must be addressed.

Autonomous learning is only understood nowadays when it comes under the umbrella of digital competence. *LinguApp* is a research project whose main goal is to help autonomous language learners to overcome the language gap by expert guiding and counselling from researchers. Therefore, *MentorLang* will devote its efforts to offer the coaching that the literature has identified as a key element both to improve motivation and to foster autonomy among 21st century language learners.

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New Media in and beyond the University Classroom: Opportunities through Change

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Abstract

Digitalisation and globalisation have transformed how we acquire foreign languages, not least by extending learning environments far beyond classroom walls. As today so much of L2 English learning and use is facilitated by technology and takes place outside formal learning spaces, we need to ask ourselves how this affects students' perspective on what institutional environments offer. In this paper, we first investigate stakeholders' (teachers' and students') views on the facilities provided on the campus of an Austrian Business University: lecture halls and a state-of-the-art self-access Language Learning Centre (LLC) both equipped with the latest technology. Drawing on interviews conducted with teachers, we discuss to what extent they regularly employ the available technological equipment (PC and projector, internet and smart boards) and explore the rationales governing uptake or rejection of the tools. Second, we investigate whether students' everyday access to authentic language resources influences their views of teacher-controlled technology in class or their motivation to visit the LLC. Based on surveys and the results of the annual LLC monitoring, we will juxtapose students' perceptions of the benefits of technology use in formal spaces with their informal, independent practices, thus presenting data from three interlinked learning environments as well as from the perspectives of both teachers and students.

Keywords: Technologies for language learning and teaching; student and teacher perceptions; informal learning

1. Background

1.1 Instructed, self-instructed and naturalistic learning on campus

A number of developments have influenced and changed the learning and teaching environments at Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU). Most important amongst the 'local' changes, and greatly enhancing the teaching context, was WU's move five years ago to a brand-new campus.

This represented a quantum leap in terms of classrooms facilities: teachers now have easy access to internet and multimedia presentation technologies in all seminar rooms.

The main part of the LLC is set up for autonomous learning, boasting a self-access area with a well-stocked media library, 27 PCs for individual work, a lounge area with sofas, tablets and journals, as well as five so-called Tandem rooms. The self-access area caters to a variety of needs. It was conceived as a physical location providing material, social and virtual resources for formal and informal, self-instructed and naturalistic learning. According to Benson, the dimension of formality refers to "the degree to which learning is independent of organized courses leading to formal qualifications" [3]. The LLC, in collaboration with the Department for Foreign Language Business Communication, developed toolkits to guide students in their selection of materials for their WU language courses in the LLC. Moreover, a wide range of specially designed materials complementing formal English, French, Spanish, Italian and Russian courses were developed.

Students can thus engage in formal, albeit self-instructed out-of-classroom learning. At the other end of the dimension, they may opt for 'self-directed naturalistic learning activities' such as watching IPTV in the target language (TL). Benson [4] understands the latter type of learning as having a different pedagogy; though a naturalistic learning situation is set up deliberately by the learner, e.g. by choosing to watch a favourite series in the TL, the focus is on enjoyment rather than the language itself. This contrasts with the more structured, sequenced approach of dedicated language resources.

1.2 New media beyond the university

The second major development shaping students' learning experiences is the ready availability of mobiles, tablets and other networked computers, which make naturalistic (as well as self-instructed) learning activities location-independent. Though English is considered the natural language for much

Web-based communication, social media, e-mail and blogs/vlogs offer affordances also for languages other than English. Technology has become an integral part of students' daily lives, affording plenty of opportunities for TL exposure, TL use, and, consequently, incidental and deliberate TL acquisition.

2. Research questions

We are firstly interested in establishing to what extent teachers and students exploit and appreciate the technological infrastructure at the three university-provided learning environments (classrooms and self-access LLC), which had, after all, required major investment in financial and training resources. Second, we aim to find out how learning spaces interact, particularly given the exponential rise in informal, naturalistic and self-instructed learning facilitated by technology use. Finally, we address the teacher's role in bridging in-class and out-of-class learning spaces.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Classrooms

This section is based on semi-structured interviews with a sample of 25 teachers from the English, Romance and Slavic Institutes, which represents nearly half of the faculty of the Department of Foreign Language Business Communication. We ensured that the sample was relatively balanced in terms of functions (full-time lecturers vs. research staff), teaching experience and age. The student perspective on teacher-controlled tech draws on three sources: teachers' perceptions of student attitudes, students' official course evaluations, and survey data collected for a previous study on informal learning [5].

All classrooms are equipped with a computer monitor, which displays the image being projected onto the screens (smartboard and whiteboard), and an interactive pen display, which teachers can use to make notes on documents. Training sessions on the functions of the projection technologies and the more advanced smartboard were offered to all lecturers.

All respondents feel - by now - quite at ease with the equipment. They appreciate the advantages of being able to present multimedia content directly from the internet or USB stick. To varying degrees, they all use PowerPoint or Word documents, with hyperlinks connecting to audio, video or text.

However, very few of the respondents use the full array of smartboard functions with any regularity. In the age group 40+, the barriers we identified are lack of confidence in the reliability of the equipment and (self-perceived) lack of computer competence. Some teachers feel overwhelmed by the choices to be made. Repeated switching between modes (smart board versus presentation) tends to pose problems.

The younger cohort, being 'digital natives', quote different barriers. The courses they teach are standardised and allow for little variation or pedagogical innovation. Furthermore, the software employed in the classrooms is not compatible with teachers' PCs, so that documents developed with students cannot be changed afterwards. But also, teacher beliefs play a role: one respondent even rejects PowerPoint which, he claims, robs students of the opportunity to focus and to discern what is really important.

Students' reactions to technology are positive without being enthusiastic; it is simply a standard they are accustomed to and expect. A case in point is the showing of audio/video clips in English classes: though students find it provides some variety and thus enhances classes, the activity has become too ordinary to be considered 'motivating'. Students' ideas of what constitutes efficient use of face-to-face time even means that some of them prefer outsourcing viewing activities to out-of-class environments. As far as skills are concerned, they find that internet resources offer plenty of opportunities for listening and viewing beyond the classroom; it is speaking they are keen on practising, preferably in face-to-face situations.

3.2 LLC

Over the past 15 years, a quantitative and qualitative monitoring survey has been distributed annually among LLC visitors. The questionnaire collates useful information about the visitors and their needs, as well as inviting feedback and proposals for improvement. This, combined with participant observation, in-depth interviews with learners in tandem programs, and individual language advising sessions, has made it possible to keep abreast of changes in users' behaviour. So, for instance, a decrease in the use of paper-based dictionaries on site prompted an adjustment to the terms of use for this resource. Although nowadays the majority of students use online dictionaries when studying, they still need paper-based dictionaries for some of their exams. By allowing the loan of paper-based dictionaries, the LLC promotes the use of a resource which would otherwise remain largely ignored.

Despite the worry that the LLC would attract fewer visitors due to 'global' changes like the surge of popular apps like Duolingo (which make some of the language learning software pre-installed in the LLC look obsolete), the LLC is still very well frequented. The move to the new campus not only made it possible to create a state-of-the art language learning environment, but also to attract more visitors. Indeed, the decision to situate the new LLC as a clearly defined space (with its own staff and separate access) within the main library has proved to be beneficial in terms of increased visibility.

When asked why they visited the LLC if they just used resources available on the Internet, the majority of respondents to the annual monitoring 2016 (n=100) gave the following answers: "I find it easier to concentrate"; "I can use accompanying materials"; "I use the time between two classes"; "I like the facilities and the atmosphere"; "I prefer to study among other language learners". Furthermore, feedback from learners in the tandem program points to the importance of finding supportive and competent staff when visiting the LLC.

3.3 Interaction between environments and teacher role

Students' muted reactions to in-class technology use are an example of how developments in informal learning can affect perceptions of activities in instructed environments. Arguably, the influence between formal and informal environment is unidirectional rather than reciprocal: with students' improved listening skills due to their frequent watching of English films and TV, they now perceive any scripted listening exercise, and often even authentic clips, as (too) facile. English teachers accordingly do not find it necessary to encourage informal learning, but focus their advice on tools and strategies that should help students succeed in the formal ESP context - which might include recommending a visit to the LLC.

This is different for languages other than English, where exposure to the TL does not happen as a matter of course in students' private spaces. To remedy that, one respondent, for instance, shows American hospital series in TL Russian during break time or uses the Russian Amazon interface to practise shopping vocabulary, thus managing to integrate activities that feature strongly in students' individual realities. Particularly concerning languages students are less proficient in, the teacher's role in drawing students' attention to the availability and validating the potential of informal learning is pivotal.

4. Conclusions

In order to thrive at a time in which language learning resources are available everywhere, institutional facilities like the LLC need to invest in creating added value for their services. This means not only having a well-stocked library and keeping abreast with technology, but also investing in an appealing infrastructure and promoting initiatives that act as a bridge between formal and informal, classroom and out-of-class, instructed and self-directed learning. Some of the measures taken in this sense at the LLC are the toolkits discussed above, implementing a language advisory service and providing plenty of guidance and support to tandem language learners.

The principle of added value also applies to classes. Neither students nor teachers appreciate technology for its own sake. The university's e-learning platform makes it easy to distribute digital content, and it has become increasingly important for teachers to decide which materials to use in face-to-face sessions, and which to allocate to environments beyond the classroom. The challenge today is for teachers to create a pedagogically sound blended environment that answers the needs of students, and to keep abreast of developments in students' private learning spaces that affect their expectations as well as their language skills.

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Promoting Active Lessons and Independent Work through Flipped Learning

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Abstract

In the arena of foreign languages, authorities affirm that the time of exposure is crucial to achieving a certain level of expertise. Since high-quality education and the face-to-face lessons are not sufficient to learn the target language, an approach as Flipped Learning surfaced to provide learners with the independent study time, often needed for better results. Therefore, this paper focuses on the experience of implementing the Class Preparation Session (The CPS hereafter) as a Flipped Learning strategy in an EFL university program in Colombia. The study looks at about 3,000 students a semester who have participated for almost three years. Participants were exposed to the CPS, and, as a result, increased their self-direction in language learning. When comparing the previous strategies with the CPS, in a sample of 430 participants, preliminary results showed that the students' independent work increased by 33%, under the same conditions of evaluation. Similarly, teachers state that classes are now more student-centered, promoting active learning. Besides, considering the large-scale coverage of participants, the academic team has created about 600 resources such as videos, online quizzes, audios, reading passages, and other scaffolded activities throughout the three-year implementation. In the session, attendees will be provided with examples of the institutional made materials, as well as the procedures that English level Coordinators and teachers follow to plan their classes. Finally, some key points, best practices, and successful strategies will be shared as to why Flipped Learning is an efficient approach to implement in higher educational language programs.

Keywords: flipped learning; blended learning; active learning; Independent work; learner autonomy; student-centeredness

1. Introduction

The benefits of speaking a foreign language have been reported abundantly. For instance, [1] Bong-woon (2017) declares that acquiring a second language "cultivates your mind, fulfils your soul and develops your knowledge, competence, tolerance, understanding, and patience". He also states that much of the information available in the world is conveyed in English, which makes learning this language a necessity. Besides, it is well known that "communication" is a 21st-century skill, more valuable if it is in more than one language. Being aware of this importance, the educational community in Colombia promotes second language acquisition and high-level pedagogy in schools and university programs. For those reasons, this paper focuses on socializing the implementation of The CPS (Class Preparation Session) as a Flipped Learning Strategy, as a way to promote active learning and independent work in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university program.

2. Context

The Department of Languages and Cultures from Universidad de La Sabana is the area in charge of offering foreign language courses to the university community. This paper is especially focused on the English as a Foreign Language Program, directed to undergraduate students. This program receives about 3.000 students a semester from different academic fields that need to reach a B2.1 level of English proficiency, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The Department also offers French, Portuguese, Italian and German for some students who have the requirement of a second foreign language to graduate or for the ones who take it as an elective course.

3. Problem Statement and Justification

The educational community has increasingly valued the importance of learning a foreign language.

For a student to be able to develop a successful professional career and/or to progress with graduate studies, it has become necessary to be an independent user of English. Likewise, for a student to reach the university's demanded level of proficiency, between 600-800 hours are needed ([2] Desveaux, 2018; [3] The British Council, 2018). The EFL program at La Sabana aims to graduate students with this level of proficiency, therefore it is designed to provide students with about 784 hours of exposure to the foreign language combining face-to-face classes and independent work. However, having students work on their own has always been a challenge for educators. That is why, The CPS as a Flipped Learning strategy surfaced to boost active lessons and to make independent work more meaningful to students.

4. Flipped Learning

The Flipped Learning Network (2015) defines Flipped Learning as:

A pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter." ([4] as cited in Jenkins et al., *2017).*

The academic team in the EFL program at La Sabana moved some of the content explanations from the face-to-face classes to the students' individual learning space in the Moodle platform; consequently, the time in class is devoted to practice the productive skills.

A case study on a Flipped classroom in an EFL content course, found out that through the implementation of this strategy, a group of 12 college students perceived the implementation as positive, they reported a more active participation in class and became more responsible before, during and after the lessons ([5] Sung, 2015). It is important to highlight, that [4] Jenkins *et al*., (2017) also recommend Flipped Learning as part of the overarching pedagogical philosophies, rather than a mere technology implementation, which is a target in the EFL program at La Sabana.

5. Pedagogical Implementation

In the EFL program at La Sabana, students are requested to take 4 hours of face-to-face classes and to work for an estimated of an hour in the institutional Moodle platform. This technological activity is called The CPS (The Class Preparation Session), and it is where some of the content, that used to be taught in the group learning space, has moved to become part of the student individual learning space.

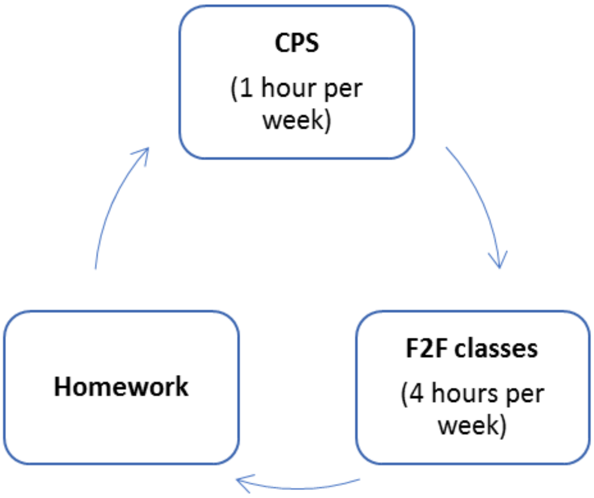

Fig. 1: Students' work cycle

Figure 1 above shows the cycle that students follow in this EFL program. To start, students work on the CPS, a week in advance, in the Moodle institutional platform. There, they must answer some questions of lower order thinking skills, according to Blooms' Taxonomy. As a product of this CPS, students bring to class their notes, pictures, etc. based on the content studied in the platform. In class, students share their notes, solve doubts with their classmates and teacher, and use the higher order thinking skills, as applying the new knowledge and creating a product. The last stage of the cycle showed in figure 1 is the consolidation of the content by doing regular homework. Chart 1 below is a model of the content studied before and during the class.

Level	**Language Component**	**The CPS (Before Class)** Lower order thinking skills	**During Class** Higher order thinking skills
Pre-intermediate	Grammar - Speaking	Students watch a video about the first conditional and answer some questions in the Moodle institutional platform to demonstrate the understanding of the topic Watch the video here	In groups, students socialize the use and structure of the first conditional; and provide some examples. Then, they must follow the regular steps of a language class: guided practice, free practice (Speaking).
Pre-intermediate	Writing	Students watch a video about the comparison and contrast composition. They must identify the parts of a given composition and tick only the correct topic sentences from a list given in Moodle. Watch the video here	Students share their notes, solve doubts and write the outline for a comparison and contrast composition.

Chart 1: Model of how the content is distributed

6. Preliminary Results

After almost three years of implementation, the program has found out some preliminary results. To start, the academic team has created about 600 institutional made resources, such as more than 60 videos, 350 Moodle questionnaires, and 200 workshops in word and PDF files, besides other activities performed in class. In addition, students have shared encouraging comments in the surveys applied so far. As a quantitative result, 100% of students affirmed to work on The CPS on a weekly basis.

Likewise, when analyzing the data from the previous strategies against The CPS, preliminary results showed that the students' independent work improved by 33%, under the same evaluation settings. Moreover, teachers and coordinators state that they have observed positive changes in their classes, as having more time to practice the productive skills and students becoming more autonomous.

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Speaking for Yourself: How to Support Students in Autonomous Speaking

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Abstract

In the European project 'Speaking for Yourself', six language institutions from four different countries investigated the question: how can we support teachers to stimulate students to practice speaking on their own? This empowerment of the student to learn autonomously is important for several reasons. Firstly, learning a language requires a lot of practice and the time available in the classroom is not sufficient. Therefore, students need to be able to learn and practice on their own. Secondly, differentiation, especially at higher levels, is a key factor and autonomous learning provides the opportunity to differentiate according to the needs and wants of the student. Thirdly, when students learn to take their learning process in their own hands, they will continue to learn, even after the formal instruction is finished.
Seeing the complexity of language learning, we considered it more efficient to focus on one skill. We chose speaking because it is generally considered the most important language skill in terms of usage of the target language, but also the most difficult one to empower the learner for. There are numerous grammars, vocabulary and writing tools to be found on the internet. Reading and listening can be practiced using videos and texts but speaking tools and activities to practice on your own are not widespread, so we wanted to investigate this challenge. As a method of enquiry, we opted for action research: an efficient method to empower teachers and provide them with the ability to support their learners and to take their professional development into their own hands. In this article, we will explain why and how we conducted the action research and describe conditions and suggestions for implementing a similar action research in your own institution.

Keywords: speaking, autonomous learning

Thinking about the outcome

The research question for our European project was: how can we support teachers to stimulate students to practice speaking on their own? The first idea was to design a ready-to-use toolbox: a collection of instruments and procedures that we tested and improved by using action research.

Teachers would then be able to download and use the toolbox in their own schools. However, when performing the action research, we gradually came to realize that the only way for teachers to really become competent in supporting their students is to go through the action research cycle themselves (preferably with colleagues). In other words: the process became the product.

We decided on this shift of focus because we learned that the initial situation (type of students, class size, language level, preference of the teacher, educational culture, etc.) is too much of a determining factor to work with default material. Secondly, it is really important that teachers have a profound understanding of the various challenges and opportunities of coaching autonomous learning. This can only be reached by trying to figure it out yourself with your own students and colleagues. In other words: by doing action research.

Lowering the threshold

The second question we posed ourselves was: how can we lower the threshold for teachers to go through this action research? We agreed that the best way to do this was a combination of two elements. Firstly, by setting an example and describe the way we performed the action research in our own institutions. This makes the concept of action research more concrete as the examples are embedded in real contexts of practice. Secondly by making the results of our research (questionnaires, screening instruments, activities and materials) available to all interested teachers in a toolbox: http://speaking4yourself.hetperspectief.net/toolbox/. Teachers are free to use our models as they please: they can copy them and use them as they are, but we strongly believe that it is even better to "tune" the models to one's own initial situation. This tuning can be done by performing the steps of action research we describe. Our goal of lowering the threshold is achieved because teachers can follow the steps we set out in the description of our action research and they don't have to design their own instruments: they can start from the models we provide.

Before starting our own action research, we needed information on both the context and the theory on autonomous learning.

Autonomous learning: the context

What is the initial situation concerning autonomous learning in our own schools? In other words: where do depart from? How is autonomous learning perceived by teachers and students? To what extent do teachers support autonomous learning at this point? Do stakeholders want more autonomous learning? We designed questionnaires to find out more about the position of autonomous learning in our home institution. The questionnaire templates and the results of our schools are available on the website: http://speaking4yourself.hetperspectief.net/the-making-of-2/initial-situation-analysis/

Autonomous learning: the theory

The theory: what is autonomous learning and what role can a teacher play in supporting it? To find out more about this subject, we consulted relevant sources and summarized our findings in a common vision. This starts with a definition of autonomous learning: we think teachers need to be able to support the students toward learner autonomy as defined by Holec [1]: "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". This needs to be done in steps as there is a strong correlation between competence and autonomy: students should be given the level of autonomy proportionate to their level of competence. If students are given too much autonomy too soon, their motivation will drop and vice versa. Teachers need to be able to estimate the level of autonomy they can gradually give to their students.

Supporting autonomous learning: steps

This gradation of autonomy may be organized according to the following list of decision topics (Holec):

1. fixing the objectives and defining the content and progressions;
2. selecting the methods and techniques to be used;
3. monitoring the acquisition procedure and evaluating what has been acquired.

For each of the above topics, teachers may decide on their own, inform students on the decision or gradually include students more in the decision-making process by giving them options to choose from. Ultimately, they could leave the decision completely up to the learner.

1. Fixing the objectives and defining the content and progressions

The teacher makes a **diagnosis** of the student's language learning process. In order to do so, the teacher identifies the **key elements** of the learning process. This diagnosis requires the ability to:

- design tasks that are suited for diagnostic testing
- identify -from the different tasks-the key elements of the different subskills
- analyze the feasibility, difficulty and importance of the diagnosed elements
- define the learning objectives and their timing accordingly

The teacher gives **efficient feedback** to their students in such a way that

- the student feels the feedback is clear, precise and adapted to their own needs and learning style
- the student feels motivated and stimulated to work on their learning process

2. Selecting the methods and techniques to be used

In order to **support and coach the student** in this step, the teacher needs to:

- be familiar with a variety of methods and techniques to learn autonomously
- suggest and explain efficient methods and techniques for different skills or underlying knowledge

- motivate the learner to make choices and to start the learning
- support the learner in the first learning steps

3. **Monitoring the acquisition procedure and evaluating what has been acquired**

In order to **support and coach** the student in the monitoring and evaluation of the progressions, the teacher needs to:

- give efficient feedback on the progressions of the student
- visualise the progressions
- intervene when necessary
- motivate the student to continue
- gradate the autonomy according to the growing competence of the learner

The tasks described in the steps above are complex and difficult: teachers will need instruments and procedures to be able to perform them. As we described at the beginning, however, our view is that teachers can't just copy the instruments and procedures: they need to gain insight and acquire skills to use them in their own educational environment. This acquisition is best achieved by performing action research, as we have done in our own institutions.

Action research

Action research is an organized method to find solutions to practical challenges. It is also an effective way to co-operate with the colleagues to improve shared teaching practice because it gives feedback on your work and provides you with a new perspective. More technically speaking, it is an intentional and planned study of one's own teaching practice, with the primary objective of improving that practice. The difference between action research and academic research is:

- Action research has a focus on improving one's own practice. It is research conducted by the teacher. It is therefore personal, context oriented, unique and small-scale.
- With academic research, the focus is rather on theory building: others can use the theory in their practice.

Action research generally follows a cycle [2]:

Step 1 – Problem Identification:

- Why do you want to do study this topic?
- Is the problem broad enough to allow for a range of insights and findings? Is it narrow enough to be manageable?

Step 2 – Plan of Action

- Will you develop and implement a new strategy or approach to address your question?
- What data do you need to learn about your question?

Step 3 – Data Collection

- What, why, when, where, and how will you collect your data?
- How will you ensure that you have multiple perspectives?

Step 4 – Analysis of Data

- What can you learn from the data?
- What patterns, insights, and new understandings can you find?

Step 5 – Plan for Future Action

- What will you do differently in your classroom as a result of this study?
- How will you write about what you have learned so that the findings will be useful to you and to others?

Our action researches

In our project, we performed two action researches that serve as a model for interested teachers.

Action research 1 investigated the specific **research question** was: what is the most effective way to inform my students on the speaking skills they need to practice more? We designed screening instruments for the diagnostic testing of speaking skills, which we tried out during the action research.

The report on our website provides a detailed account of the experiences we had with our first action research: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_amaWKvBqXSSFJBS2Rjd0VFNHM/view

It contains suggestions on how to use the templates pragmatically in various teaching situations and reports on the impressions of students and teachers.

Action Research 2 focused on the research question: how can I motivate and empower my students to practice speaking autonomously? The report on the project website describes our experience and results concerning this research question:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_amaWKvBqXSRlhLNVE1aXVEYzA/view

Conclusions

In this article, we described the rationale, process and products of the European project Speaking for Yourself. The project participants decided to use action research as a method to find an answer to the starting question: how can we support teachers to stimulate students to practice speaking on their own? By doing so, we developed instruments, materials and autonomous learning activities applicable to our own educational environments. However, we also came to realize that it is not just those concrete outcomes that will help other teachers to support autonomous learning. Rather, it is the process of going through an action research as we have done. In other words, the process became the product and that is what we shared on our website: http://speaking4yourself.hetperspectief.net/

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Supporting Dyslexic Students through ICT Tools in Foreign Language Learning

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Abstract

In Italy Dyslexia is considered as a part of a wider frame of learning disorders affecting Italian population (DSA). In this definition Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia and Dysorthography are included. The percentage of students affected by these disorders is estimated around the 5 per cent of the whole school population in the compulsory grades of school, primary, low secondary and high secondary, although the data in our possession belonging to the last National survey related to school year 2015/2016 states a lower percentage due to lack of official DSA certification. Dyslexia is a real problem, which affects the acquisition of reading and writing of many individuals and whose effects may be worsened by an inadequate education at school. If not recognised in time and not provided with effective support at all school levels, students with dyslexia will probably face academic failure affecting their self-esteem, and will therefore fall into anxiety, lack of motivation, and disengagement with school. Moreover, the acquisition of oral and written skills in foreign language can be really challenging and frustrating for students affected by reading and writing disorders. That is why it is extremely important for teachers and trainers to understand the nature of dyslexia, its manifestations and consequences and to be aware of the ways they could help and support students to overcome their difficulties. The most common practices in order to cope with dyslexic students in their learning process are extra time, adapting written skills to oral skills and using maps and diagrams. In years of experience with certified and not certified dyslexic students, in my school context, the use of ICT based tools, such as audios, videos, computer-based word programs for writing, learning games, multimedia quizzes and maps have proved to be effective both in terms of acquisition of competences than in the improvement of self-esteem and motivation in learning.

Keywords: ICT Based Language Teaching and Learning Approaches, Studies in Second Language Acquisition

1. Introduction

In Italy Dyslexia is considered as a part of a wider frame of learning disorders affecting Italian population (DSA), covering in this definition Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia and Dysorthography.

The percentage of students affected by these disorders is increasing rapidly in these last years due to a growing attention towards this disturb, a high percentage of diagnosis made in adult age that urges the evidence of the need of an early recognition in order to cope with it and support the individual along his lifeline. The percentage is estimated around the 5 per cent of the whole school population in the compulsory grades of school, primary, low secondary and high secondary, but it is not a faithful data as certification is still in progress for many cases. The effects of the lack of diagnosis and of support for these kinds of disorders provoke an early abandon of school for students and a lack of educational provisions for adults compromising also their future job opportunities. This is the reason why it is nowadays strategically important to focus the attention of teachers, parents and educators on reading and writing disorders and to investigate their real reasons and how they can affect school success. Although in some countries there is a stronger literature on dyslexic individuals, no single country in Europe has reached yet the right solution or methodology and so a constant research by the stakeholders related is in progress. Our school, *Istituto Comprensivo Laura Lanza Baronessa di Carini*, located in Sicily, Italy, has a long experience in this field, which has been strongly implemented in the last two school years. In particular dyslexic students face strong troubles with second language learning and so this is the reason why, following different paths, after observing them in their daily school routine, I decided to apply methodologies based on digital tools to cope with difficulties as, in my years of experience, they have been proved to be more successful in most cases of learning disadvantages.

2. Our project

As our school applied in 2017 in an Erasmus KA201 Project "DysTRANS Supporting Dyslexic Individual In Transition from Primary to Lower Secondary School" (2017-1-TR01-KA201-046274), coordinated by the Educational Inspectorate of Istanbul, the path to follow was a series of interventions on students who were certified as dyslexic, or supposed to be and in train of certification, by a team of teachers involved in the project. First step promoted by the international partnership was an analysis on the needs to be aware of the starting point; several issues came out in particular for children in transition from primary to low secondary school or equal grades in European educational system. The results showed moreover a strong need of training for both parents and teachers, of psychological support for children as in most cases the fear of failure and a sense of being different form the others caused isolation, conflict in relationships and lack of school success. In the long term, these could also affect their future adult life. In the light of this outcome, I decided, together with a team of teachers of our school, to design a supportive educational plan for disadvantaged students with particular regard to dyslexic ones attending our school. The project was called *Filling the Gap* and its main aim was exactly to fill the gap between students with reading and writing disorders and their schoolmates. This action of support was carried on in small groups out of their classes in some hours of their timetable in a closer approach with their teachers, mostly in the media lab.

3. Digital tools to cope with dyslexia – our case study

The teachers' team, in particular, focused its attention on two students certified as affected by Special Learning Disorders (DSA) approaching the last year of low secondary school with a final National exam, for whom a course based on interactive digital approaches was planned. The two students were different in their story of recognition of the disorder and its certification. One was diagnosed during his years in primary school and followed a path for dyslexic students since early years, while the other one was lately diagnosed in the second year of low secondary school after a school failure. In particular, this last one was diagnosed erroneously as hyperactive although he manifested strong limits in performing writing and reading tasks and maintaining the attention within the class context. The educational plan was based on digital tools as, after years of experience with learning issues among disadvantaged students in our school, digital resources had been very useful in increasing motivation and attention with a strong return on learning attitudes. The use of audios, videos, and software to create maps and diagrams, writing software, interactive games, multimedia quizzes made learning contents and vocabulary comprehension easier and effective in terms of acquisition of competences. Another basic assumption of the plan was to create lessons out of the class within their curricular timetable, in a more comfortable context, often the media room, or a special class, supported by a teacher in definitely small groups, 4 or 5 students. The room was equipped with laptops, computers, large tables to sit together and have also moments of discussion.

Moreover, they were allowed the use of their smartphone for educational activities (googling contents, using translator for second language acquisition, and calculators). The team proposed tasks, which were similar to the curricular ones, yet simplified and coping with their feelings and emotions to reduce sense of discomfort with their peers and to increase motivation and self-esteem. In this way, better relationships within their classes, back from this path, were promoted.

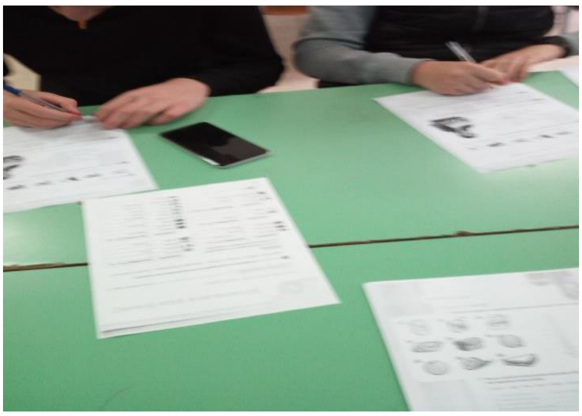

Fig. 1: Students using maps and diagrams working in small groups

The digital tools were very useful in this kind of activities as writing is one of the most difficult performance they had to face; their faulty orthography also could affect the expression of their thoughts in the accomplishment of a task and their reading really disconnected from the meaning, wrong recognition of phonemes could cause misunderstanding and lack of learning; digital documents and digital writing software helped them to cope with it as the main issue was caused also by the presence of different graphemes. In this case, they acquired the competence to recognize and decode the typographic font and to apply it through the digital tool. Moreover online multiple choice quizzes could help to fix contents and meanings, In particular as most of the difficulties were the lack of attention, the tiresomeness of school activities and the lack also of cooperation with the rest of the classmates who were definitely faster to accomplish the tasks, A lot of these tools were levelling the range of performance of the students ad so this increased attention and motivation, with the aid of writing software and the possibility to enlarge letters and to correct through the orthographic spell checker. Online quizzes such as *Kahoot*, an interactive platform, with close answers, matching exercises and fill in the gap texts, supported by large fonts and block letters, videos on main curricular contents, reduced their apprehension for writing and comprehending. In particular the text to speech tool, audio reading the written text, helped them with reading tasks.

Fig. 2: Students using filling the gap online quiz helped by the screen

The students were also leaded to online comprehension tests on English as a second language, both oral and written, in order to gain the right experience to attend the National Skills Tests (INVALSI), which were compulsory to access national exams for low secondary school diploma.

These tests on Mother tongue, Math and English skills, for the first year in Italy were administrated in a Computer Based Test modality and the confidence acquired in this *Special* path with digital tools guaranteed a high percentage of success in their performance.

Conclusions

In this particular case, digital tools are really a strong support for students, they support dyslexic individuals as writing and reading are made easier and orthographic support is really needed. This, of course, is a good starting point for DSA students who can improve but not solve their basic disadvantages, in order to promote success and inclusion, as main aim of any form of Education is to be ***Inclusive***.

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The Adaptive Approach: Best Practices in Teaching L2s at Elementary Levels

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Abstract

Best practices in the teaching of a foreign languages based on "clinical" studies and research depend almost entirely on the specific situation and circumstances under which the language is being taught. While proven best L2 teaching/learning approaches resulting from extensive research in psychology, neurology, and anthropology (human behavior), such as the natural or communicative approach, have shown evidence of success as applied under controlled or semi-controlled environments, those cannot be successfully applied under uncontrolled environments. For the specific case of underdeveloped departments of foreign languages in US institutions of higher education, it is very clear that specific socio-educational circumstances make it almost entirely impossible to apply any un-modified teaching/learning approach. Instructor are commonly forced to use an adaptive approach if they want to maximize learning outcomes versus meet the curriculum. Understanding the limitations imposed by the lack of environmental resources, is crucial for the effectiveness of the specific teaching approach to be used. I would like to discuss my teaching experience at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, as a faculty member and former Chair of the Former Department of Foreign Languages, and how institutional politics, departmental funding and curriculum development, UNC system interests, and the particular circumstances of the student body have a direct impact on how teaching L2s are understood, taught and learned.

Keywords: Foreign Language, teaching, L2, language learning

Like most things in life, what is a best practice in teaching or learning a foreign or second language is debatable. The issue of when and how someone is best fitted to teach or learn a foreign language has been studied for years by renown scholars in a variety of fields that go from linguistics, to psychology, to anthropology to neuroscience. As of today, we count on an enormous amount of impressive results and evidence that would be considered ludicrous just a few decades ago. However, is there anything that can fairly be considered even close to be objectively called a 'best practice' or approach in the teaching (or learning) of a foreign language? This is a rhetorical question. I do have my doubts. Let me start then by clarifying that this paper is based exclusively on my own personal experience, teaching in specific institutions, with in turn, have their own specific and distinct mission statements and student populations. By no means I claim this to be a scientific study or a study based on statistics or other mathematical or clinical calculations.

To write this piece, I was motivated not just by my own personal realization, but by observation in different conferences of the increasing numbers of "best practice hunter-gatherers." Based on my 23 years of experience teaching Spanish as a foreign language in several institutions of higher education in the united States, which include T1 institutions, such as Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX; private colleges such as Methodist College, in Fayetteville, NC (now Methodist University);and public institutions such as Fayetteville State University and the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, where I have taught for the last fifteen years, I conclude that such universal best practices do not exist as pixy dust does not exist. It would not take long for me to understand that each of those institutions required a different approach to teaching a foreign language. Not only they were very different from the funding perspective (private vs. public) and its implications, but their institutional mission, geographical location, and student population played a very important role on how the learning of a foreign language was or is perceived and, consequently, taught and learned in each one of them.

If the obvious differences between the institutions were not enough, in the course of these years I had the opportunity to compare best practices in teaching foreign languages from two different perspectives: Teaching L2 in a native country (Spain and Colombia) and teaching a L2 in a foreign country (USA). I find these circumstances to affect the approach radically different ways. To my surprise, a PhD in Spanish who graduated from an accredited institution of higher education in the US, such as myself, would not even be considered a qualified professional by Spanish native institutions (Instituto Cervantes) and his/her methodology or approach wouldn't be acknowledged in the same fashion. Institutions in Colombia, however, were way more welcoming to specialists in foreign language teaching and their approaches, even though their own approach was different as well.

There was no reason for a graduate student in a T1 institution such Texas Tech University back in 1999 to question the teachings of faculty in courses such as Methods of Teaching a Foreign Language (any, Foreign Language). Along with specific instruction on pedagogic methodology came the formal professional training received by Graduate Teaching Assistants who were put in charge of teaching lower level foreign language classes. Both, specific course contents and formal training, strongly emphasized the so-called natural approach, developed in the 1970's and 1980's by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell, which focuses on subconscious language acquisition. As language instructors, all were to apply this natural approach in our classes emphasizing every-day information, realia, active synchronous verbal and asynchronous written communication, as well as acting and performing in the classroom. At the same time, it was a clear understanding that time dedicated to formal grammar explanation should assigned as homework, while minimized to no more than 5-7 minutes in the classroom. As enthusiastic trainees, we watched videos, received copies of instructional materials (textbooks, workbooks, audio tapes (later CDs), and transparencies). The approach was rapidly implemented in our classrooms and closely monitored by faculty supervisors in charge of TA's. I was a supervised TA at the time, and I had no criteria to judge the results of the approach. It seemed to work, though, and supervisors were satisfied with the results. Just a handful of students would fail the class every semester (nothing abnormal) and we all had a general sense that it was working and the way to go.

In 2003, I was hired by the department of English, Theatre and Foreign Languages at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. I joined two colleagues as we were in charge to develop the program of foreign languages in this rural campus of the UNC system. I three years we stablished the major in Spanish and we were simultaneously teaching Spanish, French, German, and Russian. In 2008, what was a languages program, became the Department of Foreign Languages. All three faculty members used the natural approach in our classes based on consensus, adopting "Dos Mundos" (by authors Tracy Terrell and Rachel Andrade) as the textbook. I started implementing it with great enthusiasm since classes were fun and relaxed. I had always obtained good results after all.

However, I soon noticed that it was not only not working as expected. Something was not right. Students enjoyed the show, and they appreciated the relaxed environment, that mistakes in oral production were not that relevant, but at the same time, they were very conscious of the learning process. They were being evaluated after all and they started to point at a disagreement between what was expected from them in the classroom on regular class sessions versus on the assessment artifacts. At the end of the day, what matters most to them was the final grade. After a few semesters of the same feedback, I decided that the situation deserved a second look. What had changed was very important for a student of any foreign languages: their motivation. Why are these students learning a foreign language, in the first place, had major implications on how would they approach the class? I had already noticed that most of the students were taking Spanish classes because it was either requirement for their major programs (i.e. English) or it was an 'easy' class to take to fulfill the General Education requirement. Very few, if any, were taking the class because they actually wanted to major in Spanish or learn the language. The great majority were guided by their experience in High School, meaning that these were supposed to be second or even third-class college classes, taken as a band-aid to complete requirements for graduation or to fill the "gap" doing something easy. Now they were confronting a language class professionally taught by means of a teaching approach they did not understand. The effect was in many cases devastating. Students would drop the classes and I would get frustrated not knowing what was causing the alarm. Once I understood the situation, I experimented a little bit with the natural approach, adapting it to a different audience: students who are not necessarily motivated to learn the language, but still need to meet certain requirements by taking my classes.

A couple of years into my job in Pembroke, I had the opportunity to teach evening classes at FSU (Fayetteville State University). While still in the UNC system, FSU is a historical 'black' public institution. This was, by itself a major change. In this case, not only I was teaching what is known in the states as non-traditional students by teaching in the evenings, but a very specific demographic group in a very specific institution. I will not elaborate much about my experience at FSU. Enough to say that long gone were the days at TTU, but contrary to my experience at UNCP, at FSU students were surprised that I was attending classes. Any kind of teaching approach was futile. My understanding is that things have changed dramatically in the last few years.

At the same time, I also taught some elementary Spanish classes at Methodist College, in Fayetteville, NC. Again, a dramatically different student population, a new institutional mission, etc. In this case MC (now MU) is a private institution. Students pay their tuition out of pocket, so they – or those actually paying the bill – are more careful at selecting classes and the academic advising in general. Even though these were also evening classes, the academic environment was different. Students were more motivated and had higher expectations from faculty. This environment facilitated the implementation of the natural approach, but, again, with badly needed adaptations. While many wanted to learn the language and were motivated to learn academically, almost none understood the natural approach given the time restrains.

My experience at the four institutions, TTU, UNCP, FSU and Methodist College, made me reflect about what is the best way to teach Spanish. I concluded that teaching Spanish under those circumstances and with institutions pressing increased student retention from above, there had to be compromises. Also, there were a couple of additional experiences awaiting me. In 2011 I attended a conference organized in Madrid, Spain, by the Instituto Cervantes. This is when I became aware that officially qualified professionals in the US – and I presume in other countries as well – were not necessarily recognized as such by the Spanish institution. They have their own ways, and there are no others. I tried to understand that teaching Spanish in Spain or any other Spanish Speaking countries, was essentially different than teaching it in non-Spanish speaking countries. The nature of the student population is, again, dramatically different. Who studies Spanish in a Spanish speaking country? A native student who wants to study Spanish linguistics or literature at very high levels, or foreign speakers in study abroad or immersion trips. In other words, students who are not necessarily concerned with a final grade, their GPA, the midterm exam, etc. and normally, they benefit from the ultimate classroom which is the city itself. Under these conditions, students would accept a more communicative approach in the classroom, since they will immediately apply their learning after class.

An additional experience that I had related to teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language was with the US Department of Defense, for which I prepared two different Spanish language courses (SOLT I - Special Operation Language Training I and II) and Spanish for Military Heritage Speakers. In this case, I was not teaching classes, but creating pedagogical materials for teachers in the military. For these materials, – and understanding the motivation of military personnel –, who would apply their acquired language skills under difficult circumstances, I created platform based on a limited version of the natural approach. Interactive and highly communicative activities for the classroom and continued practice outside the classroom, all based on digital or electronic format (first iterations of Blackboard). I counted with an impressive team of content developers, graphic artists, and computer specialists who created the scenarios students needed outside the classroom.

I need to go back to 2009, as the Department of Foreign Languages became its own entity. This was our opportunity to launch a serious campaign to promote foreign languages at UNCP. A proposal to make at least two semesters of foreign languages mandatory across the board was submitted to the Faculty Senate and we collected opinions around campus via student and faculty surveys. The implementation of the policy did not pass the Senate arguing that it would be too complicated to add hours to academic programs, especially in the schools of science. This was also the time when most, if not all, American institutions were hit hard by the financial recession of 2008. Along with severe budget cuts came the consolidation of academic programs. In 2013, the Department of Foreign Languages ceased to exist as such, going back under English and Theatre in spite of ever-increasing numbers in Spanish majors and minors. French, Russian, and German were eliminated, and Chinese survived until 2006 through a special program that provided UNCP with Chinese instructors for periods of two years. This is how politics work in academia.

Fast forwarding to 2018. Having reached this point in time, it was years ago at UNCP that I noticed that even within the same institution the same adaptive approached not always worked with good results, and with the pass o time, the success of the original natural approach as applied back at TTU or its adapted version, no longer worked in my classes at UNCP. I noticed that some other factors were influencing the need to change the teaching approach. One of the most important factors was technology, followed by change in student demographics, popularity of (or institutional support for0 the program of Foreign Languages at UNCP, the broader institutional interests of the UNC system as it introduced the FL Exchange, and the needs of our newer generations in the ever-changing society.

In sum, after years of internal debate and afraid of disclosing my personal understanding that there has to be much more than just some “best practices” in the teaching of foreign languages, I now concluded, that there are, in fact. best practices in the teaching of foreign languages, but each institution at any given point in time, has its own, whatever they are, and that sometimes those best practices could be shared among teachers and professors who perform under similar conditions, but that there is no universal “best practice” that applies to the discipline as a whole. I cannot anticipate what is going to come next, in terms of technology or institutional interests. I am not the same, my students are not the same, my institution is not the same, and society is not the same. With all these ever-changing factors, I start every semester prepared to change my teaching approach and my syllabus as it best suits the interests of my students at any particular time.

The Effect of Electronic Teaching Techniques on the Media and Mass Communication Students & Teachers

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Abstract

Media and Mass Communication College Students have great possibilities in using new trends of teaching such as Electronic teaching methods, seating arrangement and Modern technologies. With this freedom in teaching, teachers have an enormous number of techniques inside classrooms. Teachers in different branches of Media and Mass Communication College tries to discover a great number of new methods and activities all the time.
One of the college teacher's crucial tasks is to compare, analyze and evaluate the methods they use in order to motivate the students and to make the learning as effective as possible. This research focuses on some techniques commonly used today and tested them. With a theoretical study of these methods, this research will present how college teachers applied them in real classrooms situations.
Students' performance or the circumstances are responsible for the failure of a class; however, there are other factors, which are usually neglected, this leads college teachers to choose what might seem as a successful method by itself but when it is applied in the wrong circumstances, it may lead to disastrous results. This represents the main problem of this paper.
This paper aims at studying the effect of the Electronic Techniques on university teaching. A review of all the methods and how they affect the college teacher and student and how the methods and techniques will apply in the class. It is based on the hypotheses that there is no constant method that the university teacher is able to use, which may lead to a successful classroom Achievement. All techniques and methods depend on several factors: the societal circumstances, the personality of the teacher and student, and the choice of the type of method.
To do this research, the following procedures will be followed:

1- *Applying two approaches in Electronic university teaching, modern methodology and traditional methodology in real classrooms.*
2- *Handing questionnaires that will be answered by the pupils.*
3- *The opinions of pupils' parents about the experiment will be mentioned.*
4- *Two groups are taught each by a method in which Both of the groups had the same number of lessons (three lessons a week.*
5- *The result will be mentioned in two tables and then analyzed.*

This study is limited to the application of the electronic modern methods as well as the traditional methods took place in Al-Imam Al-Kadhim University College for Islamic Sciences. The subjects of the study are ten college students in the third year in Journalism branch and ten students in the fourth year in Television and Broadcasting branch of the same college.
Finally, a number of, conclusions, suggestions and recommendations for further research are made.

Keywords: Teaching; Teaching Techniques; Electronic;

Introduction

As far as the teacher is concerned, everyone can remember a few college teachers who stood out from the rest. If students were lucky, they had several who were superb; however, each of them likely had more poor teachers than outstanding ones. They can all remember classes that were boring and frustrating, when they dreaded going to class or meeting the professor in the hallway, when they ritualistically counted off the number of classes remaining in the term. But students also had classes they attended eagerly and finished with regret. Remembering notable positive and negative examples from their past is useful in choosing ideals to emulate. (Bhatt, 2002)

The most striking thing about these portraits of twentieth-century college teachers is the importance of their lecture or seminar performance to the level personal and intellectual impact they had on their students.

Modern Methodology

Turning the attention to modern methodology, its aims, philosophy, and procedures, and some examples of its methods. Unlike traditional methodology, modern methodology is much more student-centered.

Broughton states that "the language student is best motivated by practice in which he senses the language is truly communicative, that it is appropriate to its context, that his teacher's skills are moving him forward to a fuller competence in a foreign language" (Broughton 47). Briefly put, the students are the most active element in this process. The teacher is here not to explain but to encourage and help students to explore, try out, make learning interesting, etc. Though being essential, the aim of learning a foreign language according to modern.

In his book Learning Teaching, Jim Scrivener claims, that nowadays a great emphasis is put on "communication of meaning" (Scrivener 31). Instead of grammatical competence, communicative competence became the priority. Ronald V. White articulates three principles of modern methodology: firstly, "the primacy of speech"; secondly, an emphasis on "the centrality of connected text as the heart of teaching-learning process"; and thirdly, an "absolute priority of an oral methodology in the classroom" (White 11). Instead of memorizing grammatical rules and isolated vocabulary, modern methodology prefers to present contextualized language and to develop skills.

Teaching skills

Focusing on one important part of modern teaching – teaching skills. The main skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They can be classified into two groups: receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing). These skills consist of sub-skills; for example, reading includes skimming (reading for gist), scanning (reading for specific information), intensive reading, and extensive reading. While listening, students can listen for gist, or for specific information: for some details, like numbers, addresses, directions etc. In real life we do not normally listen for every word spoken. Therefore, as many professionals today agree, the task should be realistic too.

The tasks should improve skills, not test memory. Concerning productive skills, writing and speaking, there are some important issues to mention too. While students practice production skills, a teacher using modern methodology is aware of a contradiction between accuracy and fluency.

According to Jack C. Richards, "fluency is natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in a meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations on his or her communicative competence" (Richards 13).

As stated by Richards, modern methodology tries to keep a balance between the fluency and accuracy practice (Richards 14). There is another aspect important in speaking activities. This vital aspect is context and purpose. This is supported by the opinion expressed by Jill and Charles Hadfield who claim, that activities which mirror real life situations and which have a goal, for example finding a rule, are "more interesting and motivating for the learners (Hadfield 4). This approach helps learners to be motivated and interested in the subject matter.

Teaching Grammar

Teaching grammar in a modern way is an essential part too. Unlike the traditional method, Four conditions of a good grammar presentation. These are: the creation of a safe atmosphere, the feeling among the students that tasks are achievable, that the students show understanding, and that the students actively listen to, speak, read and write the new language (advisably in this order). As it is emphasized in these courses, the meaning should be taught before the form (Zemenova). Jim Scrivener also makes a good point by stating "Keep it short" (Scrivener 267). Keeping this rule in mind when teaching is essential, since long explanations often become confusing and boring.

Since most of the interaction is going on in English, modern methodologists recommend checking understanding throughout the grammar presentation. As suggested in the methodology course at Masaryk University, the teacher can carry out this essential procedure by using timelines, examples, (if suitable) visual aids, or by asking concept questions. Concept questions highlight the meaning of a target language item and are simple to understand and to answer (usually ‘yes’ or ‘no’, possibly ‘we do not know’).

However, very often they are not easy to make up. They are asked in the target language, though they must not contain the structure or word being taught. The presentation should be followed up by appropriate practice which is usually controlled, guided and free respectively (Zemenova). These suggestions agree with Jim Scrivener’s statement that the “ability to use language seems to be more of a skill you learn by trying to do it [...] than an amount of a data that you learn and then try to apply” (Scrivener 19). It appears that encouraging students to ‘play’ with the target language is very effective in helping them learn to speak it.

Modern methodology includes a number of methods. One of the effective methods for presenting new language is so called ‘guided discovery.’ Scrivener defines it this way: the teacher is “leading people to discover things that they didn’t know they knew via a process of structured questions” (Scrivener 268).

The teacher can also introduce a situation, a context, and elicit the language from the students. A suitable reading or listening can be used as a source of the new language.

Teaching Vocabulary

Vocabulary or lexis is a very important part of learning a language. The modern ways of teaching lexis. One has probably met many ways to teach or revise vocabulary. As suggested by Jim Scrivener, the most popular or the most common methods in modern teaching are:

- Match the words with the pictures.
- Check the meaning of these words in the dictionary.
- Match the words with the definitions.
- Brainstorm words on a set topic (i.e. collect as many as you can).
- Divide these words into two groups (e.g. food words and hobby words).
- Label the items in a picture with the right names.
- Complete gapped sentences with words from a list.
- Discuss a topic (that will feature in the text).
- Say which words (from a list) you expect to be in a text about. (Scrivener 231).

Including these methods, the training at Masaryk University offers other ideas too:

- miming, drawing or showing a flashcard to indicate the meaning of a word.
- using timelines or percentage (in comparison with some similar words).
- eliciting some words for a short preferably funny or personal (possibly repetitive) dialogue or story.
- letting the students get the meaning from the context.
- using synonyms and opposites.
- crosswords, riddles.
- for some difficult words, such as abstract items or verbs, translation is useful too; however, it is preferable to elicit the translation from the students (Zemenova).

These lists definitely do not include all the methods a teacher can use. However, these methods can be used in a variety of activities, such as pre-teaching, listening for lexis, reading for lexis, using a dictionary, etc.

These stages correspond to the stages presented to students during the methodology course at Masaryk University and they have proved successful in many lessons. From a certain point a view they also agree with the grammar lesson stages which are: presentation (first meaning, then oral form, and finally written form) and practice (controlled, guided and free respectively) as suggested by the teachers at Masaryk University (Zemenova).

This procedure is also in accordance with Jim Scrivener’s above-mentioned statement that “ability to use language seems to be more of a skill you learn by trying to do it [...] than an amount of a data that you learn and then try to apply” (Scrivener 19).

Many people agree that with remembering lexis, using is the best method.

Conclusions

To sum up the modern methodology principles, we can highlight the student-centered interaction, which is connected to the involvement of the students in everything going on during the lesson. This shifts the teacher's role to not causing the learning, but helping learning to happen. The teacher's task is to choose activities suitable for their learners, to guide them in the lessons and to encourage them to experiment with the language.

The modern methodology comprises a rich variety of methods, which should have some common features: activities involving students and close to the real-life situations. To be effective, the methods follow each other in a suitable order, and there should be a balance of teaching focused on different aspects of the language.

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The Role of the Virtual Museum in the Foreign Language Teaching. A Case Study of Teaching Italian as a Foreign Language in the University Setting

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Abstract

The virtual museum focuses on the importance of information and displays the exhibits of 'natural' museums. It can be used as a constructive way of education that transforms digital users to a community interaction with their cultural and intellectual heritage, activating experiences for aesthetic and objective as well as experimental and playful learning. Museum education gives the opportunity to activate the senses and to achieve the cognitive, emotional and social development of persons, a multi-sensory experience that stimulates the passion for discovery, remembrance, multiple knowledge and free expression, lasting for life. In the above-mentioned framework, Internet technologies can provide the means to create an efficient, cooperative learning atmosphere for online courses. Social networks and wikis can build online collaborative learning communities for dynamic interventions and contributions, co-creation of knowledge and learning materials. Following the above theoretical framework, a research was carried out in the Department of Italian Language and Literature of the University of Athens aiming at the creation of alternative learning environments using Web 2.0 tools for the teaching of the Italian culture and the Italian as a foreign language in the context of university language education. More specifically, our research aimed at linguistic and cultural education of students through alternative cultural environments, such as virtual museums, as well as the dynamics of online activities in cultural subjects.

Keywords: virtual museums, museum training, wikis, online activities

1. "Digital Museums – Museum Education"

Contact with the museum affects values and attitudes, either by promoting cultural and social consciousness and enhancing the interest and curiosity of the visitor, or by motivating for further learning and decision-making on life. A great contribution of the Internet is the movement of cultural objects into a variety of recruitment environments. This builds a 'digital extension' of the museum on the Internet, a 'no-wall museum'.

Museum education is a cognitive process and a product of social and cultural interactions. It offers an opportunity to activate the senses and to achieve the cognitive, emotional and social development of individuals, a multi-sensory motivation to reach the spiritual and cultural heritage. The introduction of technology into the language and culture lessons can trigger a more original way of teaching in authentic environments that will fill learners with internal motivation and unimportant interest in knowledge, exploration, social activities and autonomous learning. Through online tours to local and global cultural institutions, the visitors will be able to not only enrich and improve their language skills, but they can also gain intercultural awareness [8] and a positive attitude towards the culture and the country they visit.

The experience of using the Internet for teaching purposes has shown that giving students access to authentic data with the help of technology can bring both cognitive gains (better assimilation of linguistic and cultural knowledge) and psychological (joy of exploration) [6], [18], [8], [7]. In surveys [10], [11], [7], [4] it has been shown that the right planning for the integration of culture into language learning and in particular the engagement with visual elements – expansion with virtual environments – brings positive results in learning culture by helping to foster positive attitude, learning alertness and efficiency, authenticity through images of people, landscapes, foreign language art, flexibility for multiple interpretations and adaptation to each other's experiences. This creates an autonomous learning environment that should be developed in a systematic way, providing new ways of using the language (mainly hybrid) that may enhance and motivate collaborative and interactive contact with others and the foreign language.

2. “Social Networking – Wikis”

The Internet offers those technologies and means to create an efficient, cooperative learning atmosphere for on-line lessons. With Web 2.0, web-based applications are based on dynamic information traffic and user collaboration. In other words, there is an active engagement in online content, allowing grouping and interaction on online content. In this way, online collaborative learning communities and wikis were designed to help teams to collaborate, to “build” online material, to interact, especially for distance learners. This is a possibility of collaborative writing and intervention at any time. Annotations and contributions from all members are non-linear activities with the potential to share the outcome and the final outcome. Moreover, supporters of wikis highlight to ease of use, flexibility in content development, but also to its open philosophy that makes it a particularly useful tool for teamwork support [17], [19], [1], [3].

Furthermore, wikis as tools can increase trainees’ participation and motivation, facilitate learning and provide opportunities to practice writing skills. In particular, its two strong points are that it helps co-operation between users and allows the digital community to maintain and update information in a collaborative and easy manner [19], [5].

3. “Research methodology”

A three-year study was conducted by students of the Department of Italian Language and Literature of the University of Athens, aiming at the creation of alternative learning environments using Web 2.0 tools for teaching culture and foreign language in the context of university language education. The ultimate goal of the research was the language and cultural education of future language teachers through alternative cultural environments such as virtual museums as well as the dynamics of online activities in cultural and foreign language lessons [12], [13], [14], [15]. During our research, students were familiarized with cultural material, rich interaction, exchange and negotiation of ideas between them, alternative ideas and a flexible view of things. As a result, they were able to choose what they would learn, show interest and encouragement in the performance of the other.

For these reasons, a basic wiki environment (http://it.web2lang-learning.wikia.com) was created, from where the student groups pumped general cultural or practical information about the course activities. Eight laboratory courses were planned, which consisted of several activities. Students wandered into virtual cultural institutions in Italy, museums, temples, theaters, libraries and groups, each time choosing one of the course’s suggested activities to develop it in their own wiki environment. All activities were developed on the following theoretical basis: On the one hand, they rely on the theory of multiple types of intelligence. This theory allows the broadening of students’ experiences by approaching different themes and subjects in alternative ways by exchanging with their fellow students’ experiences, knowledge and approaches; thus, promoting a unified learning “flow” within the classroom. On the other hand, they rely on the theoretical principles of constructivism for active cognitive exploration and construction of their own knowledge and, lastly, creative writing [16] the opportunity to free their imagination and creativity into a safe and creative environment and to promote original solutions.

4. “Research Results”

From the virtual cultural experience of the students and from the questionnaires (initial-final) given to them, remarkable results emerged. It is worth mentioning that the concept of topicality is crucial to how students face the exploitation of New Technologies. By incorporating authentic and up-to-date material, language can be supported and the required range of communication and socio-linguistic competence can be acquired. It turns out that our students have the need to gain a positive and more open way of thinking. They are ready to recognize the participatory exchange of views and to work together, having a common goal.

The students have positively evaluated the potential of New Technologies as an ever-evolving environment, rich in cognitive and informational material. On the other hand, able to contribute and support learning and collaboration on the one hand, and on the other hand their creative expression in pedagogically planned activities.

It becomes clear that the concepts of understanding and deepening the issues with which our students are negotiating are extremely important. They believe that with the New Technologies, they have the ability to design their own learning program and gradually lead to the understanding of another language and the culture associated with it. They acquire knowledge of the subject that they negotiate, understand and visualize concepts, they gain learning experiences in Internet environments. Moreover, they design and evaluate the products of learning itself, which leads to understanding and reflection. It also appears that the New Technologies can introduce students to the scientific approach to knowledge and reality. It gives them the opportunity to observe and explore, to be interested, by sharpening their imagination. Finally, it is crucial for our students to be creative with the new technologies in order to experience aesthetic experiences in different situations, producing many ideas, using the transport way of thinking. Encouraging creativity involves students in authentic social activities and teaches them to negotiate linguistic and communication codes that promote autonomy and self-control. By being exposed to different societies and cultures, their imagination is stimulated and the consciousness of alternatives becomes an integral part of their thinking.

5. “Conclusions”

Cooperative writing wikis facilitate the production of teamwork and the learning of culture, maintaining and updating the informational treasure, in an atmosphere of activating creative thinking and linguistic experiences. In the virtual museum, there are active participation and multiple opportunities for dealing with a subject or exhibit, depending on the preferences, knowledge and interests of each, aiming to make the visit more attractive and efficient. We need the pedagogical script support to achieve both mental and emotional vision of objects, addressing all senses and types of intelligence, visualizing abstract concepts and interacting with specific elements as well as socially with other users, and of course, to lead to an increase in effective and informal learning.

Bowen [2] concludes with a phrase by Nobel laureate Penelope Lively, “we carry a museum inside our heads,” and goes on to argue that the Internet may be a way to reveal some from the most essential information to everyone. However, we must be careful to see the digital presence of museums on the website as something special and complementary to the traditional image of the museums we have in the authentic experience and viewing of the exhibits. Under no circumstances is this culture to be replaced by virtual museums. The opposite. The virtual museum is the intermediary, the tool that will strengthen the presence and visit of the museum's natural spaces. Clearly, they cannot offer real objects to their visitors, but they can extend the ideas and principles of these collections to the digital space [9]. In this way, they not only reveal the essential nature of the museums but also allow digital visitors to experience a visit to places they may never have been able to carry out.

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Transformative Technology Infused Curriculum: The Foundation Program as a Case Study

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Abstract

The infusion of technology into the curriculum and teaching pedagogy in recent years is believed to be paramount to students' motivation, engagement, and overall academic success. Despite many institutional efforts and initiatives to capture and encourage their faculty and curriculum designers to embrace the use of technology in their classroom, we observed some changes that need to be addressed to guarantee successful implementation.
Our hypothesis is that academic institutions need a clear roadmap in which all participants are involved at every level to guarantee a higher level of success and engagement. The aim of this paper is to capture and share the successes and challenges faced by the English Foundation Program at the Petroleum Institute during their transition towards a full technology adoption. Qualitative focus group interviews were used with six of the faculty who actively participated in different capacities during this transition. In addition, the paper offers a self-reflection component to facilitate the journey of practitioners who might be undertaking a similar initiative.

Keywords: English Teaching and Learning, ICT, Technology in the classroom, Curriculum

1. Introduction

The infusion of technology has changed the dynamic of classroom management and the students' overall engagement and inclusion in the educational process. Despite that, we find different academic institutions are standing at a different point and have different views when it comes to the extent of this infusion. This might be attributed to the multiple challenges that institutions, students and faculty face while implementing these changes.

In this paper, we will focus on the experience of the foundation Program-Petroleum Institute as a case study after the initiation of the Project X. [3] The aim of this paper is to target practitioners who are facing a similar scenario and attempt to facilitate their journey towards a fruitful infusion of technology in the classroom. Our hypothesis is that academic institutions need a clear roadmap in which all participants are involved at every level to guarantee a higher level of success and engagement.

2. Literature Review

The growing need for providing quality and individualized educational experiences and lifelong learning for all people [9] along with the recent educational technology advancement made the shift towards the infusion of technology investable. Having said that teachers are still trying to catch up and "often to learn with their students" [6] when it comes to technology.

For those who find themselves at this pace, it became apparent that there are 3 main elements that contribute to the success of such a goal. The first starts with the faculty; the amount of supports/he is receiving which includes time and workload on the one hand and receiving sufficient training and support on the other. According to Zhang 2017, "In the implementation of a new teaching method, teachers complain" [10] It's a time-consuming multi-layered process; "Teachers need to master the basic knowledge of the computer, and know how to make a micro-lesson teaching video… secondly, teachers should always update the teaching concept, as far as possible to adapt the teaching materials to attract students' attention during the teaching process." [10] According to the literature, teacher is not prepared to use technology while teaching and consequently they are left at a disadvantage and "…with negative or non-existent perceptions of their efficacy in using educational technology". [4]

The second element is the curriculum and curriculum building, which is steered towards modern learning and teaching approaches and transforming in such a way that would “help develop positive traits and attitudes” [1] among the students and allow them to have a real-time, hands-on experience.

The use of Flipped classroom, student-cantered learning environment that accommodates students’ interest and preferences proved to increase students’ engagement, task engagement and self-reliance [8 & 3] because it allowed educators to speak “the language of today’s students” [5].

While on the other side of the spectrum, researchers conclude that “due to the rigid curriculum in certain high stakes context, not all teachers have the freedom to devise such stimulating activities, and may further be limited by time and expertise.” [8]

The third aspect is the support of the management in providing a suitable physical organization of classroom environment equipped with technology, arrangements should be done by considering physical variables of classroom management. [9] The administration should also be open-minded about the proposed changes or policies that would facilitate this transition and for creativity. [6]

3. Background

In response to the strategic plan, the IT department at the Petroleum Institute launched PROJECT-X in 2015. The scope of the project covered things like hardware, software, Classrooms equipped and assigned for active learning purposes (ALP classrooms). [3] The project was piloted and then in the fall semester several units adopted or started to prepare for the adoption of this project, one of those units is the foundation Program. In that semester a tasks force was created to work on the planning and curriculum improvement before the semester along with a practitioner community to support another faculty.

4. Methodology and Data Collection

This paper is based on 8 individual interviews conducted with those who lead or contributed to this initiative within the Academic Bridge Program (including the Head of the Department, the Chair of the curriculum committee, a course coordinator and the Project leader). The interviewees were asked 17 closed-ended questions which were divided into 5 sections:

1. General questions to ask about their teaching experience, the use of technology in the classroom.
2. Self-reflections which included questions their roles, their attitude towards the initiative? The specific use of technology in reference to the SAMR Model (substitution, Augmentation, modification, and redefinition), the challenges they faced during the implementation of this project?
3. The impact on the students’ performance and motivation.
4. Leadership and institutional roles: The support they received to launch and sustain this intuitive (i.e. reduced teaching load, Workshops, grants… etc.)
5. Finally, Future recommendations.

The research method will also include a testimony or a self-reflection provided by the author who was leading the foundation program and led this initiative at that time.

5. Results & Discussion

5.1 Interviews

All participants had between 3-5 years of experience teaching at the Petroleum Institute. Four of them described themselves as heavy users of technology, three medium users, and one light user.

They all agreed that the use of educational technology is essential and it “…gives teachers a whole new set of opportunities to create a dynamic learning environment” and addresses the workforce needs. However, three of them do not use technology in their classrooms due to time limitations and the density of the curriculum.

In reference to the SAMR Model, those who used educational technology (6 interviewees) were more focused on the first three levels of substitution, Augmentation, modification and they found the redefining level is challenging. While one faculty only mentioned that at times she covered all levels.

They used applications like the Google Suite, Kahoot, Quizlet, Socrates and other collaborative tools in order to encourage students to create their e-portfolio, think critically and engage students during and out of their class time.

The diverse roles that the interviewees had resulted in having contradictory perceptions about the success or failure of foundations’ version of project X. While some stated that it was “led beautifully”, and “the coordinator gave (us) the teachers all the support that we needed”, others felt that the attention at the time was on pushing the students to buy specific laptops and the resistance they found from the students.

Others described his overall experience as “Frustrating”. This includes the head of the department who believed that while he had the support of the director, the middle management, both faculty and students did not buy-in. He described the project as a ‘failure’ and attributed to the fact that the institution specified the computer model, lack of IT support and lack of policies. He also pointed out that the faculty’s level of enthusiasm led or determined the success or failure of this project and the department had a small group of enthusiastic early users. Both the head and few other interviewees pointed out that the departmental and institutional change management put this project on hold.

Some other challenges were mentioned by the interviewees such as the extent of the Wi-Fi coverage within the campus, students not bringing or even buying their computers. The fact that students had to buy the laptop before receiving the stipend from their scholarship providers.

Another faculty spoke the amount of intimidation he faced and getting off the mental notion that ‘he is the master and he should know it all, while it should be perceived as another platform and he should learn about it with his students.

On the other hand, two interviewees acknowledged the opportunities that came along with the launch of the project: the time release, the departmental and institutional pedagogical training sessions, the conferences they attended and the 2 mini-grant they received. 6 of them mentioned the support they received from the departmental community of practitioners and how it led to having experts within the department to support both the infusion of technology into the curriculum and the faculty.

6. Self-Reflection and Conclusion

As I reflect on my role as the director, I believe that the infusion of technology in the curriculum requires an excellent planning, enthusiastic faculty, clear policies that would guarantee the implementation of such a vision and transform it into a reality. There were a number of challenges faced during the implementation of this project: 1. the high level of enthusiasm from those who volunteered to take part in this project, versus the pushback culture that built up among some of the faculty who were not open to change which as a result might have affected the students’ attitude towards technology in the classroom. 2. The lack of clear policies from the institution which made people question the urgency and the value added of this project. 3. Despite having a strong departmental support (taskforce, release time, mini-grants, workshops, conferences) some of the faculty could not surpass their own vulnerability barriers [7] towards technology. 4. The fact that this project was initiated and owned by IT [3] and the conflict that arose from the different style of management (for example: operating in a fiscal year versus academic year) created a mismatch in terms of expectations and deadlines.

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Language Learning to Support International Mobility

A Language Exchange Tool for Internationalization: Tandem Experience at METU

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Abstract

This paper covers the story of face-to-face Tandem language learning partnership program in a Turkish state university, Middle East Technical University (METU). All the information about the program is based on first-hand experiences of METU-Tandem coordinators and feedback from participants. The paper informs audiences about the participant numbers and demographics of the program, which gives some insight into problems encountered. Tandem language exchange is not a remedy for all obstacles in the process of internationalization but a wise tool to help METU "to develop awareness of internationalization and multi-cultural life experiences of all the university components" and "to organize activities that will increase our students' awareness of multicultural life" (METU Strategic Plan, 2018-2022)*. METU-Tandem, offered across the campus since 2015, has been contributing to the internationalization efforts of METU, bringing together "Erasmus and International Students" and "Home Students". The program is not new to European countries, especially Italy, Spain, England, France and Germany. However, METU-Tandem is the only regular and widespread application of Tandem language exchange in a campus environment in Turkey.*

Keywords: internationalisation, language exchange

1. Introduction

We live in an age when internationalization efforts of universities have gained momentum. This is due to the increasing global competition and interaction, availability of funds from outside and changes in global infrastructure of transportation and information (Şahin, 2017). Accordingly, METU also aims for more international cooperation and has set itself the goal of "developing awareness of internationalization and multi-cultural life experiences of all the university components (Metu Strategic Plan, 2018-2022). To this end, Objective 15.1 of the Strategic Plan reads "Organizing activities that will increase our students' awareness of multicultural life"; and one of these activities is the METU-Tandem Language Learning Partnership.

1.1 Tandem Language Exchange

Tandem is practiced in numerous countries and predominantly at the international universities based in Germany, Spain, Italy, France, England, China and the US. As Tan, Wigglesworth and Storch (2010) state this language learning method "has been applied in language teaching in different ways. It can be integrated into a language course or be carried out independently as an after-school activity for different time lengths and frequencies" (as cited in Sung & Poole, 2017, p. 99). Also, there are language schools operating based on Tandem language exchange in Europe. In Finland, "tandem has, during the last decade, been established as a methodology for adults within adult education, where the most familiar example is FinTandem" (Karjalainen, Pörn, Rusk and Björkskog, 2013, p. 166).

This is a partnership between two people, each of whom is learning the other's language at roughly the same level of proficiency in their respective target languages. Learners of two different but native speakers of languages get together on a regular basis and help each other to practice their target languages. During the meetings, each learner assumes the role of the "expert" (= native) and "novice" (= non-native) in turns. This structure provides learners with an opportunity to develop a friendly and comfortable relationship where the native speaker does not function as a teacher but as an empathizing peer who gives assistance and assurance to the other peer (Brammerts, 1996). In short, in Tandem language learning, learners work in pairs in order (1) to learn more about one another's character and culture; (2) to help one another improve their language skills, and (3) to exchange additional knowledge – for example, about their professional life (Calvert, 1999, p. 56). "First used in face- to-face contexts, Tandem is now increasingly being used by language-learning partners located in different countries who are linked via various forms of electronic communication, a context that has become known as e-Tandem" (Cziko, 2004, p. 25). Overall, Tandem is economical, flexible and open to a wide range of applications, and its main types are: (1) Face-to-face and (2) Electronic. One characteristic of Tandem language exchange is *reciprocity*, which means both learners should contribute as equally as possible to the learning process. In other words, "both partners should use the language in equal amounts to ensure that they profit equally from the exchange" (Schwienhorst, 2003, p. 431). The other characteristic of Tandem language exchange is *autonomy*, which holds that "learners alone determine what they want to learn and when".

2. Tandem language exchange at METU and challenges in practicing it

METU Tandem Language Learning Partnership Program is a free and extra-curricular activity, and an initiative taken by two language instructors to bring Erasmus, international and home students into contact. The program is face-to-face Tandem language exchange and has been practiced at a large scale, regularly in Turkey only at METU since 2015. The program has been offered across the campus to students with levels of foreign language competence ranging from low to high levels. So far, 186 students have participated and received certificates of participation upon successful completion of the program. Because the Department offers courses in English, German, Spanish, Italian, French, Greek, Arabic, Russian, Chinese and Japanese, METU-Tandem includes all these languages but is not limited with them as long as matches can be made. The general practice while matching partners is based on applicants' preference for the target language and their level. However, due to the low ratio of international students volunteering to participate in the Tandem language exchange compared to home students, during the pairing of Tandem learners it is made sure that one of the partners in each Tandem pair is a native speaker of Turkish. In Tandem programs the control and formality of instruction varies according to the aims. METU-Tandem, in this respect, is a semi-informal form of Tandem, where leaners are required to attend two evaluation meetings to be certified upon completion of the program.

2.1 Limited number of international students and pre-dominance of non-European languages

"As of 2016, 1,744 international students (excluding international exchange students) are enrolled in programs at METU" (Metu Strategic Plan 2018-2022, p. 30). Considering the total size of students (18,058 undergraduates) across the campus, this number leads to a ratio imbalance between home and foreign student numbers, making it difficult to assign a partner to all Tandem applicants in all languages. This limitation may be caused by "the adverse effect of security concern in the world and in the region on international mobility towards our country" (METU Strategic Plan 2018-2022, p. 109).

Apart from security issues in the country and region, political tensions between Turkey and some European countries undermine the number of incoming European students. Karakaş (2017) reported that the political tensions between Germany and Turkey last year had an influence on the student exchange program, Erasmus as well. Some German students going to Turkey with Erasmus even changed their minds at the last minute and remained in Germany. As seen in Figure 1, the majority of international students visiting Turkey are not from Europe. However, a majority of the applicants to METU Tandem among home students are the ones who want to practice European languages, mainly English, German, French, Italian and Spanish. Figure 2 shows Erasmus partners who sent more than 10 students between 2015 and 2018 and only two of these countries are European, whose languages though are not studied much by home students.

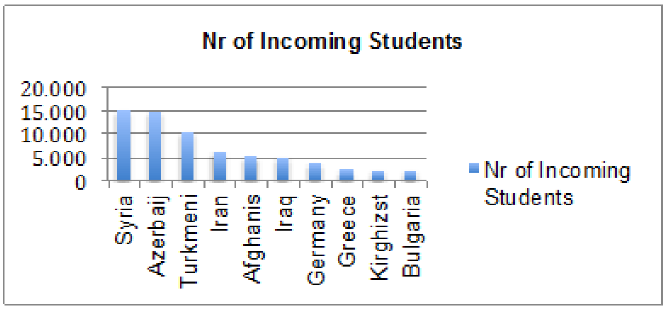

Fig. 1: Top 10 countries sending students to Turkey in the academic year of 2016-2017. (Council of Higher Education, 2016-2017 higher education statistics, 2017).

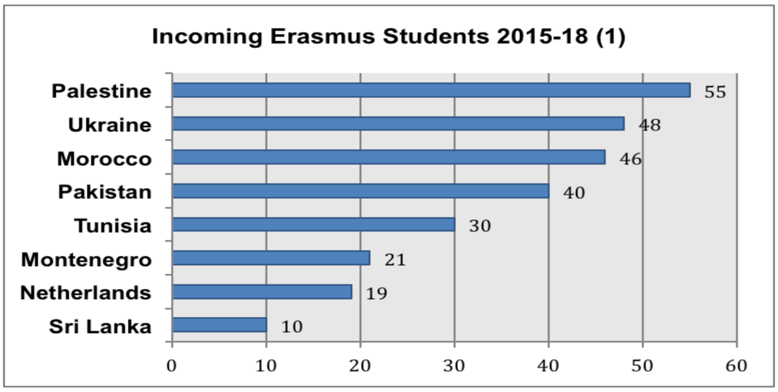

Fig. 2: Erasmus partners who sent >10 students between 2015 and 2018 (Source: ICO-METU, 2018)

2.2 Exchange students with unfavourably low-level Turkish

Although Kana *et al*., (2016) suggested that there was a marked increase in the number of people learning Turkish in European and Middle Eastern countries due to the EU membership process of Turkey (as cited in Ünal, 2017, p. 295), the majority of Erasmus students visiting METU campus can speak no or too little Turkish. However, Tandem language dyads can benefit from each other most on condition that both parties are at a certain level in their target languages, preferably minimum B1. This is another factor that makes Tandem language pairings rather difficult.

2.3 Erasmus students' short visit and travel preferences

In their research, Gheorghe, Moraru and Anton (2017) reported "When asked about the number of occasions they [international students] had to travel during their Erasmus semester, 59,4% answered "more than 7 times". This tendency is also observed among the Erasmus students visiting METU, and it constitutes a barrier to regular Tandem meetings, leading to loss of motivation on the part of the home partner. In her interview with ODTÜ-Tandem coordinators, a Turkish Tandem participant from 2017, for example, admitted that throughout the language exchange program she always had to be the understanding party to reschedule meetings due to her partner's short trips out of Ankara.

2.4 Low number of applicants for Tandem language exchange among visiting students

Research indicates one of the most popular out-of-class activities among Turkish foreign language learners is having conversations with native speakers of Turkish (93.1%), (Karababa & Karagül, 2013, p. 368). Still, the relatively heavy workload, being in a new environment, already existing network of Turkish friends, personality, unfamiliarity with autonomous learning and lack of ECTS credits for the program could be some of the reasons why visiting students may show less interest in the program.

2.5 Participants' unfamiliarity with autonomous learning

Tandem language exchange is an autonomous learning endeavour in its essence. Students unfamiliar with this learning method cannot benefit the program much because their goal setting, sessions with their Tandem partners, materials and self-assessment may be ineffective.

Conclusions

Despite the challenges stemming mainly from the geographical location of both the university and the country where it is, METU-Tandem is an on-going program, which benefits its participants a lot. METU has always been a pioneering university and strives to serve its stakeholders at its best.

Therefore, all the challenges encountered since the beginning of the program has been handled through adjustments made to it, which could be the focus of another paper. The program is and will be alive to help as many students as it can in their endeavours to have contact with native speakers of their target language because sometimes it is not the quantity but the quality that you need to consider first.

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The Migration Experience and the Informal Language Learning of Refugees

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Abstract

Due to the increasing migration flows in the recent decades, language learning has become an important issue related to the integration of newcomers in Europe. In fact, the migration crisis has resulted with the creation of new integration policies that have as a main preoccupation the acquisition of the language of the country of arrival by the newly settled immigrants. Lesser attention has been shown by the policy makers about the linguistic background of the immigrants, which often includes a multilingual repertoire. Literature about language learning is hence now getting specialized in migration contexts, putting its attentions on the language of the new country of residence learning by the immigrants. However, few attentions have been dedicated to the specific case of refugee learners and their linguistic background. The aim of this research is to study the multilingual competences of the refugees and the relation of the refugees' linguistic repertoire with the migration experience. In order to achieve the objective of this research, we have used an ethnographic approach which has allowed us to enter in a direct contact with the subjects of the research in a natural way. Specifically, the instrument used in this study is the in-depth interview, focused on the linguistic biography of the informants. This instrument allowed us to know in deep both the refugee migration experience and its relation with the languages of the migration process. The data collected by this research show that the peculiar migration experience of the refugees, which often includes a long migration process, reflects in the language learning process. In fact, refugees' linguistic repertoires are shaped by the migration experience. On another hand, the possibility to learn the languages met during the migration is related to the experience lived in the countries of the migration.

Keywords: Refugees, migration, language learning, L2, multilingualism

1. Introduction

The international mobility that represents our era is shaping an always more multicultural and multilingual world. The need for improving the person's own economic condition and the emergency situations of some areas of the globe are the main causes of the migration flows. In the last decades, the surge became so important that the literature often refers to as the "migration crisis", because of the vast number of humans that reaches Europe after fleeing their own country. Conflicts and instability are often responsible of the surge, which looks like becoming the greatest after the Second World War [1]. The countries of origin of the migrants are often countries affected by wars, dictatorships and, more recently, by the tyranny and terror of ISIS. In our day, the countries that mostly have generated refugees and asylum seekers are countries like Syria, Congo, Iraq, South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Mali, Gambia and Pakistan, between others [2].

The pressure exerted by the increase of the non-nationals in Europe has triggered anti-foreigners' feelings which often associate the newcomers to 'invaders', promoting the fear for a 'foreign invasion' [3]. On another hand, the growth of the migrant's presence has gradually induced in almost all European countries the implementation of migration policies. Such policies include laws that aim at controlling the migration flows and the stay within the European borders of the extra-European nationals. At the centre of one of these policies there is the knowledge of the residency country language. Language mastery is required, accordingly to each European country policy, either for the admission into the country, for the permanence and/or for the citizenship application. Both the requirement reason and the language competence level vary according to the policy of each state [4].

One of the European nations that has implemented its integration policies based on the language knowledge is Italy, whose rules contemplate the mastery of Italian language at a A2 level of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) in order to obtain the long-term permit of stay. Cuttitta describes this policy as the policy of the 'mandatory integration', which becomes part of the border control policies "blurring the traditional distinction between the two domains", the integration and the border control policies [5].

Definitely, the implementation of such policy can have at least two potential effects. First, this policy implicates an education challenge which can result with a more prohibitive procedure to obtain the legal status of the immigrants [6]. A way of limiting, in other words, the residency of the immigrant in the European country of stay [7]. On the other hand, if the attention focuses exclusively on the country of origin language learning, it can intensify the monolingual attitude of countries like Italy, in which the linguistic diversity and the presence of immigrant languages is treated as a threat to the national unity [8] [9].

Consequently, to the monolingual attitude, there is in the literature a lack of studies on the immigrant languages and multilingualism to which is added a generalised lack of research studies on refugees' linguistic repertoires and attitudes.

Moreover, it is important to emphasize that if from a side the international mobility is valued as a precious way to acquire language skills that enrich a university student curriculum and can lead to better job opportunities [10] [11], from another point of view, the refugees' migration experience, which also lead to multilingual abilities, is definitely not valued in the same way and also suffers from the monolingual integration policies, hence discriminatory.

2. Method

The methodology used for this study is the Ethnography. Twenty-eight in-depth interviews to adult refugees living in Italy have been carried out during a period of seven months, in order to study the relation of the migration experience with the refugees' linguistic repertoire. The origin of the informants is varied and describes the migration crisis that is affecting Italy and Europe. Their nationalities are represented as follows: Nigeria (5), Pakistan (5), Gambia (4), Senegal (3), Bangladesh (3), Syria (2), Cote d'Ivoire (1), Guinea (1), Egypt (1), Mali (1), Niger (1), Ghana (1). In order to proceed with the analysis of the collected data, the interviews have been labelled and subsequently analysed following an interpretative approach.

3. Results

The peculiar migration experience of refugees and asylum seekers as forced migrants consists of a generally long migration period that can last up to several years. The length of the migration is typical of this kind of migrants, which totally differs from other kinds of migration. For example, from that of economic migrants which is characterized by a voluntary process generally accompanied by a safe and comfortable short trip. During this period, forced migrants often cross various countries, staying in one or more of them for a longer period than in others, entering in contact with the local population and learning their language. This experience, often hard and even traumatic, can result with the enlargement of their linguistic repertoire, as this fragment of interview shows:

"When I reached Greece, it was so hard, it was impossible to speak with them! Always when I say 'do you speak English?' they answer '*όχι όχι όχι*'. They only speak Greek. […] I've started to understand something, people were knowing me and started to look for me to give me jobs…" (A.T., asylum seeker from Pakistan).

The mastery of the local language covers in this case an instrumental need and, although at a basic level, helps the migrant to work in the new country.

As previously said, the migration process of a forced migrant can last up to several years, and can consist of numerous countries crossing which can result in their correspondent languages learning, as expressed by this informant:

"I left my country around two years ago, almost […] I have been in Libya for many months, many months. I had a job but I had to hide, so I didn't talk a lot with them. But I can understand some words, but it is really hard language for me. Now here I've learnt *italiano* and I can speak with people in the street, at *mercato* […] I want to learn Dutch because I want to go to Holland, I have friends there and I can have a job" (M.C., asylum seeker from Nigeria).

The competence of the language acquired during the migration can be basic and partial, as shown for Arabic in this interview. Nevertheless, all the migration experience is accompanied by the permanent learning of new languages. In this case, which is common to many others, the language learning does not stop in the host country but is going to continue because the migrant plans to carry on his migration experience, ending up with the learning of at least three languages: Arabic, Italian and (probably) Dutch.

Furthermore, the two fragments of interviews here proposed demonstrate that the type of contact, hence the kind of experience, had during the migration can determine higher or lower competences in the second language. In fact, the permanence of some refugees/asylum seekers in a country can be characterized by less contact with the local population, sometimes for suffering from detention or because of living in same nationals closed groups.

4. Conclusions

The migration experience of forced migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, is often an extremely long trip that last up to several years and comprise a stay in various countries. During the way, forced migrants enter in contact with various languages and cultures, ending up with at least partial and basic competences of them. The more the migration experience is long and comprise many countries, the more the migrant can extend his language repertoire to other languages. The refugee knowledge is in fact shaped by the migration experience which, despite the hard realities he has passed, can result with a linguistic and cultural enrichment. The linguistic knowledge acquired during the migration experience definitely improves the linguistic competences of the refugee, who usually holds a rich multilingual repertoire. These competences should be considered in the outline of integration policies that promote multilingualism.

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Language for Specific Purposes

An Analysis on ESP Students' Preposition Errors (The Case of Legal Translation)

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Abstract

The article analyzes preposition errors by university students at the introductory course of legal translation, as well as the causes of such errors. The author gives an overview of the legal translation course, including, inter alia, general conditions of teaching, requirements as for selection of legal texts for learning purposes, the groups under study. Students' written translations from Russian into English served as material for analysis. The research incorporates comparative analysis of the system of prepositions in English and Russian based on the typological differences of the languages and the corresponding sublanguages of legal documents in particular. The study relied on the following methods: analysis and synthesis, classification and description, comparative analysis, and continuous sampling technique. The data interpretation provided for description of error zones caused by interlanguage interference, the ontogenetic complexity of preposition usage, and individual difficulties of students. It concludes with the major causes of faults that give rise to errors on the levels of reception, storage, restoration, use, and metacognition. The paper recommends raising students' awareness as a means that can assist in reducing the preposition errors.

Keywords: ESP, error correction, preposition errors, legal translation

1. Introduction

The learner's language has been recently widely investigated. There are papers in the framework of theory of errors from the perspectives of language pedagogy, psycholinguistics, and psychology.

Moreover, there are studies analyzing various aspects of errors, their causes and types manifested in different conditions and as seen by learners of different languages. The main bulk of such research lies within the area of English as a foreign language and English as a second language. Researchers from different countries speculate on characteristics of language acquisition and errors made in English by speakers of other languages. Among those mentioned one can find a substantial number of studies revealing peculiarities of written and oral errors, including systematic ones and occasional or accidental [5; 8; 9], correcting grammatical and lexical errors in texts written by second language authors [13], the ones that can be useful in the description of an interim language [1], those typical for school and university students [16] etc.

The issues of interference are thoroughly studied mainly those concerning negative interlanguage type thereof. Additionally, linguistics and methodologists have developed a number of classifications, generalizations and typologies of foreign language learners' errors [6; 14; 17]. Some focus on errors that can hardly be treated as typical but rather as those caused by individual difficulties, including inter alia the personal characteristics of memory, perception, intellect etc. [10], foreign languages mastered before or being learnt at the same time [18]. Academics elaborate techniques of modelling errors based on the data represented in the contemporary research on errors [10].

Publications on legal English cannot be treated as system-based but rather focusing on private issues: grammar difficulties, the issues of equivalency, translation techniques, the cases of synonymy, analysis of various legal sublanguages [12], and many other separate matters. There are articles dealing with prepositions in legal English texts, mainly based on corpus-based studies, which constitute the quantitative comparison analysis of prepositions in either legal documents of different jurisdictions or some of them also imply different languages [3]. There are studies with a special focus on translating particular types of prepositions [15], or those applying certain approaches to correcting prepositions [11], however, all of them deal with English for general purposes. As for translating Russian prepositions into English we have not revealed studies focusing on analysis of the corresponding errors. As for general studies we can refer to just few, elaborating on features of Russian prepositions revealed when teaching Russian prepositions to speakers of other languages [4].

We have already undertaken attempts to classify errors by Russian speakers in legal translation in general [7]. The present article focuses on preposition errors made by Russian speakers when translating texts of Russian contracts from Russian into English. The analysis presupposes preliminary typological comparison of the system of Russian and English prepositions specific to the texts of contracts.

2. Methods

The groups of students selected to be analyzed included second year university students. During the previous year they studied English for general purposes (one hour and thirty minutes per day, five days a week, the first year comprised 18 months of the first semester and 16 months of the second semester). The written translations were collected and summarized during the third semester (18 weeks, with 1,5 hours for legal translation and 8,5 hours for general English). The total number of students was 31.

The students under observation were grouped according to the efficiency of their work in the group, subgroups, and in pairs. The students were also characterized as having the approximate similarity as for the speed of material processing, perception, memory etc. and the similar level of the English language (78-93%), with all subcomponents of their communicative language competence being equally developed (sociocultural, sociolinguistic, linguistic, discursive, with strategic being the least developed).

When selecting the teaching material for legal translation purposes apart from federal standards and those of the University the students studied at (Moscow State Institute of International Relations) (those of general character) we relied on professional realism approach introduced by J. Biel [2]. The approach provides for the materials (legal documents) to be present in most jurisdictions, in high demand for employers, those frequently translated for market purposes. The data stipulated by J. Biel and our own investigation into the Russian legal translation market let us concluded that the type corresponding to the principle of professional realism is contract.

For teaching purposes, we limited the number of contract types and adapted them according to the general adaptation rules accepted for ESL/EFL purposes. The types of contract included the following (as well as several varieties thereof): guarantee agreement, sale and purchase agreement, lease agreement, work contract, insurance policy, agency agreement.

The texts of the corresponding contracts were shortened in general approximately by 35-40% at the initial stage and by 20-15% at the interim and final stages (mainly the repetitive passages). The percentage of unfamiliar words was increased by 0,3-0,5%. The interim stage included in general 4,5-5% of unknown words and collocations, these calculations were made excluding word derivatives etc.

The research was conducted applying the complementary methods of analysis and synthesis of theoretical foundations of the issues under study. Classification methods were also applied to analyze the preposition errors revealed. The method of description, as well as compare and contrast analysis were used to characterize English and Russian prepositions in the texts of contracts. Continuous sampling technique provides for selection of all prepositions spotted in the texts of Russian contracts (including cases with homonyms). This technique ensures the real distribution of prepositions in the texts. Another application of the technique concerned collection of students' preposition errors in translations of contracts from Russian into English. Upon application of continuous sampling technique, the data received were further analyzed, cases with homonymy, technical errors, misspelled prepositions, instances with syntactical transformation of sentences and clauses students resorted to for translation purposes were excluded.

3. Discussion

Upon the end of the third semester we had collected translations of 12 different contracts made by each student. 261 errors were revealed, after we discarded repetitions, accidental errors, cases of syntactical transformations eliminating the necessity of using prepositions, misspelled prepositions the remaining prepositions were divided into those of ontogenetic character (the ones predetermined by the complexity of prepositions of the English legal texts), caused by internal and external interference, as well as individual difficulties of students. Despite the differences in typology of the Russian and English languages English and Russian contacts have a few points of contact. First of all, these are relations they denote, mostly: spatial, temporal, causal, purpose-oriented, possessive, limiting.

Secondly, relations between objects and subjects and relations thereof to actions, states, quality.

Another similarity is parts of speech they are used with: nouns, prepositions, substantive adjectives, numerals used with verbs, nouns, prepositions, and adverbs. One more common feature is the morphological composition of prepositions: simple, complex, compound.

The differences are caused by flexion system of the Russian language and a very scarce system of flexions in English; a complex case system of the Russian language and few cases in English. The government of verbs and nouns follows different logic in English and Russian, including cases of double government, zero preposition cases. Another problem zone is differences in syntax, especially manifested in enumeration patterns, the word order determining the place of a preposition in the sentence, especially in questions.

The interchangeable prepositions usually have either semantic or stylistic differences. Such cases as (on/upon) in English, in Russian these are mostly «в» и «во», «с» и «со» etc. As well as those interchangeable in certain contexts such as “at” and “by” in English, frequently related to the verb government, or “within” and “in” which denote a change in meaning corresponding to Russian «в течении», «через».

Complex idiomatic types of prepositions, such as phraseological units, clichés, archaic prepositions or any other usage of prepositions which is stylistically predetermined («оплачиваемый приказу», «в дату») are constant roots of errors. However, compound prepositions and prepositional phrases have more specific meanings than simple and complex non-compound prepositions, that is why the frequency of errors with such prepositions is lower. Students also make fewer errors when the temporal and spatial relationships of prepositions are not interrupted by indirect transferred meaning of the verb.

In case of synonymic compound prepositions, a frequent cause of errors is when students confuse prepositions used in different similar compound prepositions (“в отношении” can be translated “regarding with”/“in respect to”/“in accordance to”/“according with”). Similarity with other parts of speech, mainly verbal adverbs, nouns, conjunctions, adverbs repeatedly gives rise to errors.

Multivalent prepositions and cases when there are no equivalents in English are causes of frequent errors as well.

There are instances when rules of translation provide for a necessity to change the syntactic pattern containing a preposition, including changes of passive patterns into active, or changes of a subject. In such situations students frequently do not resort to the required transformations, which is an additional cause of errors.

Internal interference is mainly predetermined by the previous and parallel courses of English for general purposes. The most frequent errors contradicting the generalized rules acquired by students are those denoting cases. During the preceding course of general English students learn that genitive case is denoted by preposition “of”, hence, they commonly make errors such as “party of a contract”, “shares of the company” instead of prepositions “to”, and “in” to be used correspondingly.

Various types of errors are to some extent caused by undeveloped, underdeveloped metacognitive, prognostic, transfer skills, usage of references. Individual difficulties students encounter can be determined by their temper, attention spam, efficiency of their verbal memory, involuntary memory, consciousness and unconsciousness of memorization, their reaction, reception.

4. Conclusions

For the purposes of our study we focused on texts of Russian contracts selected to be translated into English. Contracts were chosen subject to the principle of professional realism as applied to the Legal English classroom. The texts were adapted as for the length and complexity of syntactic patterns and intensity of unfamiliar vocabulary. Translation of prepositions from Russian into English is very complex and is fraught with difficulties for Russian learners of legal English and as such causes a number of errors. The error is those predetermined by genuine difficulties of a legal text – syntactic patterns prepositions are used in, government of verbs and nouns, cases used with different types of speech and prepositions, multivalence of prepositions mostly predetermined by context, stylistic peculiarities of legal texts determining the usage of prepositions. Thus, it is recommended both for teachers of legal translation and language learners, in case of autonomous learning, to analyze original texts before translating them, adopting a particular technique of reading for translating purposes. Such analysis shall reveal the corresponding typological difficulties of the original and target languages, ways to translate zero equivalence cases, multivalent terms, stylistically predetermined passages, complex syntactical patterns. In case of translating prepositions in the texts of contracts, the zones of potential errors are limited by the type of this legal document and the corresponding subtypes. The number of prepositions used in Russian contracts is also limited as well as the contexts they are used in. Thus, preliminary work with the potential error zones can contribute to prevention of most and major errors in students' translations.

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LSP or CLIL in Tertiary Education: Different Perspectives on the Choice

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Abstract

In the global strive for effectiveness and sustainable results in the Education World, teaching/learning of languages at the tertiary level has been scrutinized not only by the directly involved actors (teachers and students), but also by university administration, curricula designers and policy makers. Since, in most cases, university and college students are supposed to "continue" studying the language(s) they learnt at schools, the content of the courses, offered at universities, is pre-conditioned by the level acquired at school as well as the national or supranational (as in the European Union) language policies. Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) as well as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) have been recognized as the most popular approaches to language teaching/learning at universities all over the world. The article suggests the analysis (based on the experimental activities) of these approaches from the perspectives of universities of two countries - Russia and Lithuania. The authors will debate the advantages and challenges of LSP and CLIL on the basis of their application at Vilnius and Tomsk universities. Such factors as course duration, the balance between content and language learning, and some methodology aspects will be analyzed from teachers' and students' perspectives on the basis of the conducted surveys, interviews, teachers' observations and reflections.

Keywords: Content and language integrated learning, language for specific purposes, adjunct learning, learner-oriented teaching, language acquisition

1. Introduction

There is little left UNSAID about the applications of LSP or CLIL approaches in tertiary education; the theoretical aspects of these approaches have been developed since 1990s, besides, there has been done a lot of field research to supplement the theoretical principles and concepts with the "real classroom" data. Nevertheless, the choice between LSP and CLIL has not been determined and unanimously upheld yet; the effectiveness of this or that approach is subject to ever-changing teaching/learning environment, not only in terms of generation-specific features of teachers and learners, but also considering the peculiarities of pre-tertiary education systems, availability of experts, teachers' commitment and some other factors. The present paper is based on the authors' experience of teaching at the universities of Lithuania and Russia, the countries that about forty years ago shared a common vision of how to teach foreign languages at the tertiary level, but since then have developed their education policies separately. The authors do not claim to overview all the aspects of university language teaching in both countries, they offer the reflections based on their personal teaching experience and relate them to some theoretical issues of LSP and CLIL application.

2. Teaching LSP: what is the key word in LSP?

Purpose oriented teaching complies with the increased strive for effectiveness in all areas of human activities, that is one of undeniable characteristics of our society.

Although the term *Language for Specific Purposes* suggests the dominance of the word *language*, we believe the word "*purposes*" deserves some special consideration. For learners, the purpose might be more or less evident: the language needed is a specific content area (for example, specialization in family, criminal or commercial laws), but teachers, while creating an appropriate learning setting, should be able to relate the content area to specific language skills (comprehension and advising, presentation, arguing, summarizing, etc.).

3. Pre-requisites for a successful LSP course

The reflections on the accumulated experience in teaching LSP courses at the tertiary level allow us to distinguish several important elements of a successful language course.

As suggested above, **the awareness of a variety of specific purposes** is essential in designing, delivering or following a course. The content areas are possibly the easiest and less professionally demanding for a teacher to decide on. For example, the legal English course offered to the 2nd year students of the Law Faculty at Vilnius University closely reflect the range of major subjects, taught in the respective terms (3rd & 4th terms): civil law, criminal law, EU law, international Law.

What might be less evident for the learner are the things you can accomplish through the language course: how to use language effectively to argue your point of view, how to construct a debate to achieve your aim, how to stay consistent and coherent. Actually, these skills are to a large extent transversal, not language-specific; when teaching this or that language, we can highlight the universal value of such skills, and we can also teach the specific functional language – English, German etc. – that serves to better achieve the set goal, whether it is to present your argument or to convince your counterpart, to summaries the results of negotiations, to review an article or to write an academic report.

Learner-oriented teaching is another important condition for a successful LSP course. The university setting suggests a less rigid learning environment as compared to the one at schools or short-term training courses. As our annual interviews and students' feedback show, students view LSP classes as an opportunity to use the target language in classroom debates, discussions, in solving legal problems in teams/pairs, in corresponding with future clients, etc. These activities are easily adapted to the needs or interests of some particular groups of students, they promote individual involvement, let students decide on their immediate priorities and make adjustment to the suggested learning content. The ratio between face-to-face sessions and independent work on the legal English course at Vilnius University is 1:2, i.e. the 270-hour course comprises 96 contact hours and 174 hours of self-studies.

The amount of time allocated for independent work allows to individualize such 'traditional' for university tasks as presentations on a chosen topic (certain freedom in the choice of topics, in using various presentation styles and various media), it also gives students a chance to revise some particular language topics (general English grammar, limited vocabulary, etc.)

A considerable number of students' independent work is given to reading academic articles that are chosen according to the thematic area of students' course papers. For the legal English course, students have to write an extended summary of the articles they have read; then they present 'their findings' to their group mates during 'round-table' discussions, which proves to be useful in clarifying certain issues in the course papers.

4. Recommendations based on the LSP courses at Vilnius University

Since most school leavers in Lithuania have CEF Level B1 or Level B2, there is no need to spare university study time on the basic language issues; instead, Language for Specific Purposes courses are offered.

Designing an LSP course, the teacher should be well aware of the range of topics, relevant for the students, as well as the schedule of covering these topics/subjects. The information received in LSP classes is complimentary to that received in major subjects; it brings up different aspects of the issues under consideration (e.g. practice of law in other countries).

While delivering an LSP course, the teacher should exploit 'additional values' of a language course: awareness of language importance in various forms of communication, transversal skills, functional language. The suggested activities and tasks should resemble real-life situations and professional needs.

The LSP course should be learner-oriented. Such tasks as preparing individual presentation, choosing and reading academic articles, debating, round-table discussions promote students' engagement and raise the effectiveness of the course.

Let us consider the other focus point of the article as CLIL, often viewed as an alternative to LSP at the tertiary level.

5. Teaching CLIL: what is the main purpose in CLIL?

As we can see from the recent surveys (María Pérez-Cañado, 2011) CLIL is clearly on its way to becoming obligation, not an option, for higher education. Against the background of internationalization and globalization perspectives, educational institutions face the need to create borderless education that entails the challenge of programme competitiveness and language acquisition. CLIL is considered as a driver for both.

6. Pre-requisites for successful CLIL

CLIL is an approach to learning oriented towards achievement of a dual objective, where a foreign language is used as a means of teaching content and at the same time as the object of study. Specific nature of CLIL courses is the right balance between the difficulty of content and language. This balance can be achieved by careful planning and selection of content that has a linguistic potential, as well as a simultaneous selection of language that is most typical for a professional field (Ting, 2011).

In other words, **cL**il = simple content + complex language or **Cl**il = complex content + simple language. That is, the increase in linguistic complexity should be compensated by a decrease in professional content complexity and vice versa. Therefore, CLIL implies changes to the traditional repertories of language and non-language teachers, requiring the development of a special approach where educators work collaboratively to formulate new didactics for "a real integration and function in language teaching" (Marsh, 2008).

7. CLIL Practice at Russian University

The transmission to CLIL-based teaching in Russian universities was not so easy. The main reason for it was that the approach has not been well-termed yet and had the lack of practice base. In spite of quite "long existence" in the world pedagogy, CLIL application is compounded with some differences in cultural backgrounds and social-educational patterns, established in the world countries.

All said above can be underpinned with the following quotations: "there is no single blueprint of content and language integration that could be applied in the same way in different countries – no model is for export" (Marsh, 2012)"; "CLIL resembles acupuncture: it works but nobody seems to know why" (Van de Craen, 2007) that required own field research; "the political support for CLIL teaching is generally strong, concrete guidance and support for teachers implementing it are largely absent" (Wiesemes, 2009).

Thereby, on the one hand, CLIL format promises much but on the other hand, it remains some questions open, and here are only some of them: which language level should teachers possess to be able to deliver a CLIL course? Can a CLIL course be of a general academic nature, e.g. academic writing, scientific communication? What should be the nature of cooperation between language and content departments? Can this course repeat some content previously learned in a native language? Is language or content a primary objective of a CLIL course?

The table below gives the succinct specification of the CLIL practice at Tomsk Polytechnic University and presents the types of learning activities and the important "quality parameters" as Lesson pace and Student engagement.

CLIL practice at Tomsk Polytechnic University

Practice 1	Practice 2
Course: Computer Aided Analysis (Bachelor 3 year) **Integration into programme**: extension to a previously taught course **Proficiency in English (professor/students)**: B1/-A2-B1-B2 **Use of Russian**: 100 % **Teaching objective**: to teach how to operate information in English **Organization**: translation of an article into Russian **Lesson pace**: low **Student engagement**: low	**Course**: Powerful Gas Lasers (Master 1 year) **Integration into programme**: new course **Proficiency in English (professor/students)**: B2/A1-B1 **Use of Russian**: no **Teaching objective**: to teach professional concepts in English **Organization**: game, discussion, peer teaching **Lesson pace**: low **Student engagement**: high
Practice 3	**Practice 4**
Course: Algorithms and Data Structures (Bachelor 3 year) **Integration into programme**: extension to a	**Course**: Introduction to Databases (Bachelor 3 year) **Integration into programme**: extension to a

Russian-mediated co-requisite **Proficiency in English (professor/students)**: B2/B1 **Use of Russian**: bilingual textbook **Teaching objective**: to teach professional concepts in English **Organization**: advising students in preparing a lab report **Lesson pace**: low **Student engagement**: moderate	previously taught course **Proficiency in English (professor/students)**: B2/B1 **Use of Russian**: to explain difficult concepts **Teaching objective**: to teach professional concepts in English **Organization**: active learning techniques **Lesson pace**: low **Student engagement**: high

Let us give the clarification to each case presented in the table.

Practice 1. The objective of the course was to develop general academic skills and was not focused on professional content directly. The students were taught to translate technical texts, specifics of English phrases and terminology. Although the place of the discipline is defined in the programme, its content seems inconsistent and disagrees with programme objectives. It is not clear how the skills of analysing, searching and processing data are integrated into the whole course. Observation showed that insufficient linguistic preparedness of a teacher additionally increased complexity of the course. The language level of students was also different and sometimes exceeded that of the teacher. As a result, the native language was constantly used and the foreign language failed as a communication tool; cognitive processes ran in Russian as well. This negatively influenced students' motivation and engagement.

Practice 2. The purpose of the lesson was to get acquainted with the basic concepts of the subject area, which fully corresponds to the CLIL format. At the same time, it should be noted that the volume of knowledge has been significantly reduced and the pace of training dropped as compared with a similar discipline implemented in Russian. The level of proficiency in the teacher's knowledge is much higher than the language level of the students. Active methods are used; this ensures high involvement of students in the process, interaction with one another, high concentration and interest. This practice can be considered as successful.

Practice 3. The educational objective is not clearly stated. In part, it touches upon the terminology. The course is not clearly placed in the programme. Ambiguous objectives lead to the lack of motivation among students because it is difficult to learn something without firm understanding for what you are doing it. Pedagogical methods are obscure. Communication observed during the lesson did not lead to any learning outcomes.

Practice 4. The lesson objective corresponds to the CLIL model, the level of the language proficiency of a teacher and students is adequate. The students are actively involved, although linguistic materials have not been normalized. The teacher conducts the lesson in English. Russian is sometimes used to explain terms. Active methods are used. Students' engagement is high.

8. Conclusions

It is evident that different pedagogical approaches appear in response to emerging professional and social needs and challenges. The application of LSP and CLIL at Vilnius and Tomsk universities do not allow deciding which one is better. The choice is determined by goals and available resources (human and material). The main principle in choosing is feasibility and applicability at a place. There is no need to start CLIL if you do not have the resource or special need for it, the chase for being innovative can lead to the results with the "minus sign". Meanwhile, if LSP is a well-established practice and complies with the university policy and curricula, there is no need to replace it with new "more innovative" approaches.

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The Main Criteria of Constructing Task-Based Reading Activities for ESP Learners

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Abstract

The target goal of the current paper is to thoroughly elaborate and introduce the main criteria of constructing task-based reading activities for ESP learners with the specialization of architecture and construction. There are several reasons why ESP students may benefit from a task-supported or a task-based syllabus. The majority of second language acquisition researchers agree that instruction is more effective when it is primarily meaning-based. But at the same time, it's also supplemented by timely focus on language features such as grammar, lexis, pronunciation and pragmatics. Tasks have the potential to generate many opportunities for meaningful language use. By definition, tasks are meaning based. Tasks, however, also provide a platform for language focused instruction. Proponents of task based approaches do subscribe to both the ideas of learner-centered education and learning by doing. Learning the language via task-based practice clearly involves learning by doing as students are engaged in activities that resemble what they do in real life using the language. Last but not least, tasks, if they are carefully selected, can also provide students with practice that's relevant to their academic, occupational, vocational, or social survival purposes. In the ESP context task-based approaches stimulate not only language competence in all four skills, but they also help to develop the skills necessary for success in working life, such as: group-work skills, problem solving skills, presentation skills, discussion skills, negotiation skills, making compromises, intercultural competence in an international setting, study skills, learner motivation. Thus, in the current paper a comprehensive light will be cast upon the four main criteria ("focus on meaning", "communicative problem solving", "relationship with the real world", "non-linguistic outcome"), which should undoubtedly be taken into consideration in the process of constructing a task-based reading activity for the ESP context.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, Task-Based Language Teaching, reading skills development

The aim of the current paper is to elaborate and introduce the main criteria of constructing task-based reading activities for ESP learners specializing in architecture and construction, and thus provide conditions and perspectives for the integration of task-based reading activities into the ESP course program in National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia.

Over the past few decades, task-based language teaching has been integrated in foreign language education programs to improve the quality of language teaching, however its characteristics and criteria have not been extensively studied. Based on constructivist learning theories of learning and teaching methodologies of communicative language, the task-based approach of language teaching has been founded due to some limitations of the traditional presentation, practice and production approach (PPP) and had the point of view of language teaching, outlining the process of presentation, practice, and performance. Hence it is important to note that language learning is a process of communication and social interaction development rather than a product internalized by practicing language elements, and that learners master the target language more powerfully when exposed to significant task-based activities naturally [6].

To understand the task-based language teaching deeply and to define its approaches first of all we must define the task itself. Professor Jack C. Richards gives the following definitions to a task:

- it is something that learners do, or carry out, using their present language resources or those that have been provided in pre-task work;
- it has an outcome which is not simply linked to learning language, though language acquisition may occur as the learner carries out the task;
- it is relevant to learners' needs;
- it involves a focus on meaning;
- usage of communication strategies and interactional skills;
- it provides opportunities for reflection on language use [5].

One benefit of the task is the fact that they can integrate a focus on meaning with a focus on language, and can also provide students with practice that's relevant to their academic, occupational, vocational, or social survival purposes. Needs analysis is the best way to find out what tasks might be useful for and relevant to a particular group of ESP learners.

Task-based reading skills development is one of the core aspects of task-based instruction as a complex multilayer approach to language teaching. So, reading as a communicative activity, the reading purpose in the ESP classroom and the concept of task-based reading instruction should be logically and interrelatedly involved in the process of constructing task-based reading activities for an ESP classroom.

It is a widespread assumption, that reading is more interesting and the text information is better understood and recalled when reading is purpose driven, it follows that creating purpose in the classroom reading situation will enhance readers' interest and performance. But how narrowly should the concept of purpose be defined? In the broadest sense, even the most traditional textbook comprehension exercises provide students with the purpose of reading a text for specific information.

Yet traditional comprehension questions generally address all information in the text in an undifferentiated manner. This kind of even, comprehensive coverage is well intentioned but unfortunately results in a levelling of content, as if all ideas or aspects of the text were equally important. In short, there is no reading perspective. Beyond comprehension exercises, purposeful reading can also be part of whole communicative tasks in the foreign language classroom. Nunan defines a communicative task as a "piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on meaning rather than form" [3]. TBLT uses communicative tasks as the key unit for creating language learning activities. It describes one of the ways of developing intermediate level reading skills through a variety of pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading tasks. Reading in a target language is a complex interactive process that encompasses two important acquisition areas – understanding information and enhancing language proficiency. The complex nature of the process necessitates special approaches to task development.

In general, task-based activities, lessons, or sequences of lessons have been described in terms of three phases. These three phases reflect a chronological order in which they occur.

- **pre-task stage**: this stage includes the range of activities that teachers and students can do before they begin the task.
- **during-task phase**: concerns the task itself.
- **post-task phase**: this phase entails activities and procedures that are completed as a follow up to task performance.

So, the extensive theoretical and practical analysis of the target research materials has brought us to the detailed elaboration of the following four main criteria of TBL reading:

- **Focus on meaning**: Learners are exclusively focused on conveying the meaning as the language or the form is not the primary focus. The form is perceived not intentionally but intuitively and it is supposed to be consolidated in the process of carrying out the tasks.
- **Communicative problem solving**: Group work and pair work activities, where learners carry out a kind of survey and report their finding to the rest of the class. Activities of these type are introduced below.
- **Relationship with the real world**: Authentic professional topic and well adapted subject-specific material, which is not too long to bore the learners and not too easy to seem useless waste of time.
- **Non-linguistic outcome**: Tasks are assessed in terms of the non-linguistic outcomes of the task. So, the teacher is not only interested in the quality of the language used during task performance, but also whether the actual communicative purpose of the task has been met or not (*see:* the nine task-based activities introduced as extra activities in the end of the paper).

As it has been stated above, on the basis of the four main criteria a series of task-based reading lessons has been elaborated and practically experimented with the 2nd year students (B1) of National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia. As it is clear, the English language teaching in this context is very specific and it touches upon the fundamental professional issues that are interesting and necessary for the future architects or civil engineers to learn. Hereafter one of the task-based reading lessons is introduced, where 3-phase theoretically founded practical activities are successively presented after the text titled "Types of Houses":

TEXT: ***Types of Houses***

British Houses

The largest and most expensive type of house is a **detached house**, which is not joined to other houses and is surrounded by a garden.

Semi-detached houses or **semis** are extremely common in Great Britain. They are built in pairs with one house joined to the other one along one side. A typical semi-detached house has two floors and three bedrooms.

Terraced houses are built mainly for working-class people. Four or more houses are joined together in a row. There is little or no front garden, so the front door of each house opens onto a pavement. They usually have two floors with two bedrooms upstairs.

Cottages are small, very old village houses.

Bungalows have only one story, and this makes them especially popular with older people.

High-rise **block of flats**, sometimes over 20 stories with several flats on each floor, were built in many cities in the mid20th century.

American Houses

Most houses are **detached**, but there are also **duplexes**, which are similar to British semi-detached houses. **Mansions** are very large houses where rich people live.

In the cities many people rent an **apartment** in an **apartment block**. An apartment with only one room may be called a **studio** or a **loft**. A building in which the apartments are owned by the people who live in them is called a **condominium**, or in some places a **co-op** or even **condo**.

Armenian Houses

All types of houses can be found in Armenia too. But unlike the British and the Americans, many Armenians do not live in detached houses but in block of flats. These are **residential buildings** that have five to nine floors, though a lot of fourteen and a few sixteen-storied buildings have appeared in the recent years. Because of the overpopulation of the capital, the old houses have been **pulled down** and **high-rises** have been built instead. Today, those who can afford rich housing build new detached houses, and their number has increased considerably. These houses look like **castles or fortresses**, with a little land attached. Some are really well designed.

Pre-Reading Phase

The pre-task phase aims to prepare the performance of the task in order to make sure that it is conducive to language acquisition. Peter Skehan suggests this can be achieved by introducing activities that enable students to focus on language in addition to content while they're engaged in the task itself. Two types of pre-task work can assist in meeting this goal, **language-focused** activities and **content-focused** activities. Language-focused activities may introduce new language, for example, in the form of vocabulary or grammar. They may also recycle existing linguistic resources, for example, reminding students of vocabulary items and grammar they have previously covered. Content-focused activities engage learners with the topic of the forthcoming task.

1. ***Pre reading discussion – prediction** – **Look at the following picture and try to guess the topic of the text: suggest titles that would match these picture (pictures are provided).***

2. ***Group Work – Match the following pictures and the words or word-combinations (pictures are provided).***

a) rainbow house b) loft/studio c) edge house d) cabin e) igloo f) dancing house g) hut h) wheeling apartment.

3. ***Vocabulary preparation procedure*** – **Skim through the following words in BrE and AmE and try to find their equivalents in Armenian**.

BrE	***AmE***
semi-detached house	*duplex*
block of flats	*apartment building/a. block*
flat	*apartment*
granny flat	*mother-in-law apartment*
bungalow	*ranch house*
terraced house	*row house*

While-Reading Phase

In the while-task stage, learners focus on actually completing the task. At this stage, students may work individually, in pairs, or groups. Teachers may opt to work with students closely, helping with task-relevant language, ensuring that the intended task procedures are followed, or assessing learner language and progress the task outcome. Alternatively, teachers might assume a more passive role and offer help to students only when communication problems arise, or when students request it. In the while-task phase, a primary focus on meaning is encouraged, whereas the post-task stage is generally seen as a platform for promoting more explicit attention to form, grammar, and language.

1. Information transfer activity:

Fill in the table with the types of houses that can be found in each country

British Houses	**American Houses**	**Armenian Houses**

2. Developing note-taking strategy and checking comprehension

Make notes to complete these sentences:

- Semi-detached houses or semis are built in…
- A typical semi-detached house has…
- Cottages are…
- Bungalows have only…
- Mansions are…
- An apartment with only one room may be called a…

Post-Reading Phase

There are a number of ways in which the teachers can facilitate an increased orientation towards form and language features. In this case, the teacher can act as a moderator. The public presentation of the product is expected to generate more formal and planned language use. Finally, as part of the post-task phase, the teacher may engage students in overtly focused language activities. This could target linguistic features which are relevant to or appear problematic for the students during task performance.

1. **Reacting to what they read:**

Did you find anything interesting in the text?
Was there anything surprising for you?

2. **Pair – work activity:**
   - Think about the house of your dream and describe it to your friend. Then find out his/her version and share it with the class.
   - Read the following hints and match the descriptions with a corresponding picture, writing the name of the type of house next to each picture *(pictures are provided).*

a) These types of houses are attached to each other in a long row. They are usually found in towns and cities and generally are two to four-storied buildings.
b) These houses share a central wall. They usually have a small garden in front and a larger garden at the back which is divided by a fence.
c) A two-storied flat.
d) A house where all the rooms are on the ground floor. As there are no stairs inside, many elderly people prefer living in it when they retire.
e) A stone building which is part of a farm. Some of them have thatched or tilled roof. Today many people who work in the cities buy this type of house, so that they have a place to go for a weekend.
f) An expensive and comfortable flat at the top of a tall building.
g) An apartment building in which each flat is owned by the person living in it but the building and shared areas are owned by everyone together.
h) A house covered with leaves and flowers.

Extra Activities: *(pictures are provided)*

1. You are a realtor from “Houses for Sale” Real Estate Agency. Advise the house pictured below.
2. You are a clerk. Two (or more) other students are probable buyer(s). Recommend the detached house pictured below.
3. You want to rent a country cottage for your family. Phone the landlady and ask her all possible questions.
4. Work out a plan of an ideal flat for a family of 3(5) people.
5. Describe the interior design of the house pictured below. What changes would you make to make it more comfortable and modern.
6. You have moved to a new flat in a Yerevan Suburb. You like it. Bring all possible arguments to persuade your friend to move to this district. Speak in favor of the place.
7. Speak about the advantages or disadvantages
   a) of your present home,
   b) having a country house.
8. Discuss with your friend
   a) your family country house.
   b) what is a well (or badly) planned flat?
9. Write a thank-you note to the parents of your friends for an imaginary weekend stay at their home.

So, task-based reading is based on the belief that students may learn more effectively when their minds are focused on the task, rather than on the language they are using. The activity must reflect real life and learners focus on meaning; they are free to use any language they want. Besides, task-based approaches stimulate language competence in all four skills but they also help develop the skills necessary for success in working life, not just in studying languages.

It should be noted in conclusion, that the criteria of task-based reading skills development of ESP learners analyzed in the current paper may surely help LSP (Languages for Specific Purposes) teachers to devise and conduct task-based reading lessons for the development of the professional communicative language competences of the ESP learners.

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The Role of English for Specific Purposes in an Aeronautical Design Contest

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Abstract

English for specific purposes (ESP) courses fulfil an essential function in tertiary education to prepare content students for their academic studies and future career fields. In a globalised world, demands on learners to actually use professional English are increasing and may already occur during university studies. An example of such a scenario are international engineering contests that challenge students on technical-mathematical, financial, logistical, organisational and linguistic levels. The current paper presents the role of ESP in an aeronautical student design competition hosted by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA). This annual contest requires participating teams to design, build and fly a model aeroplane according to certain operational parameters, within a tight schedule and under highly selective conditions. Through several competitive stages, the initial number of above 100 teams is reduced, and the winning team is determined after a sophisticated scoring process at the contest site in the United States of America. Before the teams are admitted to the competition flyoff, they need to write and submit a design proposal in October and a design report in February. Only if both documents are accepted, will the respective team be allowed to participate in the flyoff in April. Particularly non-US student teams are thus faced with the challenge of producing decisive technical documents in English to achieve a good final ranking in the competition. The author's institute has encouraged student participation in this contest for four years now to boost learner motivation and compete with other teams on a global scale. The paper finishes by depicting the team results from these contest years and by drawing conclusions on the potential of engineering design contests for higher education.

Keywords: English, ESP, technical documentation, language use, engineering student contest, higher education

1. Introduction

English for specific purposes (ESP) is a heterogeneous field with different manifestations, contexts and learning scenarios. Apart from ESP courses, for instance, university students face other scenarios in which they need to apply English as a foreign language (EFL) for academic and professional communication. International engineering contests represent such events that challenge student teams at multiple levels. Not only do they require competing teams to merge mathematical, scientific and technical knowledge with linguistic skills, but they also afford students the opportunity to immediately compare their own achievements with those of other teams.

1.1 The Design/Build/Fly (DBF) Contest

The annual Design/Build/Fly (DBF) contest is hosted by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), Raytheon Missile Systems and the Cessna Aircraft Company. It is a global competition that invites international university student teams to design, construct and fly an original unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) according to certain rules and operational parameters. The flyoff with the teams' demonstration flights of their designs alternately takes place in Tucson, Arizona, and Wichita, Kansas, in April each year.

The whole competition adheres to a strict schedule with the registration of teams finishing in October for each contest season. Registration is only complete when teams also submit a design proposal, which serves as the basis for the organising committee to rank the "top 100 proposals plus ties" [1] for the acceptance list. This first selective criterion is followed by the submission of a fully-fledged design report by a February deadline. The point score given to this design report then determines the flight line for the flyoff in April, and after the aircraft designs admitted to the flyoff have passed a technical inspection, a ground mission and several flight missions, the final score is established and communicated to the teams at the contest site [2]. This shows that student teams undergo several assessment stages of their contest documents, aircraft design and flight performance, which leads to a drastic reduction in the number of teams from the initial registration to the actual final ranking.

1.2 Rationale for the Participation in a Design Contest

As the DBF contest blends technical-mathematical, financial, logistical, organisational and linguistic challenges, it closely resembles real-life engineering assignments. Firms recruit engineers who “combine technical expertise with practical ability, backed up by strong interpersonal skills, including an awareness of commercial realities” [3]. Furthermore, authentic engineering tasks foster student motivation [4], and engineering competitions are viewed as best practice in project-based learning (PjBL) [5]. The DBF contest resembles the Conceive-Design-Implement-Operate (CDIO) approach promoted by engineering educators [6], and it is related to Lave and Wenger’s situated learning theory [7]. Apart from the core scientific and mathematical skills required from graduate engineers, “effective oral and written communication in professional and lay domains” [8] is crucial for a successful career in engineering. For these reasons, the Institute of Aviation at the FH Joanneum (FHJ) University of Applied Sciences in Graz, Austria, has encouraged student teams to participate in the DBF competition (joanneum Aeronautics, jA). Participation in this contest is particularly demanding for international teams, as students need to complete an elaborate technical task as well as use English for communication and documentation, which often is a foreign or second language for such teams.

2. The Role of ESP in the Contest

ESP manifests itself throughout the DBF contest and assumes a central function for student teams.

It comprises all main language competences, from receptive to productive and from written to oral skills, which may be further subdivided into various text types and communicative events. First, concerning reading, students access the contest website and download the contest rules, which was a 28-page document for the 2017/2018 competition [1]. Teams usually also consult winning reports from previous contests to prepare their own documents. Second, in the area of writing, the core contest documents are the design proposal, the design report and a three-view drawing that need to be submitted to the organising committee. However, writing further occurs in the completion of administrative documents, such as registration forms, shipping lists and customs declarations, as well as in email correspondence with contest organisers and potential sponsors. In addition, students tend to create public relations documents, texts for their team website and contributions to social media with the aim of drawing attention to their participation in the contest. Finally, planning the trip to the USA involves written communication to organise accommodation and transportation. Third, there is the area of spoken interaction. At the flyoff, students communicate orally with DBF judges, AIAA engineers, contest organisers and other teams. During the whole trip, they meet US citizens in all walks of life as well as international travellers and company employees, such as airline representatives, car rental agents or shop assistants. The 2016/2017 joanneum Aeronautics team, for instance, even recorded a short video interview with the then executive director of the AIAA.

3. Team Results over Four Contest Seasons

In the past four seasons, FHJ student teams participated in the DBF contest with their original aircraft designs. Table 1 shows the joanneum Aeronautics team rankings in bold in comparison with the total number of eligible teams at important stages in the competition and the score achieved on the jA design report. The table also reflects the influence of the report score on the queue for the flyoff and illustrates the good results achieved by all FHJ teams. Students’ ESP skills, particularly in technical writing, thus considerably contribute to the overall team result.

Table 1: Overview of the jA DBF team results from the past four contest seasons (data from the AIAA final results releases posted on the competition website [9], [10], [11], [12])

Year	**Contest Season**	**Initial Entries of Candidate Teams**	**Design Proposal (Final DBF Accept. List)**	**Design Report (Queue for Flyoff)**	**Report Score (max. 100)**	**Final Rank after Contest Flyoff**	**Notes**
2017/ 2018	22nd	134	**57**/101	**15**/91	**86.33**	**16**/77	2nd-best internat./16
2016/ 2017	21st	138	**11**/104	**5**/95	**90.63**	**11**/73	3rd-best internat./14
2015/ 2016	20th	145	–/137	**15**/80	**91.00**	**7**/66	best internat./25
2014/ 2015	19th	100	–/–	**19**/84	**90.50**	**26**/65	1st jA season

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The DBF contest affords students the opportunity to test their engineering knowledge and skills in a scenario which comes close to real-life workplace assignments. Furthermore, student teams can see how their designs fare in comparison with those produced by international peers. A number of challenges adhere to the competition that seem to additionally encourage students to master the tasks set. These include the fact that the rules, requirements and missions change from year to year, so that a new design needs to be delivered in each contest season. Similarly, the late freezing of rules means that teams may have been working on an aircraft which then has to be redesigned to meet the changed regulations. In other words, there is a short period for teams to complete their designs from the rules release to the final design, and this period is even shorter for some international teams, as academic terms and thus preparations for the contest may start later than at US American universities. International teams also face more complicated shipping issues than US American ones, and they need to create technical documents in English, for them a foreign or second language.

Despite or maybe because of all these circumstances, student motivation tends to be high each year. In fact, the DBF contest seems to boost students' team spirit, confidence and enthusiasm. In addition, it makes the ESP share in a team's success visible and tangible, which leads to an added value of ESP for students, who are eager to achieve a high ranking in the competition. The contest also strengthens students' ties with faculty and the engineering community, and it creates public relations value for a team's university. Finally, students gain international experience and use English in various domains and communicative events. In brief, the DBF contest merges features of an engineering project and a business case into a multilevel challenge with educational merit for all participating teams. Educators in other settings, therefore, may find similar competitions in their students' career fields to prompt participation by a team from their university.

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Language Teacher Training

"I Keep Returning to it, so Something Must Be Happening": Swedish Foreign Language Teacher Students' Conceptions of ICT and Digital Tools in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

The annual report "The Swedes and the Internet" from 2017 states that close to 100% of teenagers connect to the internet on a regular basis (Davidsson & Thoresson, 2017), mainly for social and recreational purposes. In relation to school work in general, around 80% of secondary and upper-secondary pupils report that they use the internet and digital tools on a regular basis. For younger learners the figure is around 55%. The inclusion of ICT and digital literacy has been a mainstay in the steering documents since 2011, and in 2017 the presence of digital literacy was further strengthened and specific knowledge requirements were introduced for several subjects. However, the area of pedagogical use of ICT and the promotion of digital literacy in foreign language (FL) teaching remains an under-researched area. The present study addresses this issue from the vantage point of FL teacher education. The paper reports on an analysis of 12 FL teacher students' views on the use of ICT and digital tools in FL teaching and learning. Reflective diaries written as part of an introductory course in language education theory, including a practicum period, were collected. Based on the frameworks of teacher cognition (Borg, 2015), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982), and agency (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011), the diary entries were analysed using a combination of qualitative content analysis (Creswell, 2014) and discurse analysis (Gee, 2011) to identify recurrent themes in the student's writing, and to establish the students' perceptions of their own sense of agency regarding their present assumptions and future projections of why, how and when to include ICT and digital tools in their teaching. The results indicate that the FL teacher students' own lack of pedagogical models initially restrict their sense of self-efficacy and agency in this respect, but also that the interplay between language education theory and teacher practicum may offer a stimulating arena to try out and reflect on ICT and digital tools for pedagogical purposes, potentially challenging previous held views. The results will be discussed in relation to FL teacher education and teaching practices.

Keywords: agency, FL teacher education, FL teaching and learning, ICT, reflection, self-efficacy

1. Introduction

This study is set in the context of Swedish foreign language (FL) teacher education and concerns FL teacher students' cognitions regarding ICT and digital tools and their pedagogically justified inclusion in FL teaching. Sweden is one of the world's most connected countries and surveys indicate that close to 100% of teenagers connect to the Internet on a regular basis. Around 80% of secondary and upper-secondary pupils report that they regularly use digital tools as part of the school work [1]. In 2017, requirements for the inclusion of ICT and digital literacy were strengthened and specific knowledge requirements were introduced for a number of school subjects [2].

These two factors should pave the way for beneficial conditions for a pedagogically sound inclusion of digital tools in FL teaching. The area is under-researched in the Swedish context but published studies suggest that ICT teachers find it difficult to navigate in the vast number of digital resources that are available, both in terms of technology and pedagogical considerations [3]. Another issue is that students in pre-service FL teacher programs in many cases have substantial experience from using the internet and social media for personal needs and communication, but their experiences as pupils/learners in school have not provided them with models for the pedagogical use of ICT and digital tools. As pointed out by Zhang and Martinovic [4], as well as others, for instance Barnes, Marateo & Ferris [5], these students have not reflected on how their use of digital tools affects their own digital development. In other words, their use of ICT is quantitatively extensive but qualitatively constrained.

The present study seeked to address these challenges among Swedish FL teacher students through the following questions:

- Which factors shape the FL teacher students' cognitions with regard to pedagogical applications of ICT and digital tools?
- How do the FL teacher students view their own possibilities to include ICT and digital tools in their future teaching?

2. Theoretical framework

The framework of the study is that of teacher cognition, or more specifically student teacher cognition. It seeks to probe into the "inner lives" of the teacher students, assuming that the experience-based cognitions held by the teacher students will influence their current thinking and projected scope of action [6]. The views held by the FL teacher students at the time of data collection were analyzed through the lens of self-efficacy, which for the purposes of the present study is taken to be the individual's expressions of how well he/she can "execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" [7]. I take this to be a 'current state of affairs' and a matter of to what extent the teacher student feels that he/she is in control of the present situation. Consequently, I do not use self-efficacy as an expression of a future projection of agency. This projected scope of action is captured by the notion of agency. I use Beauchamp & Thomas's definition of agency as the "performance within teaching contexts", and an "empowerment to move ideas forward, to reach goals or even to transform the context" [8]. In the context of the present study, agency thus refers to the FL teacher students' projections of future capacity to act as a teacher. In other words, I see digital agency as one very important component of teacher identity, and one that is not always emphasized in the TPAC model.

3. The study

3.1 Participants

The participants in the present study were 12 FL teacher students enrolled on a three-semester M Ed program. The students had completed their subject studies in one or more of the following languages: English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish, and they were studying to qualify as secondary or upper-secondary FL teachers. This study is part of a larger project where Swedish and Finnish FL teacher students are followed throughout their M Ed. The data collection for the present paper comes from the Swedish cohort and the first semester of study. Their linguistic histories vary: four students have L1 Swedish, four students have L1 Spanish, two students have L1 Italian, one student has L1 Polish, and one student has L1 Finnish. Their ages ranged from 24 to 35. All students had some previous teaching experience and experience in using technology for information search, social interaction and – to some extent – from educational contexts.

3.2 Data

The data for the present study was taken from a writing assignment during the FL language teacher students' initial course in language pedagogy. The course consisted of 12 seminars over six weeks, covering the following topics: theories of language learning, principles for foreign language teaching, communicative language teaching, task-based language teaching, form-focused instruction, and foreign language development and assessment. Issues relating to ICT and digital tools were considered throughout the course, and special attention was paid to these questions in Seminar 5.

As part of the requirements for this initial course, the students were asked to write a *cumulative reflection log*, where they made entries after each of the 12 seminars. They were free to choose the theme for each entry based on the course content, readings and seminar discussions. They wrote individually and made their entries consecutively in an electronic document that they kept throughout the course. For every third entry they were instructed to go back and critically re-read their previous entries, and include this in their further considerations, hence the label cumulative. As the final entry the teacher students were asked to write a meta-reflection on their own learning process. At the end of the course, the document containing the reflections, critical readings and the meta-log was handed in.

This assignment was not graded. These documents from each of the 12 participants constitute the data for the present study.

3.3 Data analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used to identify recurrent content categories [10]. Once these content categories were established, each occurrence was further investigated using discourse analytical categories [11]. Based on Ruohotie-Lyhty's analytical categories, opening and restricting discourses were identified to uncover the discursive patterns used by the FL teacher students to express notions of self-efficacy and agency [12]. This category, *discourses of reconciliation*, is suggested to capture fluctuating lines of development.

4. Results and analysis

The following broad content categories were identified in the FL teacher students' reflections containing references to ICT and digital tools. The figures in brackets indicate the number of occurrences identified for each theme.

- ICT as a general phenomenon (99)
- Proficiency development > reception, production, interaction (21)
- Feedback and assessment > formative assessment, peer assessment (12)
- Form-focused instruction > grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation (6)
- Literature and cultural competence (5)

As can be seen, general considerations relating to ICT dominated the material. This is not surprising given the introductory nature of the course, the students' initial limited knowledge of language pedagogy, and their relatively limited teaching experience. There is also a clear trend in the material for the more specific categories to emerge gradually as the course unfolded.

In the following, the two major content categories, 'ICT as a general phenomenon' and 'proficiency development' will be considered.

Within the broad content category of 'ICT as a general phenomenon' two prominent themes emerged.

4.1 Teacher authority and the role of the teacher

As can be seen from the following examples, the FL teacher students were quite concerned with classroom management issues, fearing that the presence of computers and other digital devices will disrupt teaching and challenge the authority of the teacher. In addition, the fear is voiced that the pupils will get access to the Internet "in an unchecked way".

Restricting discourses

> *"My experience is that, if unchecked, using ICT becomes an obstacle to teaching because the pupils have access to the whole of the Internet" (2.5)*
> *"We could just as well abolish all classroom teaching and let the pupils sit in front of a computer with recorded lessons and with no contact with a teacher." (4.5)*
> *"I have often been the person who has said that the use of computers in the classroom is largely a way of making the pupils focus on everything but the teaching." (8.5)*

Opening discourses

There are, however, students who voice a more assertive stance towards ICT and who project their agency quite clearly.

> *"As a future teacher I feel considerable responsibility in relation to my pupils and their varying needs". (5.3)*
> *"The internet has opened up new possibilities for both teachers and pupils to use various tools in the classroom, and with regard to language teaching I think that these tools can be used in a creative and constructive way in schools". (7.5)*

4.2 The general usefulness of ICT

Restricting discourses

Student 4 sees few positive aspects of ICT in the language classroom, and refers to perceived general trends in society:

> *"The value of ICT is overestimated because it contributes to not only pupils but the whole of society becoming lazier and less interested in acquiring knowledge when all information is available on the Internet" (4.5)*

Student 4 initially equals ICT with the Internet as a container of information and sees no or little pedagogical value in bringing it into the classroom. However, the student then goes on to discuss the use of digital tools in the classroom where, interestingly, the possibility of using ICT as a source of information is now seen as an asset but with no added pedagogical potential:

> *"There are probably a number of advantages in using ICT when it comes to gaining access to information and its dissemination, but the use of ICT and multimodal content itself in combination with certain gadgets and apps – does it really make teaching better in comparison to the time when ICT was not used at all"? (4.5)*

Opening discourses

Student 5 is also concerned with the development in ICT, but takes a rather different stance to the issue compared to Student 4. Student 5 is also worried about the vast quantities of unsorted information available on the Internet, and expresses a concern about knowing less than her students. However, Student 5 frames the concerns in terms of the future work as a teacher:

> *"I will become a teacher at a point in time when pupils can access large quantities of information … outside of my control. … Even now I worry about how to set the limits. (5.3)*

Student 5 voices her anxieties more from the pupils' points of view and also takes a learner and learning perspective. She expresses a clear notion of agency in her future work as a teacher even though she sees obstacles:

> *"As a student I'm prepared to learn as much as possible [about ICT] but I cannot be expected to know everything … and I can't compete with a super smart iPad or phone that can find all sorts of possible answers." (5.3)*

After a few more seminars, the views of Student 5 have become more positive. One explanation for this could be that she no longer views ICT as just a vast and unmanageable ocean, but is able to relate to it in terms of concrete digital tools that have a specific pedagogical purpose.

> *"ICT can also come in the form of flashcards [Quizlet] where the pupils work with new vocabulary and they can also compete with each other … So far, we have seen how ICT has changed to become a valuable tool for language teaching. (5.6)*

4.3 Proficiency development

Generally, the FL teacher students' discourses on specific skills areas are more opening than restricting although both types are represented in the material:

> *"One method that we have been discussing during the seminars is to record small-group conversations. This method can have the drawback that it impedes some students just as some students are impeded by talking in front of the whole class." (1.C3)*
>
> *"If a conversation is recorded the teacher can form an opinion about the pupils' strategies and their interactions." (5.7)*

A discourse of reconciliation

One of the most developed lines of reasoning is given by Student 8, who has some previous teaching experience. Her initial take on ICT (see above) was that it was a way of making students pay attention to everything but the teaching. Regarding reading skills development, she conducts an extensive and lengthy discussion about the use and usefulness of ICT and she returns to this topic in four of her blog entries. The following extracts illustrate her shifting lines of reasoning. Her initial attitude, based on her experience as a learner, is that reading should not be done digitally.

> *"Reading was done from books and printed texts" (8.6)*

She seeks theoretical support and the student's quote below is taken from one of the course books.

> *"Increased use of the internet does not automatically lead to improved digital literacy and this reinforces the standpoint that printed text and linear reading is the basis for developing reading proficiency" (8.6)*
>
> *"For me reading is a skill that takes a long time to develop and that requires considerable concentration" (8.6)*

The implication here is that the required concentration cannot be achieved from digital reading. Student 8 refers to research reporting on increased levels of stress and lack of concentration as a result of excessive screen time. This leads her to the conclusion that ICT is not suitable for reading. She does not, however, discard digital tools altogether.

> *"ICT can be used for other activities (repetition of vocabulary, presentations, writing, feedback, etc.). But when it comes to reading of longer texts I will probably put ICT aside." (8.6)*

In her final meta log, Student 8 returns to this issue. She refers back to the quotes above and then adds:

> *"Having worked with a teaching unit plan where reading formed an important part my opinion has changed. I now realise that the Internet is a large part of the pupils' world, and that the pupils will be reading long and short texts from the computer. Therefore, teachers need to support the pupils in this type of reading. The way to do this, which I point out in my teaching unit plan, is by asking guiding questions. This will give the pupils guidance in how to read web-based texts. Instead of discarding ICT for a specific skill it is my job as a teacher to improve their skills in using ICT." (8. Meta)*

As can be seen from the analysis of this student's writing, she moves from a restricting discourse to a more opening one, and ends up with a clear statement of agency which is grounded in her changing level of self-efficacy. Her self-efficacy and sense of agency emanate from her ability to synthesize the various strands (principles for FL literacy development, the place of digital tools in teaching and an acknowledgement of the reality of the pupils she is going to teach). She does this without abandoning her very strong commitment to the importance of developing reading skills among her students.

4.4 Results summary

One of the clearest results in this study is that the lack of ICT-based pedagogical models from the FL student teachers' own educational background contributes to

- Low self-efficacy in terms of knowledge base (the pupils will know more than I do)
- Limited initial sense of agency in terms of concerns regarding discipline issues (internet is vast and uncontrolled)

As more concrete digital tools are introduced throughout the course several students 'turn' and give voice to a higher sense of agency, mainly expressed as a desire not to repeat "boring and repetitive lessons" that they themselves have experienced as pupils. However, their initial low level of self-efficacy seems to remain, that is, they still see themselves as inferior to their future pupils, who they construct as more knowledgeable and more "tech savvy" than they. There is thus a clear tension between ICT as such, mainly concretized as the Internet, on the one hand, and the more focused pedagogical use of specific software that can be harnessed for language teaching and learning.

5. Implications

One of the main direct implications to emerge from the present study is the already well-attested importance of reflection [8], and that reflection in the context of teacher education is something that has to be administered, that is it has to be made an integral part of the program. The cumulative nature of the reflection log that these FL teacher students had to write opened up avenues of thinking that they might not otherwise have tried.

Another important implication regarding ICT and digital tools is that the purpose of teacher education should not be to make every student an ardent proponent of these devices in an unreflected manner; that would be just as bad as the categorical "no-sayer", but to foster a considered basis for reflection so that whatever these individuals decide to do in their future work as FL teachers will be based on knowledge and reflected experience, and not just on preconceived ideas or unfounded fears.

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A Critical Look at Language Teacher Practices Using the KARDS Model: Meeting the Postmethod Condition

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Abstract

From an interpretivist viewpoint, the authors demonstrate current practices inside the language teaching environment and compare them against the qualities within KARDS model to language teacher education (Knowing, Analyzing, Recognizing, Doing, and Seeing) for a global society encompassing the macro strategic framework toward modern language teaching based on particularity, practicality, and possibility (the 3Ps).The guiding questions to this comparative case study are: Do teachers in practice possess these proposed traits? How do they meet or not the post method condition? English language teachers with various Master's degrees and their students participated in the study at a Colombian university. Analysis of teacher reported data, classroom observations, and student reviews of their teachers, demonstrated teachers have strong practical and personal knowledge in their understanding and attempts to meet learner particularities. Additional findings indicate, however, a lack of critical approaches toward fostering student critical thinking and critical practices. Recommendations are made for more explicit language teacher education practices including critical reflection and action.

Keywords: Language teacher education, English language teaching, English as a foreign or second language, Modular model of language teacher education

1. Introduction

Recent demands within educational contexts not only impose innovative ideas and approaches regarding English language acquisition [1], but also warrant a shift upon underlying instructional practices. Throughout second language learning and teaching history, studies show that 1) combining receptive notions, productive behaviors, and personal factors such as learner beliefs, attitudes, and age [2], [3], [4] support second language development; 2) classroom practices are often shaped by language teachers' perceptions, working environments, and institutional policies establishing inextricable links between language teachers' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs as well as instructional practices [5].

The post method condition in language teaching, as discussed by Kumaravadivelu "refigures the relationship" between theory and practice by finding an "alternative to method rather than an alternative method" and "principled pragmatism" [6]. Within this condition, he describes the relevance of post method pedagogy, the macro strategic framework and its intertwined pedagogic parameters (the 3Ps): *Particularity,* participants' sensitivity toward the learning context; *Practicality*, theory and practice relationship; and *Possibility*, socio-political, economical and historical environments [7].

2. Theoretical background

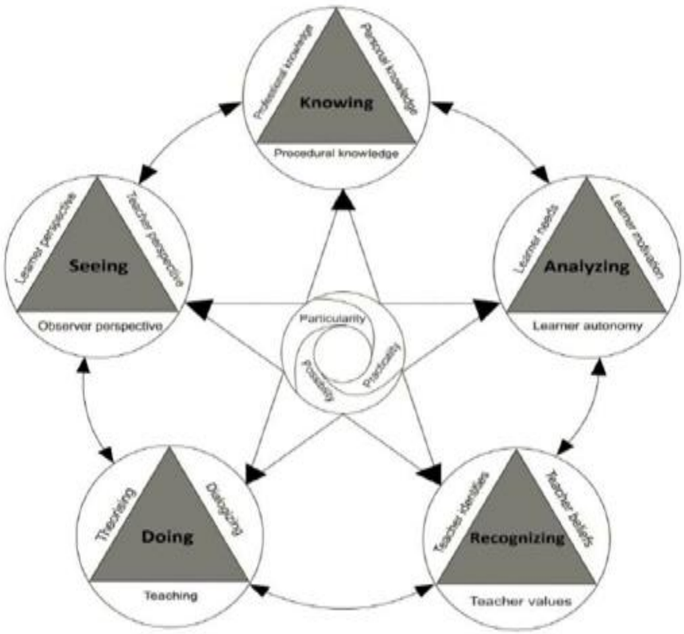
Language teacher education initially emphasized how and what teachers should learn, a perspective informed by the dual relationship between thought and action [8]. Studies have examined teacher learning cognition [9], narratives [10], professional development resulting from inner motivation [11], the specific content that must be learned, [12] and the core competencies that should be acquired [13].

Current frameworks of language teacher education derive from theory and models of learning.

Nation [14], developed the *Fours Strands Framework.* Each strand is identified by a set of necessary conditions which teachers can use to guide their practice and help language learners achieve their goals. Similarly, Jimenez, Lamb, and Vieira, [15] proposed a flexible framework that fosters teachers and learners' autonomy to encourage and enhance classroom dynamics. Korthagen and Vasalos [16] developed a model based on the various depths of a person's core qualities so that teachers reflect to discover their qualities, ideals, strengths, and obstacles to overcome.

The macrostrategic framework "(e)merged" with postmethod pedagogy in modern language teaching and teacher education and includes 10 macrostrategies aimed toward promoting critical, creative, contextual, reflective learning spaces as well as enabling teachers to "theorize from practice and practice what they theorize" [6]. The KARDS model of language teacher education for a global society [17, Fig. 1] further enhanced and contextualized the post method pedagogy and the macrostrategic framework: *Knowing,* the teachers' ability of paying attention to and reflecting upon professional, procedural and personal knowledge; *Analyzing,* the teacher's ability to determine learner needs, motivation, and autonomy; *Recognizing,* the teacher's ability to recognize and renew identity, beliefs, and values; *Doing,* the choices the teacher makes to approach a classroom situation; and *Seeing,* the application of knowledge to connect the agents to the action and vice versa; the lived experiences [18] of change and connection [17].

Fig. 1: Modular model of language teacher education for a global society: KARDS [17]



3. Purpose and aims of the study

The guiding questions to this comparative case study are: Do teachers in practice possess these proposed qualities? How do they meet or not the postmethod condition? The aims are to compare and interpret what in-service teachers reveal about their teaching practices versus what takes place inside the language classroom through the lens of the modular approach to language teacher education.

4. Methodology

The research was conducted in a Colombian university language institute with nine English language teachers and their students (n=121). Teachers' experience ranges from one to 20 plus years. They hold language and linguistics Master's degrees conferred in different regions of the world.

The data obtained for this study were analyzed quantitatively considering the aspects and particulars of each module of the KARDS model through teacher personal responses and reflective journals, classroom observations, and student evaluation of teachers. Teachers worked freely on the journal procedure and reported fortnightly in a personalized Google Doc. The observations happened concurrently depending upon teacher and observer availability.

A checklist and its rubric were designed for data collection from the *3Ps* and the qualities within each module of KARDS and their respective components. Criteria quantify the degree to which the trait or behavior of the component was met (5, the teacher obviously demonstrates the traits or behaviors incorporated within the category to 1, none were noticed). All data were then placed into SPSS 25 accordingly.

5. Results and discussion

5.1 Personal responses

The personal responses were analyzed within the modules in the following manner: *Knowing and Doing (combined), Analyzing, Recognizing, and Seeing* (T perspective). The average measure ICC was 909 with a 95% confidence interval from 779 to .976 (F (8, 56) = 11.00, p<.001). Correspondingly, Rater 1 reported (*M*=4.1, SD=0.78; *M*=4.2, SD=0.67; *M*=4.1, SD=0.78; *M*=4, SD=0.71) and Rater 2 (*M*=3.6, SD=1.1; *M*=3.6, SD=1.1; *M*=3.6, SD=1.1; *M*=3.7, SD=1.1). Though results from the two raters are acceptable, the results demonstrate a possibility of some more critical reflection of their individual teaching practice and theoretical knowledge.

5.2 Teacher reflective journals

The reflective journals were analyzed the same as the personal responses. The average measure ICC was .893 with a 95% confidence interval from .779 to .976 (F (8, 56) = 9.303, p<.001).

Respectively, Rater 1 revealed (*M*=3.9, SD=0.5; *M*=3.9, SD=0.3; *M*= 3.7, SD=0.6; *M*= 4.1, SD=0.4) and Rater 2 (*M*=3.3, SD=0.6; *M*=3.2, SD=0.5; *M*=3.2, SD=0.6; *M*=3.0, SD=0.6). Again, the results are acceptable from the two raters with Rater 2 averaging more toward the lower end of the scale. This could demonstrate that the reflections indicate less knowledge of classroom practice than the teachers' classroom practices.

5.3 Classroom observations

Classroom observations were measured using the postmethod criteria (*3Ps*) as well *Knowing, Doing, and Analyzing* along with corresponding micro components. Within *Practicality,* 27.5% measured below noticeable. In *Particularity,* participants recorded above average, but *Possibility* showed that only 25% reached noticeable. Results for *Knowing*, in both the professional and procedural components, 25% measured below noticeable and 12.5% in the personal component. The results for *Doing* scored below noticeable in both theorizing and teaching, at 25% and 37.5%, accordingly. In *Analyzing*, 25% within learner needs and 12.5% for learner motivation were below average, but an astounding 62.5% did not measure above noticeable Two of those participants did not demonstrate any action for promoting learner autonomy during the observation. These results also demonstrate that teachers tend to lean toward pedagogical knowledge over contextual particularities and needs. Student participation is rarely noticed from the outsider perspective. This could indicate prescriptive, routine behaviors hindered by years of practice or novice skills resulting in the student remaining a secondary participant in the language learning process.

5.4 Student evaluations

In general, students agreed strongly that their teachers acted accordingly and managed the areas very well (Table 1). Teacher 4, however, yielded lower scores than the other participants with an *M*=2.6 for statement 4 and an *M*=3.3 on question 2. The results show that students are satisfied with their learning with these teachers.

Table 1: Student evaluation of teachers

Teacher # (student=)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
1(*n*=18)	5	4,9	5	4,8	4,7
2(*n*=32)	4,9	4,9	4,8	4,8	4,8
3(*n*=11)	4,7	4,9	4,6	4,6	4,7
4(*n*=17)	3,9	3,3	4	2,6	3,5
5(*n*=16)	4,7	3,8	4,7	3,7	4,1
6(*n*=2)	5	5	5	5	5
7(*n*=9)	5	5	4,7	4,9	4,9
8(*n*=16)	4,6	4,6	4,8	4,6	4,5
Total *n*=121	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.4	4.5

6. Conclusions

These findings demonstrate that in-service teachers possess most of the proposed qualities within the KARDS model. First of all, within *Knowing* and *Doing*, teachers demonstrate they are knowledgeable of the content and how to teach it. The teachers were good at analyzing classroom events, but a gap exists between teacher perceptions of practice and the observed practice.

Analyzing, Recognizing, and Seeing however, demonstrate a lack of critical approaches among teachers and possibly students toward manipulating and discussing contextual particularities, fostering student critical thinking, and enabling more reflective and critical practices. Our recommendation is that a wider range of in-service teacher practice research challenges and helps teachers meet the postmethod condition.

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E-Learning in Higher Education (Forced to Use Do we Use its Force?)

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Abstract

Living in digital era forces us not only to live among technology but to live with technology and use it. It should be natural that technology is used in education. However, its use must be effective, meaningful, and carefully planned. The forms and methods of teaching and learning have been affected by technology, as well as learning experience has been profoundly affected. Technology has influenced the ways of communication, learning and teaching at the same time. Significant body of research indicates that even though technology is used in language classes it frequently happens that it is used ineffectively. Interactive whiteboards are frequently used as a projection screen or LMS platforms as files storage. What more, inappropriate use of technology can hinder learning/teaching process in case it is used not to teach content but rather to present technology and its possibilities. The article brings the analysis of 162 courses prepared by 27 instructors published in LMS Moodle based on SAMR model.

Keywords: information and communication technologies (ICT), Moodle, interaction, analysis;

1. Introduction

Using technologies in teaching and learning has become an integral part of both, formal and informal education. Today, we may say, that ICT integration is a natural process. Especially technologies that we use on daily basis (computers, mobiles) we naturally transfer into educational process. This cannot, however, be said about e.g. interactive whiteboard, learning management systems (LMS), language labs that are used by teachers in class only and thus teachers do not have enough experience with its manipulation and operation. This means it needs special skills and knowledge that have to be acquired and developed.

Many universities introduced different electronic support to face-to-face classes, blended learning or e-courses as a part of their curricula. Some of the universities opened their education to public in form of massive open online courses (MOOC) and offer different type of e-courses for free, occasionally relatively modest fee.

In Slovakia, most schools have access to technologies and especially universities are challenged to integrate the elements of e-learning into their teaching.

2. Learning and Content Management Systems and Virtual Classes

There is a degree of uncertainty around the terminology in the area of distance education and educational technology generally. The terms are often used interchangeably and without precision. In this article we discuss mainly learning and content management systems as a possible support of in-class teaching and thus we need to define at least the terms LMS, CMS (content management system) and virtual classroom, virtual learning environment (VLE). Gillespie *et al*., (2007) described VLE as an application collecting the tools for sharing files and information, downloading information, use of discussion boards, organising time and resources [1]. VLE usually includes curriculum mapping, student tracking, online support for instructor and learner, electronic communication, and links to other resources [2].

LMS is a platform that allows managing and organizing e-learning. Recording leaners, tracking learners and their work, activity and progress, in other words it is used to "plan, implement and evaluate a specific learning process" [3]. This definition is close to that of Watson & Watson (2007, p. 28, [4]) who based on [5] define LMS as "infrastructure that delivers and manages instructional content, identifies and assesses individual and organizational learning or training goals, tracks the progress towards meeting those goals, and collects and presents data for supervising the learning process of an organization as a whole".

CMSs are systems for content delivery. Meerts (2003) defines that it "provides an instructor with a set of tools and a framework that allows the relatively easy creation of online course content and the subsequently teaching and management of that course including various interactions with students taking the course" [6]. There are systems that combine learning and content management system, as e.g. Moodle. Moodle is frequently referred as LMS, even though comprising all its tools it is LCMS.

The term virtual class is often used as a synonym of VLE. It refers to the programme that are to large extent realised synchronously, using e.g. video, cameras, blackboard, chats and other tools for synchronous communication Different software and platforms that enable synchronous engagement and interactions of the learners are available.

3. SAMR Model

The SAMR model created by Robert Puentedura categorises four levels of technology integration [7]. He defines two different types of focus; firstly, enhancement with the stages Substitution and Augmentation and secondly, transformation with the stages Modification and Redefinition. The first level, substitution, does not bring functional change in teaching and/or learning. The technology is used to perform the same tasks but using technologies. There is no real use of technology. The second level, augmentation, is characterised by functional improvement. The transformation levels are connected with more significant changes and new aspects that could not be achieved without technology implementation. In the modification level we do not perform the same task with different tools (substitution) but we redesign the task with added functionality. The highest level is connected with redefinition that "allows for the creation of new tasks, previously inconceivable" [7].

4. Research

The LCMS Moodle was introduced at Presov University (Slovakia) in 2006 and gradually it was introduced at almost all faculties of the university. The different steps were taken at the faculties and in many cases, it was not very systematic approach, but rather based on individual teachers who are IT enthusiasts.

The survey about the use of Moodle was realised at the Faculty of Arts where the system was introduced in 2011. Four special workshops on e-pedagogy and how to use Moodle were organised (on voluntary basis) since its introduction. All teachers and students have an access to the systems. Seven years after its installation and accommodation there are number of courses published. Out of 220 courses published in Moodle there are 58 courses that are completely empty or there is only syllabus uploaded, i.e. more than 26.36% have been never used and are inactive. Out of 197 teachers employed at the faculty there are 27 teachers (13.7%) who have created and run at least one course in Moodle. Majority of courses fulfil enhancement function and only 22.7% of the courses according to our evaluation fulfil transformative function with 22 courses achieving the level of redefinition. It has to be mentioned that the teacher who uses the highest diversity of tools and activities took part only in the first training and she studied the Moodle possibilities and tools on her own.

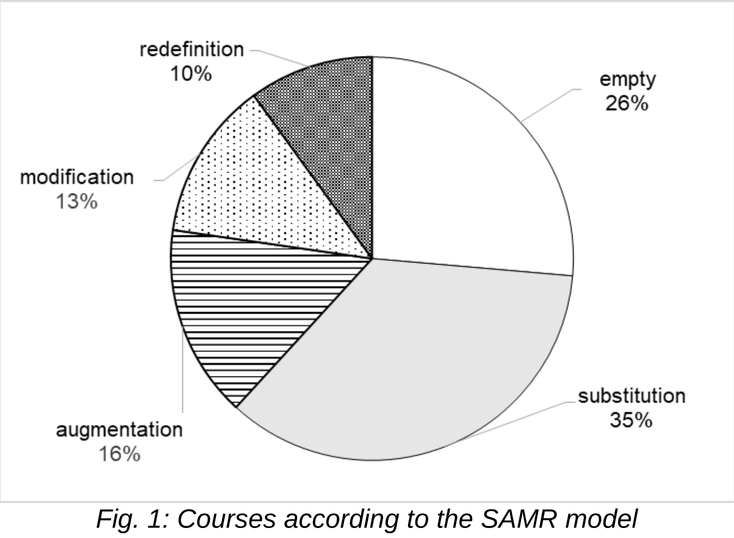

Fig. 1: Courses according to the SAMR model

The figure visualises the ratio of the courses categorised according to the SAMR model. It was expected that number of courses would correlate with the SAMR level. However, we predicted, that six years after its existence and availability to all teachers the number of the courses evaluated as substitutive level would be lower.

We discussed the results of the analysis with 7 teachers who are active in Moodle (out of 27; 25.92%). Teachers were selected based on convenience sampling. Teachers (6F, 1M; mean age 39.4; mean time of experience with Moodle – 4 years) discussed their experience with creating and running the courses. Among the benefits they could see belong time management (not only forcing students to keep it but also themselves – to plan the activities and processes in advance and systematically), students' tracking, possibility to develop cooperation and collaboration, permanence, material availability. On the other hand, they stressed that even though they realise all the benefits the time demandingness hinders their work on course development. They also agreed they need more training with the tools available in Moodle.

They mentioned (with satisfaction) that students automatically expect them to provide the support in Moodle, what they perceived as a way of positive feedback on courses supported by Moodle.

Students appreciate having all the materials, results, deadlines at one place and the possibility to deliver different tasks using the Moodle. Teachers confirmed they mostly use Moodle for uploading the documents, occasionally adding the task, creating the lectures or online discussions. All courses they built are used as a face-to-faces courses support. Only two teachers expressed willingness and readiness to create and run e-course. The rest of them mentioned they would love to run the course but with the support of course designers and developers. They are ready to prepare the scenarios, to plan interactions, however, they do not have skills and time to create it.

5. Discussions

The results of the course analysis we ran were expected. Even though the teachers perceive LMS possibilities as beneficial for both, teacher and students, they agreed that unless they are not forced to use it as a compulsory component of their teaching they will probably not make use of its potential.

The very similar results were stated by [8, 9]. Limniou and Smith (2010) published the results of research focused on VLE realised at the University of Manchester and stated that most tutors used VLE as "a means for delivering learning material, announcements and assessments to students" [9].

They also used it for uploading learning material and they perceived VLE as a tool how "to overcome the difficulties of limited time". It would be interesting to run the similar research and see how was the situation changed as this is a very similar finding we face nowadays (7 years later after the Manchester study).

We fully agree with [10] who claim that compared to other countries open education resources development in academic sphere is still in its infancy level.

This text has no ambition to present the results of research. It is just a very brief statement about the status quo at one institution that is strongly influenced by its tradition and educational philosophy.

6. Conclusions

Interaction plays a crucial role in e-courses. Thus, in case we want to apply VLE for blended learning or e-learning, planning the content presentation in small steps, ways and space for practice and different types of interaction is a must. Students have to interact with material, with "classmates" and the tutor. Creating positive, cooperative environment with the space for both, autonomous and collaborative learning is a demanding task for course writers, developers and tutors. A considerable amount of literature has been published on effectiveness of e-learning indicating that it can be used as an alternative to traditional in-class teaching. Substitution can be useful, but frequently we cannot speak about the effective use of technology in classroom.

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Reflecting on Electronic Portfolio Experience: A Comparative Analysis of Perceptions of English Language Teacher Trainees in the Slovak Republic and Great Britain

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Abstract

Recently, a considerable literature has grown up around the theme of electronic portfolios in teacher training programmes. The past decade has seen the rapid development of technology in many aspects of education. In light of recent developments in technology enhanced learning, it is becoming difficult to ignore the existence of electronic portfolios and their possible use in various fields of study or research. One of the greatest challenges is to implement electronic portfolio in a way that it is purposeful and meaningful. However, there is also an increased need to address the possible drawbacks of electronic portfolios which might be caused by a number of factors. Therefore, this study seeks to obtain data which will help to address these research gaps. Data from several studies suggest that electronic portfolio has a potential to become an effective tool in promoting professional development, peer-to-peer learning and collaboration. The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the experience of using electronic portfolios in teacher training as well as to compare perceptions of English language teacher trainees in Slovak republic and Great Britain with the emphasis put on teaching practice. The paper presents data obtained from focus groups conducted on a sample of English language teacher trainees in Slovak Republic and Great Britain. Reflecting on the experience provides an opportunity to obtain useful information from the perspective of student teachers who were the main reason for the implementation in the first place. Moreover, by comparing the way electronic portfolios have been implemented and the experience of the trainees in two different countries, we may deepen our understanding of the use of electronic portfolios on a whole new level and this creates space for new insights into the topic. This study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by exploring two culturally different settings where electronic portfolios have been implemented.

Keywords: electronic portfolio, comparative analysis, online environment, teacher trainee, teaching practice;

1. Introduction

Portfolio as such has been an object of research for a longer period of time (Imhof, M. – Picard, C. 2009, Ketter, J. – Pool, J. 1997, Westhuizen, G. – Smith, K. 2000, Akşit 2011). However, the last two decades have seen a growing trend towards the use of electronic portfolio (or e-portfolio) in teacher training. There is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance and usefulness of its implementation (Sung, Y. *et al*., 2009, Hernández, M. E. 2007, Pour, M. G. 2012). E-portfolio can play an important role in addressing the issue of professional development of teacher trainees (Chetcuti, D. *et al*., 2011, Bokiev, U. 2018). Therefore, investigation of the usefulness of e-portoflio is a continuing concern within the field of teaching and learning.

This study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by exploring and comparing the different experience of teacher trainees in Slovak Republic and Great Britain and thus investigate the use of e-portfolio in two different settings. By comparing the teacher trainees' first-hand experience with e-portfolio, it is intended to discuss its usefulness and possible drawbacks of the implementation while looking beyond the surface and examining the factors responsible for either success or failure of the e-portfolio implementation. It is hoped that this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the issue of electronic portfolio implementation in teacher training programmes. A full discussion of the matter lies beyond the scope of this study.

2. Research Aims and Methodology

Data for this study were collected using qualitative approach in order to gain insights into the topic.

The study was conducted in the form of two focus groups. The focus group method is one of the more practical ways of obtaining qualitative data through an in-depth analysis because it offers an effective way of reflecting on the teacher trainees' experience with the use of e-portfolio. The collaborative nature of the focus group offers another advantage, which is a deeper understanding of the effectiveness and usefulness of e-portfolio from the perspective of the teacher trainees and thus it helps to capture the complexity of the phenomenon. Altogether, two focus groups with eleven participants (Slovak focus group – 6 participants, British focus group – 5 participants) were conducted with the teacher trainees from Slovak Republic and Great Britain. In both cases, e-portfolio was used especially for the purpose of teaching practice (uploading lesson plans, reflections, observations, giving/receiving feedback, leaving/receiving comments). Data obtained from the focus groups were transcribed and analysed.

3. Data Analysis and Research Findings

After data were transcribed, the following three categories were recognized: general perception (i.e. reflecting on e-portfolio experience, general impression); benefits (i.e. advantages of using e-portfolio); drawbacks (i.e., disadvantages of using e-portfolio). In the analysis, Slovak participants are marked as S1, S2 … S5 and British participants as BS1, BS2 … BS5.

3.1 General Perception

In general, some of the Slovak teacher trainees considered e-portfolio as useful (S1), however, using the tool was also perceived in some cases as an obligation (S3). This could have been caused by being required to work continuously on the portfolio during teaching practice and the trainees' lack of time (S3). On the contrary, other trainees appreciated the continuous process of uploading artifacts and the option to express themselves and their feelings in a self-reflection journal (S2).

From the perspective of teacher trainees from Britain, the balance between the online environment and face-to-face environment is crucial (BS2, BS4, BS5). The trainees are aware a potential in the implementation of e-portfolio (BS3, BS4). However, at the moment, they are using the e-portfolio system especially for the purpose of the assessment (BS2, BS3, BS4). With the earlier implementation, proper training with intensive workshops, support and encouragement from a tutor, working with e-portfolio could be more effective (BS3, BS4, BS2, BS5). If the trainees were a bit more aware of how to use it, it could promote professional development too (BS4, BS2, BS3).

3.2 Benefits

What Slovak trainees found useful with regards to the use of e-portfolio during teaching practice is the accessibility of the tool (S2), leaving comments and giving feedback (S4, S3), getting inspiration from the classmates (S1, S2, S6), either by looking at each other's lesson plans (S1) or activities uploaded (S3). Furthermore, the trainees appreciate the fact that if the e-portfolio was available after the graduation, they could still have access to it (S6). The e-portfolio could also be a motivation booster (S6). Continuous feedback can be helpful for the trainees during teaching practice (S4), especially if given by a professional in the field (S6). Another benefit of e-portfolio is the option to edit the content, e.g. a lesson plan (S6) or self-reflection. All the participants used this option (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6).

With regards to the online environment, teacher trainees from Britain value the possibility of sharing resources (BS1, BS2, BS3)/information (BS2, BS3, BS4) during their teaching practice. As was the case with the Slovak teacher trainees, the British trainees point out the accessibility of e-portfolio (BS4, BS2), the fact it cannot "get lost" (BS3, BS4, BS5) and the environment-friendly aspect of it (BS1, BS2, BS3, BS4, BS5).

3.3 Drawbacks

With regards to disadvantages of the tool or platform, some Slovak trainees find it difficult to orientate in the portfolio artifacts, especially when sharing lesson plans with the classmates (S3).

Another reason for not accessing lesson plans of the classmates was lack of time. However, the trainees are aware of the potential the tool has (S6). Interestingly, some of the trainees did not feel "the sense of the online community". Again, this could have been caused by the trainees' lack of time and thus using the tool only as means to an end (S3). In addition, a different social network is still preferred as an online platform for communication among the trainees (S2). However, it is suggested that the communication within the platform should be encouraged and the trainees motivated (S1).

Interestingly, a different social network was reported to be preferred over e-portfolio for the purpose of communication also among the British teacher trainees (BS1, BS2, BS3, BS4, BS5). Therefore, in terms of the online community, discussion and collaboration, there are some trainees who prefer asking and talking with the peers face-to-face rather than through the online platform (BS4). Moreover, some of them would feel like they are “nosy” when looking at someone else’s portfolio (BS5). The trainees highlighted the need for mentors to know how to work with e-portfolio (BS2, BS1, BS3, BS4, BS5). The tool is still perceived as something new and, therefore, not everyone knows how to use it (BS1, BS3).

4. Conclusions

The research has showed that both groups of participants are aware of the potential of e-portfolio used in teacher training programmes. The combination of findings from the perspective of both Slovak and British teacher trainees provides some support for more complex understanding of the matter. As noted by the British group of teacher trainees, early implementation, proper training and encouragement from tutors may lead towards successful implementation and thus meaningful use of e-portfolio. Furthermore, British teacher trainees emphasise that it is crucial for teacher trainees to be aware of all the features and options which e-portolio offers.

As to the benefits and drawbacks of the tool, Slovak teacher trainees point out the accessibility of e-portfolio as well as the possibility of leaving comments, giving feedback during teaching practice etc.

British teacher trainees also appreciate the element of sharing information. For the purpose of communication, other social networks are still more preferred among the trainees in both cases. The benefits provide us with reasons for using e-portfolio in the first place. The findings suggest that although e-portfolio is perceived as a tool with great potential, it does not guarantee the successful realization of the process. The current data highlight the importance of the initial stage of the implementation process and these data suggest that it can be achieved through workshops and proper training not only for teacher trainees, but also tutors and mentors. This study has raised important questions about the usefulness and meaningfulness of the use of e-portfolio in teacher training.

Taken together, these findings emphasize the role of the proper implementation in promoting e-portfolio as a key towards the meaningful use of e-portfolio and successful realization of the process.

The scope of this study was limited in terms of a small sample size which can make the findings less generalizable. The issue of e-portfolios is an intriguing one and could be usefully explored in further research. More information and research would help us to establish a greater degree of accuracy on this matter.

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The MA Program on Language Education and Technology: A Global Endeavour

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Abstract

The use of computers in language education has been a fast-growing area of research in the academic field today. Several MA programs are dedicated to this issue and universities are making use of their personnel to cover the many particular topics related to the main theme, although this proves to be practically impossible, as institutions do not usually have the commodity of holding many scholars working in the same area within the same department, school or even institution. The MA program on Language Education and Technology attempted a few novelties in the personnel involved (from 6 different countries), methods of teaching (f2f and synchronous by distance), modules and seminars offered, and transparency of student selection. Data collected did not only involve opinions of those that have attended the course but also results as to how the gained knowledge affected the professional and academic life of the individuals involved. It was found that students appreciated the mode of module development, attended the seminars offered on top of the scheduled program, and made use of the knowledge gained. A number of those pursued an academic career either by being involved in a Ph.D. out of Greece (with a scholarship from the host institution), or as researchers or staff in universities as far as China. Problems during the MA development are also discussed.

Keywords: CALL training, Master programs, Teaching Methods

1. Introduction

Creating a self-supporting MA program is a difficult task. The main problem lies in the fact that departments do not usually have the commodity of holding more than one expert in highly specific areas. Consequently, several departments typically offer MA courses on general topics and expect the participating students to specialise their knowledge at a final stage, while writing their dissertations.

Inviting personnel from other universities is a direction that offers a solution to the problem.

However, this involves another difficulty, i.e., the geographical location these individuals are located and transferability. This is where new technologies could be employed and assist with synchronous communication hybrid classes, such as those in Big Blue Button, which was the tool selected to deliver the task.

The problem of lack of personnel and the computer potential bond well under the *Blended Learning* (BL) methodology, which facilitates “a convergence between face-to-face and technology-mediated learning environments” (Naaj, Nachouki and Ankit, 2012). Most scholars (Garnham and Kaleta, 2002; Li and Jianhua, 2004; Chan, 2008; Badawi, 2009; Naaj, Nachouki and Ankit, 2012) would agree that in such environments a chunk of the learning material and the teaching procedures are not provided in the traditional face-to-face instruction.

This study evaluates a postgraduate course on technology in language teaching, by recording the participant’s views through a questionnaire aiming to register any possible impact on their professional and academic life, locate its strengths and weaknesses and find whether initial personal targets were achieved. The outcomes of the study are of value to both MA course organizers and MA students alike, with a set of criteria to use for course selection. Initially, a short presentation of the details of blended learning and the program is provided. At a second stage, the particulars of the method selected is presented and collected data is analyzed statistically. Major outcomes are recorded and discussed in the last section.

2. Blended Learning

Bonk and Graham (2006) argue that BL combines different teaching methods, approaches and information technology under a new pedagogical environment, while Gűlbahar και Madran (2009) and Picciano (2006), further suggest that BL combines the potential of technologies with traditional teaching techniques. Delialioglu και Yildirim (2007) focus on the systematic usage and strategic engagement of the electronic devices for achieving the teaching targets and individual goals. Li and Jianhua (2004), and Garrison and Kanuka (2004) say that effectiveness of traditional teaching is increased in BL environments.

BL inevitably links to learner autonomy, learner needs and tailored learning in which, the individual needs are met through increased and self-paced participation (Thorne 2003). In addition, So and Brush (2008) concentrate on the increase of self-motivation, self-management and self-regulated learning while Driscoll (2002), adds the contribution to the concept of the different pedagogical models (constructivism, behaviorism and cognitivism). Finally, Singh (2001) proclaims the use of the 'right' learning technologies in association to the 'right' skills, time and personal learning style.

3. The program

The MA program attempted to bring together several scholars from around the world to contribute to this endeavour by making use of current technology and fulfill the education needs of language teaching professionals who were either full-time employees, mid-career professionals or students with specialized goals pursuing an academic career. The course was offered through an alternative mode of delivery, such as online instruction, alternatively-scheduled classes, e.g. during evenings for those who worked in the morning and at early morning hours for those who worked in the private sector or during the weekend in alternative locations (e.g. on and off-campus, face to face or virtual). The program attempted to move along two basic strands in language education and technology: a) the academic, for those pursuing an academic career, and b) the practical, for those working as language teachers. The modules were carefully chosen to support the above rationale and were distributed equally throughout the curriculum: experimental research methods and statistics, theories of second language acquisition, mobile assisted language learning, the internet and language education, internet technologies, language teaching theories and CALL, learner autonomy, instructive vs incidental learning and massive on-line language courses.

4. Method

4.1 Design and Procedure

Participants were approached by email and were asked to fill in a questionnaire relevant to the purpose of the study, with a student acting as a mediator to ensure anonymity.

4.2 Subjects and Apparatus and Materials

50 students were initially targeted; 6 of those had not completed the program at the time of the study and were excluded from the sample. A final sample of 44 subjects were approached and 20 of those responded to the appeal (return rate at 45.4%). A questionnaire with 13 open-ended questions was administered and the SPSS (v.25) statistical package was employed for data analysis.

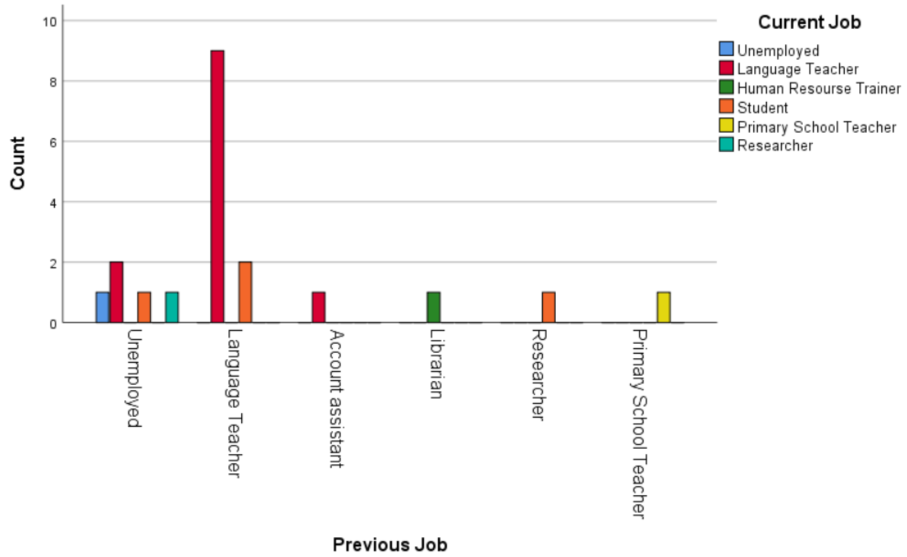
5. Analysis

The frequencies are initially offered. These are without the missing items, indicated as *valid percent* in the relevant tables.

5.1 Frequencies related to MA impact on students' professional life

Most participants (11-55%) were in the language teaching profession and a considerable number were unemployed (5-25%). Other occupations, such as account assistant, librarian, researcher, and primary school teacher were represented by only one subject. The Ba-Chart (1), records the employment before and after the program.

Bar-Chart 1



The impact of the program on the subjects' professional life was considerable as only 1 subject remained unemployed. 2 of those previously unemployed became language teachers, 2 continued for a Ph.D. study and 1 became a researcher. 1 subject changed occupation and became a language teacher (previously an account assistant), while 1 subject remained a language teacher but found a better paid job in China (and also started a Ph.D. study). The rest remained in their previous professions. These claimed that they had learned innovative methods and approaches to language teaching (31,3%), while 4 (25%) specifically stated that they found a better teaching job and 1 (6.3%) that had a salary raise (probably working in the public sector, where the possession of an MA is granded a certain salary raise). Others used their degree to pursue a further study (2-12,5%) and 3 (18,8%) to apply research in their professional environment. There were 4 (20%) missing items.

5.2 Impact of program to students' academic life

In total, 6 (30%) of the subjects in this sample, continued a further study either at a Ph.D. level (3) or with another MA program (3), while 17 (85%) claimed that the program has added to their professional development. Table (1) below presents exactly how.

Table 1

How did it help your academic Development

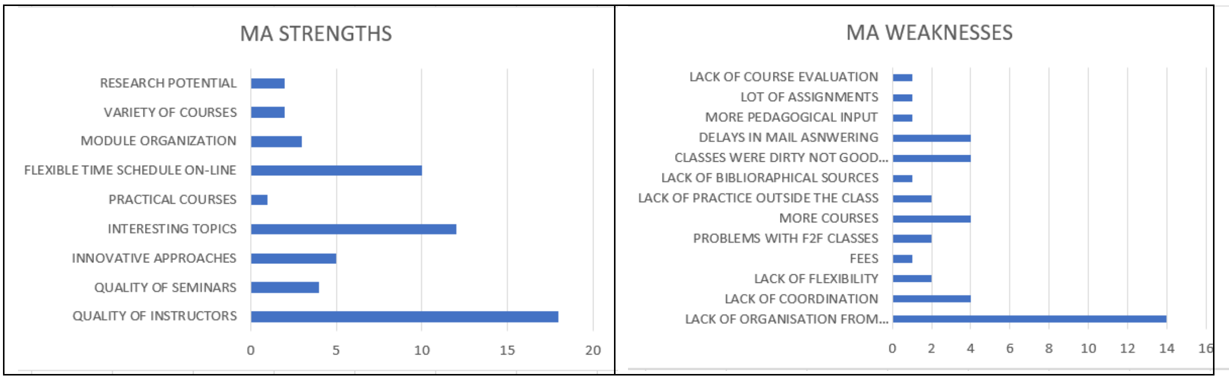
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Increased Research Awareness	2	10,0	14,3	14,3
	Participated in Conferences	3	15,0	21,4	35,7
	Ph.D.	7	35,0	50,0	85,7
	Self Development	2	10,0	14,3	100,0
	Total	14	70,0	100,0	
Missing	999,00	6	30,0		
Total		20	100,0		

14 (70%) stated that the program assisted to their academic development by a) increasing their research awareness (2-14,3%), b) participation and presentation in conferences out of Greece (21,4%), c) pursuing a Ph.D. study (50%), and d) self-development (14,3%). There were (6-30%) missing items.

5.3 Strengths and weaknesses of the program

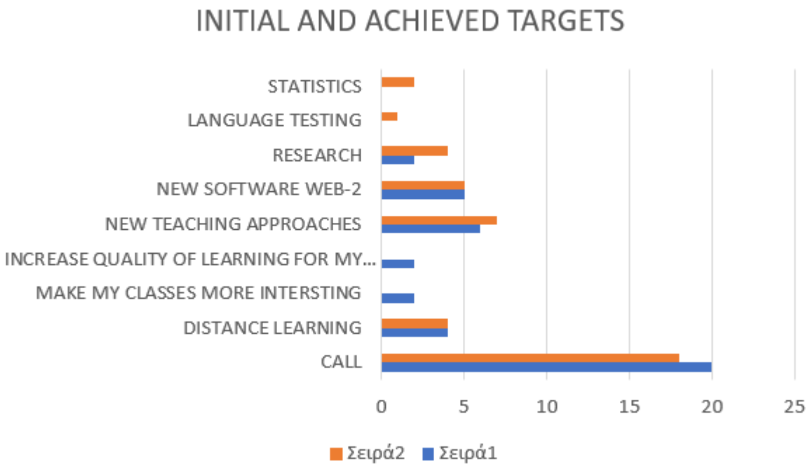
The claimed strengths and weaknesses of the program are presented in the following tables, (2) and (3).

Tables 2 and 3



Most subjects wrote that the instructors' quality came first in their choice, followed by the topics taught and the time of the meetings. The innovative approach of program delivery, the quality of the seminars and the modules organization followed. The administrator's poor organization (secretary) received most negative opinions. Much less, received the lack of coordination in the timetable between modules (which presented a genuine difficulty due to time difference and duties of personnel, the lack of more courses on different topics, the status of the infrastructure and cleanliness of the classrooms on campus, and the delays in mail answering by the instructors. Finally, personal targets prior to program engagement and targets achieved upon program completion are recorded in Bar Chart (2).

Bar Chart 2



The claimed personal targets of the subjects rested clearly in CALL. Those were achieved. The same is witnessed with the learning of new teaching approaches, the enlargement of knowledge about web2 applications and familiarity with distance learning. On the other hand, the initial registered wish to increase quality of their classes and make them more interesting, remained unsatisfied. Knowledge on research methodology, language testing and statistics was an unexpected to them gain which seemed to have been appreciated.

6. Summary and Conclusions

The program was declared to have a significant impact on participants' both professional and academic life. It either offered job opportunities to those unemployed or led those interested to a further Ph.D. level study. Those already in the profession initially targeted to learn about CALL, net applications for language teaching or applications for the design and creation of their own material.

These wishes were met.

The claimed strengths of the program were: the instructors' academic quality, the topics taught and the flexibility of the time schedule, the innovative approach of program delivery and the quality of seminars. On the other hand, the administration by the department was stated to be poor. Lack of class coordination as to the times of face-to-face meetings was declared to be lacking. A considerable number of participants also stated that they would have preferred more courses offered and spotted the problem of class cleanliness of the infrastructure.

Most subjects declared they chose to attend the program to learn more about CALL, others to learn more about distance learning, new teaching approaches, and new net applications. The stated targets were mostly achieved while other stated targets, such as making their classes more interesting or increasing the quality of their teaching/learning were not met. Finally, achieved skills that were not initially targeted were, knowledge of research methods and statistics and language testing.

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The Role of Authentic Children's Literature in Primary EFL Teacher Training

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Abstract

This paper analyses the role of authentic children's literature in the training of prospective primary EFL teachers. The focus is not on children's literature as a teaching tool, despite its fundamental importance (Ghosn 2002, Linse 2007, Masoni 2017, 2018), but rather on the beneficial effects that an immersion in and critical awareness of authentic children's literature can have on trainee EFL teachers' sense of efficacy. On the basis of ongoing research in the setting of a university course in primary education, I argue that children's literature should play a major role in EFL teacher training programs, first of all because it grants access to the English language as used by, with and around children, and secondly because exposure to children's literature grants prospective teachers a knowledge of the culture and imagination of childhood embedded in the target language (Kramsch 2009). I argue that these and other factors can have important effects on trainee teachers' ability to experience a sense of authenticity when learning and teaching the FL, as well as on their future ability to communicate with children in meaningful ways. A reflection on how children's literature can help prepare EFL teachers calls for a reconsideration of the profile of the EFL teacher and of university EFL teacher training practices. Should we design teacher training courses that draw heavily on authentic children's literature, with a view to enabling prospective teachers to feel more confident in using the target language, even despite limited proficiency (at times)? Can this approach contribute to fostering creativity and independence in prospective teachers' future teaching practices? These and other questions will be discussed through findings from ongoing personal research.

Keywords: primary EFL teacher training, children's literature

Introduction

There is a growing body of research on the benefits of using children's literature in the EFL primary classroom, as a motivating and emotionally conducive means to acquire natural language in context and develop intercultural competence [1, 5, 10, 11]. But children's literature acts in powerful ways also upon teachers, and in particular upon trainee teachers looking to become effective communicators and cultural mediators in a world where teaching a foreign language, especially English, means equipping children with the ability to look at the world through the eyes of the Other [7].

Children's literature should find a prominent role in teacher training, not just as a teaching tool that prospective teachers must learn to use in the classroom, but rather as a means of personal growth, which can help them develop critical language awareness and intercultural awareness, experience a sense of authenticity as learners and prospective teachers, and ultimately enhance the quality of their relationship with the target language and culture. Iargue this also on the basis of research conducted by the author among students enrolled on a Primary Education degree in an Italian university, over six years of teaching a course and conducting workshops on the uses of storytelling and authentic children's literature in the EFL primary classroom. These students will teach English as well as other subjects, but do not specialize in FLT. At the beginning of each course, many students declared they would rather not teach a foreign language as they did not feel comfortable speaking it. The work on children's literature also stemmed from a need to help students find their voice in the FL.

So, what do books do (for trainee teachers)?

Children's books are constantly updated sources of language in use. They display the language of children, the language used by adults to interact with children: they equip teachers with a knowledge of what children say, how children express emotions, how emotions are expressed around children, what emotion-laden words are used around children, what metaphors, what euphemisms. Books are full of daily language, common and recurrent phrases that form a sort of substratum of language native speakers take for granted. Most of these phrases realize speech acts that characterize everyday life: they tell us how people apologies or promise, for example, and with what words. This kind of language is often the most difficult to acquire for the FL learner who might be proficient in more complex registers, but feel uneasy when having to react informally to what people say or do. Yet, this everyday language is the kind of language a primary EFL teacher needs to master in order to communicate with children. Books contain endless expressions such as "I won't do it again", "you poor thing", "buckle your shoes", "now it's your turn to seek", "lick it before its drips", that represent recurring items of communication with children, the equivalents of which we would take for granted in our native code.

Yet, as basic as they might seem, they are often formulaic in nature. Frequent usage often turns sentences into set expressions that can only be learned as they are and could not be put together by combining separate items of language according to grammar and syntax rules: indeed, for this reason, many of the 'ordinary' expressions we find in books would be classified as B2+ or even C1, thus beyond the linguistic level required of primary school teachers in many European countries. We do not learn this kind of language in the EFL classroom, and even the most proficient teachers sometimes lack the knowledge of these basic instances of spontaneous interaction with children. Books can fill this gap and hand teachers plain and real language they can readily use and which helps them utilize fundamental speech acts in the FL classroom.

Trainee teachers showed particular appreciation for these expressions which sounded like "real English language" and made them feel they were acquiring language that is truly spoken and currently in use. There is a sense of synchronicity and simultaneity in this language that gives students access not only to a **speech community** of English language users, but also to a "**discourse community**" comprising "the common ways in which members of a social group use language to meet their social needs". Indeed, the language of books reflects the target language culture: through authentic books we find out about "the topics [people] choose to talk about, the way they present information, the style with which they interact, in other words, their **discourse accent**" [6, p. 6-8], as Kramsch refers to the different values and meanings people place on verbal interaction and often on the same words. For example, the ways adults speak to children in books mirror the social idea of how adults should relate to children and this in turn is shaped and reshaped by debates on child rearing, child education, etc.

This is invaluable knowledge for prospective teachers wishing to communicate language *as* culture [4] and not just language plus items of culture.

Books also give prospective teachers access to another fundamental aspect of culture: the imagination [6]. Stories provide teachers with knowledge of the metaphors, dreams and imaginings that characterize the world of children and reflect the wider society in which they live. Through these images and metaphors, the reader can gain a much deeper understanding of the culture of the target language speakers. This means taking up the perspective of the people who use that language every day.

Authentic Children's Books in Teacher Training

During a series of workshops on the uses of narratives in the primary classroom, students were provided with many titles, around thirty including books read in their entirety and extracts, so as to provide an immersion in children's literature in the English language. The books were mostly modern or contemporary classics, ranging from *The Tiger who came to tea* by Judith Kerr, to *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson. Students were also encouraged to bring other titles into the classroom and comment on them during the workshops.

During each meeting books were first of all read, translated, discussed and commented from a linguistic and cultural point of view. The students' attention was drawn to language chunks, linguistic features such as rhymes and alliterations, repetition, narrative structures, especially those, such as cumulative tales, which are particularly popular in the English language narrative tradition. This was a way of raising language awareness and helping students reflect on language, a quality which many agree is fundamental [2, 9, 12] for future EFL teachers. Despite limited proficiency and occasional difficulties with the language (the students CEFR levels ranged from A2 to B1), students engaged very actively in this work of analysis and discussion, by asking questions and reasoning about language.

The 'simplicity' of the subject matter lowered affective filters and provided an "anxiety-free zone where foreign culture" and language could "be freely discussed and explored" [3]. From the point of view of language learning, students were surprised by the number of words and phrases they learnt through children's books. In a questionnaire administered at the end of the workshops, 96% of the students felt they had learned new words from books, 98% declared they had learned new expressions, 100% agreed that picture books could be a source of learning also for them as learners.

Indeed, as simple as their language can be, such books are also designed to expand children’s linguistic knowledge by exposing them to complex vocabulary, and for this reason they can be valuable learning sources also for adult learners.

Students were able to brush up on A1 structures and existing language knowledge in the context of stories, confirm knowledge, and clarify concepts and rules that they had not fully grasped up to then and did not know how to use, while also learning advanced B2+ and even C1 structures. Books provided safe ground for language revision and awareness, but also the right amount of challenge to make students feel they were advancing in their knowledge. Because they were naturally drawn towards this genre of literature, students were also willing to play with the language: many of them appreciated the possibility of experimenting with narrative structures, rhymes, metaphors, as shown by their creative writing productions.

The other important aspect that boosted their confidence was that from books they were able to draw language they could use in the classroom [12]: 99% declared they learned useful classroom language from books, and 92% agreed that stories will help them communicate with children, 100% said they will use picture books in class. They recognized the communicative potential of the language of books as a most valid help for their future practice and declared being more willing to teach English in the future.

Conclusions

Working on language as culture within the domain of children’s/childhood discourse allowed teachers to acquire language they felt was authentic and therefore made them feel a sense of authenticity when speaking it. Books were seen as a reliable and authoritative source of language, the validity of which could not be questioned. Delving into literature helped many of the students find a voice in the FL. The workshops spurred a habit for free reading in many students, a habit that is certainly most conducive to language learning [8]. They visited libraries and ordered texts online, and many declared they would continue to expand their personal libraries. From books teachers can continue to acquire language, keep abreast of the changes in children’s culture and language use, and find classroom language. Evidence argues that trainee teachers, when undertaking critical work on children’s literature in the target language, can experience a sense of authenticity and self-efficacy, spurring their motivation to learn and teach, as well as their ability to interact with children in meaningful ways.

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The Transformative Language Teacher Training

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Abstract

Experiential language teaching training programs are a good example of transformative training for FL instructors in a post-method era. Experiential language teaching training programs which are following the premises purported by Kolb experiential cycle (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation) best illustrate and represent the transformative learning process by providing a multilayered process. Language teachers often start by learning in place and only later go back to receive a formal language pedagogical education. Thus, the common traits of thinking, knowing and reflecting essential to the professional growth process tend to drift back and forth from contingent needs to pedagogical inquiries. Consequently, the model of professional teacher training programs, especially for those who teach their own language, mirror the internal self-referential nature of what we do in the classroom. The reflective process included in experiential professional development programs should also include a direct confrontation with a multitude of realities that are becoming part of our changing profession. In this presentation, I will illustrate the phases of the reflective process and interface them with the corresponding inner and outer work that the FL teacher must undertake. I will provide samples of experiential and reflective activities useful to the profession.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Training

1. Introduction

In *Educating second language teachers: the same thing done differently* [1] Donald Freeman lists three main paths undertaken by language teachers' education within the disciplinary track of teachers' education: with the born expertise, the made over time; and the learning in place track. These do not occur in the same sequence for everybody. Language teachers often start by learning in place and only later go back to receive a formal language pedagogical education. Thus, the common traits of thinking, knowing and reflecting essential to the professional growth process tend to drift back and forth from contingent needs to pedagogical enquiries. Thus, the nature of professional teacher training programs, especially for those who teach their own language, mirror the internal self-referential nature of what we do in the classroom. It can be a challenge and an opportunity to overcome the limitations of auto-referentiality.

What do we mean by self-referentiality? Languages are the lifeblood of social interactions, and the language teacher can become the content and the agent of his own classroom.

It means to see yourself as the agent and instrument at the same time. Let's make the example of a native speaker of English who teaches English as a second or foreign language. It requires a specific effort for such an instructor to detangle from *what* he or she may teach and *being* the object of what it is taught. As the Irish poet Yeats once wrote "*how can you know the dancer from the dance*?" [3].

Consequently, a coherent professional development track is quite complicated by the asymmetric path that may lead the language instructor into the teaching profession. For these reasons, the reflective process included in professional development programs not only is essential but should also include a direct confrontation with the multitude of realities that are becoming part of our changing profession, from migrations to globalization and the reshaping of language the class. It is unsettling to forget such debate in the name of market demand.

In this presentation, I will outline the main characteristics of concepts underpinning professional developments programs, and illustrate the phases of the reflective process interfacing the inner and outer work that takes place during some specific moments of elaboration and professional growth.

Moreover, I will provide samples of experiential and reflective activities and techniques useful to the profession.

Let's begin by differentiating between Teacher Training and Teacher Development. As Freeman points out, training is characterized by a direct and specific intervention normally focused on a timely purpose. Development instead, is normally framed as an indirect intervention or an individual and idiosyncratic path. Training and Development do not always follow the same path, in fact, sometimes they collide. How is it possible? What happens after the collision?

It happens when there are differences within the institutional structures that enable the training and the sense-making of the individual. For example, if the school where one language teacher works organizes a training events focused on a specific intervention and the instructor is operating solely based on the experience acquired in the classroom, we could predict that the training will not be very effective in transforming the views of that individual. We will come back to expand on the concept of transformation and transformative processes.

M.J. Wallace's *Training foreign language teachers: A reflective approach [2]* marks the metamorphoses of the concept of experience, henceforward experiential learning. Wallace singled out four models that delineated the professional initiation to the teaching profession (Fig. 1).

Models:
- the craft model (apprentice-expert)
- the rationalist model (scientific knowledge/application of scientific knowledge/ practice/ refinement/practice)
- the case study model (observations)
- the integrative model (knowledge/experience/practice/reflection)

First and foremost, starting with Wallace the notion of "experience" dramatically takes an epistemological turn: from practice to process and back. Reflection is now the trigger of the new experiential cycle. Metacognitive processes which had already being introduced by Dewey provide the necessary ground for the inclusion of the personal knowledge and experience of the practitioner in the mix pivoting professional development, training and education in the last 20 years.

Traditionally, the transfer of content into practice was the domain of methods. Teaching competencies were measured by acquiring skills and techniques dictated more or less coherently by various methods. The communicative approach brought more flexibility to the classroom by allowing a transactional relationship between teacher and student. However, in the current post-method era, classroom roles have become fuzzier. Student-centered classroom has decentralized the instructor's role and pushed him to embrace the role of the enabler or facilitator. This new role implies the refinement of skills that might have not been so central in the past. Namely, observation skills, metacognitive skills and the willingness to self-examine their own professional efforts and challenge their assumptions, needless to say, the ability to address change and re-direct any coveted achievements, if necessary.

The tools used in the classroom can be difficult to untangle from daily social and professional dynamics and interferences from the outside world. One of the most effective examples of transformative training for FL instructors in a post-method era are the experiential language teaching training programs that are following the premises purported by Kolb experiential cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation. Experiential teaching and training models provide a multilayered approach to allow the instructor to translate observations into decision-making and directions. Experiential training also combines a closer examination of strategies: thinking as problem solving, organizational strategies and delivery strategies, all attributes that are normally the domain of instructional design. However, training based on the experiential cycle does not focus on an endless chain of reflections and speculations, on the contrary, it allows the unpacking of ideas while experimenting on learning.

I will conclude with an example that may illustrate how the skills described above get activated in the application of the Kolb's experiential cycle.

1.2 Example

Training instructional objectives: task design and implementation of task principles.

Phase 1. (Kolb's concrete experience). The facilitator introduces the following scenario to a group of FL instructors (trainees) who will act like students in an ESL class: you are working as tour guides of this area for one day and have been assigned a group of 30 teenagers from (language specific country). 2 of them have special needs (facilitator distributes 2 cards describing the needs). You also have a limited budget of $600. Write an appropriate and complete itinerary for the day, include as many details as possible since this itinerary will be submitted to the group Team Leader.

The FL instructors (student's roles) will prepare the itinerary and present it to the class. If the group of trainees is large, they should be divided in several small groups (4-5 people). The presentation simulates what would actually happen in the classroom, therefore, it is important that it is performed entirely, including the possible competitiveness that would arise in the classroom.

Phase 2. (Kolb's reflective observation). The trainees will be re-directed by the facilitator to think about the activity that they have just performed. The facilitator will be asking questions prompting the instructors to think about what happened during the activity when they were operating as students/guides. Facilitator will help in breaking down the learning process in all its components.

Phase 3. (Kolb's generalization). The facilitator captures the main points expounded by the trainees and help to generalize the concepts of task design, guiding the trainees to find the correlations in the itinerary-building task. Facilitator invites the trainees to consolidate the conceptual understanding into publishable principles.

Phase 4. (Kolb's experimentation). The facilitator invites the trainees to explore other situated applications of task design and why would a task-like activity would be useful for language learning instead of another kind of activity.

The experiential cycle can be applied for virtually all the activities and practices commonly used in the classroom: from info gaps to structured input activities. In my 10-year experience as a trainer and workshops designers, the most relevant factor is the heightened awareness that I witness throughout the training. The outcomes are usually very tangible and I had the opportunity to collect evidences from a variety of quality control and assessment tools, which include follow-up classroom observations, direct testimonials and input from the language instructors stating that the experiential training helps the instructor to thoughtfully sequence their instruction and organize their lesson.

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Training and Mentoring Novice Instructors at the University Level

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to show that graduate students in foreign language departments in the US, who cannot teach in their first year due to accreditation requirements, need to be trained, mentored, and evaluated during their first year of graduate school under the direction of a Master Instructor. To earn their stipend, novice instructors are assigned to a master instructor, take a methodology course, observe classes taught by experienced faculty, do guided grading, and begin to teach sections of a class. At the end of their first semester these instructors teach a full week on their own. In the second semester, novice instructors teach independently under the supervision of the Master Instructor. This method gives hands-on experience in a controlled environment. Time investment for mentors is significant with such models but mentees gradually gain confidence in teaching, departmental policies, and are prepared to teach independently in their second year. Mentors benefit from the positive relationship developed with their mentees who contribute ideas and insights as members of a team. Students benefit because they attend smaller classrooms and receive individual help. This method provides a cohesive training across languages in the same department.

Keywords: Mentoring training novice language instructors

Content

In the United States teaching of lower-level foreign languages used to fall primarily to graduate students pursuing graduate degrees. Today, most large universities with multi-sections of lower-level language courses have shifted to a combination of fixed-term faculty holding PhD's and graduate students pursuing a degree. Since the mid-1950s, the norm was to train new teaching assistants through a methodology course and the tutelage of faculty mentors. The mentor provided a syllabus, materials, model lessons, and involved their tutees in grading student work. The language course coordinator's role was more an administrative supervision than pedagogical training. In the last decade, the course coordinator has taken on a more active role in mentoring new instructors. While the language director and the established faculty modify their programs and curricula to enhance the professional development of graduate students, they also rely on course coordinators/master teachers to mentor and train new instructors to assume their future responsibility as independent teachers.

Course coordinators are logical candidates to mentor and train incoming novice instructors since they already organize the course and are experienced teachers invested in the success and consistency of these courses (Furry & Lindquist). Lack of consistency in mentoring was cited as a problem in the apprentice model discussed by Kost (2008). Successful models reflecting this expanded role of the coordinator entail a substantial logistical planning and collaboration with the language director. First, find, in advance, the best classroom to accommodate a master teacher and mentees. Second, pre-semester orientation with mentees to explain their role and responsibilities in and out of the classroom. Third, set up ongoing guidance during the semester in conjunction with the methodology course.

Universities are committed to improve the quality of undergraduate language instruction by having only well-trained and experienced instructors. The ultimate goal is student-centered and what we do should be in the best interest of the students. At the same time, we want to give each incoming graduate student the necessary training and hands-on teaching experience under supervised guidance. The logistic decisions in the mentoring and training program eases novices into all the aspects of teaching gradually so they are not overwhelmed by their teaching and graduate coursework. These teacher-training models foster an environment in which mentor and mentees work together as a unified team.

Universities strive to incorporate the fundamental principles of Appreciative Inquiry laid out by Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) as they have been adapted to higher education, in frameworks known as Appreciative Education explained by Bloom *et al*., (2013) and Harrison and Hasan (2013), in these teacher-training models. First and foremost, we are guided by the positive principle: improving practice through focusing on potential and the acknowledgement of what is going well rather than an obsession about what is not. Language departments provide positive interactions with mentees by creating common spaces in and outside class to encourage interaction and collaboration. Master teachers foster a culture based on respect and appreciation for each member of the team. The initial meetings with the master teacher during orientation set the tone for this approach. Besides presenting novice instructors with the department's teaching philosophy and practices during these meetings, instructors start engaging in self-reflection, contribute to teaching discussions, and course decision-making meetings. For example, even though they did not have an input in selecting their classroom, instructors are involved in figuring out how the space will be used and are invited to give their input.

Listening to their input lets them know that their opinions are valued and makes them feel part of a team from day one.

The number of incoming graduate students who cannot teach on their own determines the size of the classroom. In a typical year, such novice instructors may number from two to five depending on the language. The ideal master class consists of one master teacher and one or two novice instructors with a total of twelve to fifteen students per instructor. The classroom needs to be large enough to accommodate twelve to fifteen students to sit together with a buffer space between them for instructors to move easily among them and not be distracted by what is happening in other groups.

Students assigned to these master classes are divided randomly in two or three sections within the classroom. Each instructor is assigned a group and coordinate with the master teacher on the activities that need to be supervised. The master teacher directs the whole class, presents models to the entire group for the benefit of the students and the new instructors, and observes the latter working with groups to later provide feedback. This random assignation of students creates a community rather than independent groups. Students appreciate the flow between the presentational model to the whole class and the more personalized communicative group work in their sections with the new instructor facilitating the task. Students quickly discover that they are expected to be active participants in class and cannot merely fade unnoticed during the master teacher's presentation. For such a configuration, the classroom must have technical features that can range from chalkboard space, document cameras, projectors, multiple screens to an adequate sound system. When a classroom is missing several components, the coordinator/master teacher asks new instructors to figure out what will be the optimal usage of the classroom space and features.

Administrative procedures and details regarding a course are communicated primarily outside of class meetings with learning management systems. Early in the first semester, the team has short ongoing briefings before and after class. Pre-briefings may be devoted to translating what things on paper or on a PowerPoint mean in the reality of the classroom, or to explore the advantages of certain approaches or practices. During post-briefings, the master teacher solicits observations from instructors about what worked well, what felt comfortable, where they needed help, and suggests different approaches for subsequent classes. Master teachers also address students' questions and issues with the instructors during follow up meetings. In these meetings instructors share personal classroom experiences and adjust their practices accordingly.

Mentoring and training new instructors are crucial so that they focus primarily on facilitating communicative practices in class with their groups and follow the cues set throughout the coordinator's detailed lesson plan. In the pre- and post-briefings, the coordinator/master teacher addresses how to implement lesson plans, recycle previous material, and learn time management.

Novice teachers often rush through the material or stick to the letter of the lesson plan instead of taking time to involve students practicing the material. On occasions, they get bogged down in details and not move in a timely manner to the next activity. New instructors must see the master teacher stretching the lesson plan and later discuss possible variations during pre- and post-briefing sessions together with all the novice instructors that are facing similar challenges. The briefings become less frequent as the semester proceeds, but later longer meetings broach how to handle more complicated concepts as the material becomes more difficult.

New instructors – outside class – grade the work of the students officially assigned to them, keep track of their progress, and hold office hours. Grading starts immediately and the master teacher trains all neophytes to grade consistently across sections. Besides being trained on how to use online homework systems, they learn how to grade more complex and open-ended assignments (compositions, exams, and oral interviews) with pre-designed rubrics in sample grading workshops.

Typically, students have self-graded homework online. The self-grading online assignments give novice teachers time to provide detailed feedback on class performance, open-ended assignments, and help students during office hours. New teachers must hold office hours and be available to all the students in the course. This provides more flexible choices to undergraduate students seeking help outside class.

In the second half of the first semester, new teachers assume more obligations. After observing the master teacher direct class, implement lesson plans, and work with students, they design portions of the master teacher's lesson plan up to an entire week of lesson plans. Once the lessons are approved, they proceed to direct the class in place of the master teacher who assumes their role. After teaching independently, they receive feedback from the coordinator/master teacher and their peers in a supportive environment to foster confidence in their teaching. In the second semester, they teach independently under the supervision of the master teacher. They create lesson plans, quizzes, composition and interview topics in tandem with the course's official syllabus. The master teacher still approves their lesson plans, observes their teaching, and gives them feedback and guidance as necessary.

The model for the pedagogical training of new graduate students presented here entails significant time and work for the course coordinator who serves as master teacher and mentors all the practical aspects of their initiation to teaching over the first year. Beyond coordinating a course, such mentoring requires commitment to building a relationship with new instructors. To accomplish this, master teachers do not simply model and explain how to do things. They must devote time listening to mentees to understand what they need and involve them in the teaching process. The benefits to new instructors are borne out by their positive comments at the end of this training. By year's end, their assurance has grown exponentially and they feel well-prepared to teach on their own as a result of having spent many hours observing a master teacher and gradually taking on tasks associated with teaching independently. They appreciate the work that the master teacher does for their benefit. The performance of undergraduate students who take these master classes is comparable to that of those in regular sections and their overall response to the master class configuration is positive. Moreover, they seem to appreciate having several instructors who are available and happy to help them. Last but not least, the coordinator/master teacher benefits from the positive relationship built with mentees, having contributed to their development as instructors and gained insights from their input as well. In short, the return on the investment made can far exceed expectations.

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Monitoring and Evaluation of Language Teaching and Learning

An Ensemble Classifier for Error Detection and Recommendation in the Use of Articles by Learners of English

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Abstract

Learner English can be classified into multiple proficiency levels. To do so, texts written by learners are evaluated by native English speakers/teachers. This process can be time-consuming and could take a while before a learner gets some feedback. The aim of our research is to propose a method to leverage Machine Learning to predict errors and offer recommended alternatives as a feedback. The focus of this paper is to conduct error detection and correction on a, the, null articles as learners experience difficulties in choosing one of the forms. We propose an ensemble model built on syntactic and semantic features of texts. The Brown Corpus is a native written text collection used to build the model. REALEC, a learner corpus, is used in combination with the Brown Corpus as a Gold Standard to test the ability of the system to not only detect errors but also to validate the accuracy of its recommendations. Results show a 77% and 71% accuracy in the error prediction and correction experiments respectively, and thereby reduce the efforts of the human evaluator.

Keywords: Article Microsystem, Learner English Evaluation, Multi-Layer annotations, Ensembles

1. Introduction

English is the globally adopted medium of communication. Therefore, many non-native speakers get enrolled in additional courses to learn the language. During the course, they are trained to hone their speaking, listening, writing and reading abilities. The writing tasks are graded by human evaluators who are proficient in the language. The evaluation consists of a typical error detection and correction procedure as a form of feedback to the learners. The time taken for a complete evaluation is proportional to the effort required. Therefore, it takes several days/weeks for the feedback to reach a class of enrolled learners. This phase may be intensive for the evaluators and causes anxiety among the learners. Hence, the aim of our system is to reduce this effort, and thereby make it a less time-consuming process benefiting both evaluators and learners.

Through this study we propose a machine learning based error prediction and recommendation system focusing on the articles – *a, the and null*, as they are foundational and most frequently used, and many learners lack clarity in this space. In this study, we build a classifier trained on features extracted from native English and test it on the learner English. In section 2 briefs about articles, section 3 describes the experiment conducted, section 4 describes its results.

2. Theoretical Background

Articles *a*, *the* and *zero/null* in English, a grammatical paradigm that functions as a microsystem, are the core focus of this paper. They are the most frequently occurring morphemes in English. The *zero article* is the most frequently used article, followed by *'the'* and then *'a'* [8]. The articles indicate the definiteness and specificity of a noun and are found preceding nouns.

The definite article, *the*, implies that the succeeding noun is referring to a specific entity. The definite article, preceding either a countable or uncountable noun, means that the referent of the noun phrase is assumed to be known to the speaker and the addressee [1].

The indefinite article, *a*, is used with singular, countable and a non-specific noun [1]. The *zero article* is found with non-specific or generic forms of uncountable and plural countable nouns [1].

In terms of acquisition of the microsystem, learners go through different stages. A sentence may look syntactically correct with or without the use of one of the articles. However, the paradigmatic correctness depends on the context of the text [3]. At the beginning of their learning process, most learners tend to avoid the use of articles [8], which is considered as an overuse of the *zero article*. At the later stage, they learn the necessity of an article and tend to use *'the'* for every noun. As they gain familiarity/fluency with the language, their article usage becomes accurate [8].

3. Experimental Setup

3.1 Proposed System Architecture

The generalized workflow of a grammatical microsystem evaluator comprises of four stages:

1. **Text Decomposition**: Extract the text fragments that are used to learn the microsystem.
2. **Feature Extraction**: For a given text fragment, a set of features that influence the usage of a microsystem is extracted.
3. **Feature Representation**: Convert the extracted features to vectors that can be used for building/running the machine learning model.
4. **Building/Running the model**: If the machine learning model is already built, the feature vector is run to determine the outcome. Otherwise, the feature vector along with the expected outcome is added to the dataset to train the model.

These steps are customized to evaluate the article microsystem as detailed in further sections.

3.2 Corpora

Corpora containing text features are the data used to build the machine learning model. The model learns the native usages and applies the knowledge acquired to evaluate incorrect instances. Hence, a native error-free corpus and a learner corpus with annotation errors are required. From the corpora we extract each occurrence of an article followed by a noun as a tuple in the dataset. For instance, the first two rows of Table 1 are extracted from *"Opponents made a similar proposal"*.

The Brown corpus, built by native American writers, is the chosen error-free corpus [2].

The learner corpus chosen for this study is the REALEC [11], a corpus containing essays written by Russian learners of English. The corpus comprises of 3,400 essays and 838,000 word in total. It follows a hierarchical error annotation scheme in which each error is tagged along with the error-type, impact and correction performed by professors teaching Academic Writing in English.

3.3 Features

Texts are vast contextual content that need to be reduced to features that can be processed by a machine learning algorithm. In case of articles, the noun and its surrounding texts are features that determine the article usage. The following text features are extracted for this experiment.

1. **POS Tags**: A Penn Treebank tagset consisting of 36 POS tags and 12 tags for symbols is used to tag the text. These tags are the primary features of the text [7].
2. **Named Entity Recognition (NER)**: To add more details to the nouns, we perform NER to categorize a proper noun or entity as a person, location, organization etc [9].
3. **Countability**: Nouns can be classified as countable and uncountable based on their finiteness. The Google N-gram service takes a n-gram as input and returns the frequency of the n-gram after searching in all Google Books published between a range of years. From this service, we compute the frequency of a noun preceded by the "many" and then, by "much". If the former is the greatest, then the noun is countable (represented by "CNT"), else considered uncountable ("UNCNT").
4. **Anaphora**: When two words co-refer, then it implies the presence of an anaphoric link. This is identified by determining the presence of synonyms to a noun [6].

For example, "*She saw a blue car outside her house. The vehicle was punctured".* Here, the vehicle refers to the car mentioned in the previous sentence.

This is represented by 'CXT' aside the tags.

3.4 Features

A snippet containing nouns and corresponding articles from the Brown Corpus is tabulated in Table1.

Table 1: Example of data from the Brown Corpus

Article	Text	Feature
zero article	Opponents	NNS+CNT
a	similar proposal	JJ NN+CNT
the	election	NN+CNT+CXT

A snippet of the Gold Standard Dataset that is used to test the system is tabulated in Table 2. First is a row from the REALEC. The next is a row from Brown Corpus, hence the error column is *<none>.*

Table 2: Sample of the Gold Standard dataset

Text	Feature	Error	Expected Outcome
Sharp line	JJ+NN+CNT	Zero article	a
Jury	NN+CNT+CXT	<none>	the

3.5 Ensemble Model

This section describes the machine learning model, validation and evaluation methodologies adopted in this study.

Building the model: A Majority Voting Ensemble of Naive Bayes, SVM and ME classifiers to learn and classify the features presented is built [10]. Individually, these classifiers reported an accuracy of 74%, 78% and 75% respectively, when tested with a sample of the Brown corpus. However, an ensemble of these three algorithms resulted in an 88% accuracy when tested with the same sample.

Evidently, the ensemble model makes more accurate predictions [4], [5] and hence it is used as the supervised learning technique to build the model to learn the article microsystem.

Validation: The Brown Corpus dataset is used to perform k-fold cross validation to validate the fitness of the model. This approach flags problems like overfitting and gives indications of how the model will generalize to an independent dataset. For this experiment,

we chose 10 as the arbitrary value for k. Throughout the 10 iterations, the model resulted in an accuracy ranging from 85% to 90%.

Evaluation: Prior to error correction, error detection performance is crucial. Post gaining confidence from this experiment, we conduct the error correction experiment, wherein, every correction suggested by the system is validated against the expected outcome. Metrics such as precision, recall, accuracy and F1 score are computed to quantify the performance.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 3 tabulates the results of the pre-requisite error prediction experiment. It shows that 85% of the correct usages were marked correct by the system and 72% of the errors were identified.

Table 3: Error Detection: Confusion Matrix

Predicted Outcome		
	Correct	Incorrect
Correct	2125	375
Incorrect	750	1750

Table 4 tabulates the error correction performance. It is understood that there are 3,500 instances of each class, indicating that the dataset is balanced. 68%, 72% and 71% of the instances expecting article *a*, *the* and *null* respectively have been classified correctly.

Table 4: Error Correction: Confusion Matrix

Predicted Outcome			
	a	the	Zero article
a	2396	35	1069
the	210	2520	770
Zero article	903	115	2482

Table 5 tabulates the values of the evaluation metrics computed.

Table 5: Evaluation metrics

Measure	Value
Accuracy	0.704
Recall	0.66
Precision	0.68
F1-Score	0.67

The results state that 71% of the system's decisions coincided with those of a human annotator.

Note, the REALEC corpus has instances where learners used the incorrect noun which misguided the classifier at the cost of its accuracy. Hence, these results are subject to variations in performance depending upon the types of errors in the corpus.

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How Long Does it Take to Learn English?

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Abstract

The question of how long it takes to reach a usable standard of English is vitally important to teachers and learners alike. Although this question has been widely discussed in both technical and non-technical contexts and many different estimates are available, there is an absence of quantitative studies such as might support these estimates with evidence from the actual performance of English learners. The problem is substantially complicated by the huge variation in types of learners, contexts for learning, and learners' objectives, which make any findings difficult to generalise across the whole field. The research presented here is (as far as the presenters are aware) the first to offer numerical evidence to support claims for the time taken for typical learners to pass standard milestones in English language learning. It is drawn from a study of the anonymised study records of over 160,000 adult students currently enrolled with Wall Street English from 27 different countries, and with 17 different native languages. The study times found are then compared with estimates provided by other highly regarded global English language assessment organisations.

Keywords: Assessment, Blended Learning, SLA, CEFR, Milestones, Standards

1. Theoretical framework and rationale

1.1 Overview

There are many interdependent variables governing the answer to the question of how long it takes to learn English:

- Learner characteristics: L1, aptitude, motivation, educational achievement, and current level of English
- Learner objectives: target level, skill mix, exam-targeted or not
- Study process and context: in an English-speaking country or not, intensity, mode (online or classroom based), contact with teacher, opportunities to practice

The present study looked at a large learner group with a range of L1s from highly dissimilar to English (e.g. Mandarin) to very close (e.g., French), with a common skill focus (General English) and not exam-focused. All of them were studying in non-English-speaking countries, non-intensively, and using the same study mode, with the same amount of contact with teachers and the same opportunities for practice. They were similar therefore to the vast majority of adult English language learners around the world.

1.2 Previous studies

There are a number of widely circulated claims regarding the amount of time typically taken to progress through the Common European Framework levels [1]. The most prominent of these is produced by Cambridge Assessment, in a publication aimed at teachers in the *English Profile* series.

The following chart summarizes estimated guided learning hours for each CEFR level:

CEFR Level	Guided Learning Hours
C2	Approximately 1,000-1,200
C1	Approximately 700-800
B2	Approximately 500-600
B1	Approximately 350-400
A2	Approximately 180-200
A1	Approximately 90-100

Table 1: Study hours per CEFR level [2]

A similar claim is made by Huan Japes, chief executive of English UK, the trade body for UK language schools: "… a rule of thumb is 360 hours – 120 hours for each of three stages – to get to the standard the government expects [to be granted citizenship – B1 on the CEFR] …" [3].

Similar claims are to be found on the websites of many English language teaching institutions; yet, as Benigno, de Jong, and Van Moere point out, "The … six main levels from A1 to C2 [are] often erroneously interpreted as all being of equal width. However, the logit [logarithmic] scale underlying the CEFR scale reveals that its levels are not equidistant – with A2, B1, and B2 being about twice as wide as the A1 level. … [This implies] … that learners will take much longer to move from A2 to B1 than to move from A1 to A2." [4]

Citing two quantitative studies carried out in the U.S.A., Benigno *et al.*, propose the following table of learning hours, also taking account of aptitude with distinct figures for 'slow' and 'fast' learners:

Hours per level		**Total cummulative**		**CEF**	
Fast	**Slow**	**Fast**	**Slow**	**Start**	**Finish**
95	480	95	480	<A1	A1
95	290	190	770	A1	A2
190	616	380	1386	A2	B1
380	1109	760	2495	B1	B2
760	1996	1520	4491	B2	C1

Table 2: Study hours per CEFR level [5]

Especially for 'slow' learners and for the higher levels, these figures are dramatically different from those generally proposed by the English language-teaching industry.

1.3 Purpose and design of the present study

The present study aims to establish the time taken for Wall Street English (WSE) students to move through the levels of the CEFR, using aggregated data from large numbers of learners. The study rests on two sets of data:

i) the alignment of WSE Levels to the CEFR and GSE, and
ii) the time taken by WSE students to progress through CEFR and GSE levels.

The following section describes how these sets of data were compiled and analyzed.

2. Background: WSE course content and alignment

2.1 Pearson Global Scale of English and Learning Objectives

The current WSE syllabus was based closely on Pearson's own Global Scale of English (GSE) [6], a scale based closely on the CEFR, and GSE Learning Objectives [7].

2.2 Alignment of WSE Levels to CEFR and GSE

The fact that the syllabus was constructed using Pearson's GSE Learning Objectives does not guarantee that learners are actually acquiring the language capabilities in question, merely that they are presented with content appropriate for acquiring them. A further test was needed to verify students' ability to produce the language they are being taught.

WSE carried out a large-scale study using Pearson's Progress test [8] on over 1500 learners [9].

The conclusion confirmed the alignment of WSE Levels to CEFR/GSE summarized in the following chart, which shows the fit of expected to predicted test scores, with upper and lower bounds of 95% confidence:

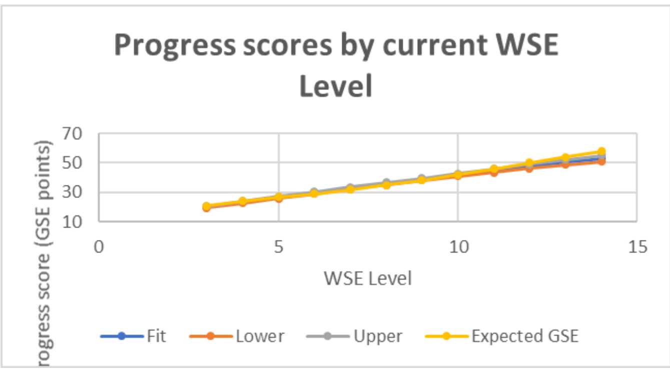

Fig. 1: Results of WSE Alignment Study

No firm conclusions were drawn for WSE Levels above 14 (CEFR B2 and C1), due to a lack of reliable data (fewer than 4% of WSE students are at these levels).

2.3 WSE study modes and data collection

WSE operates a 'flipped' learning model [10] [11], in which students develop familiarity with new language content in online multimedia study before practicing it with teachers in a highly focused small-group teacher lesson called an Encounter. There are also digital workbooks for 'homework', and optional supplementary activities such as conversational (Complementary) classes and Social Clubs.

All online study and teacher lessons are logged in WSE's Student Data System, and data is recorded using anonymized student IDs.

For the purposes of comparison, the core (compulsory) guided learning activities (Multimedia and Encounters) were considered. These correspond to the 'guided learning' referred to in the Cambridge Assessment definition. The unguided homework (Workbooks) are considered separately below.

3. Data analysis and results

3.1 Collecting, cleaning and filtering the data

Records were gathered in May 2018 of the time taken for each student to complete each activity at each level. The following chart shows the average number of times any activity in a level was completed. As students can only complete any given activity once, this indicates how many students were studying at each level during May 2018.

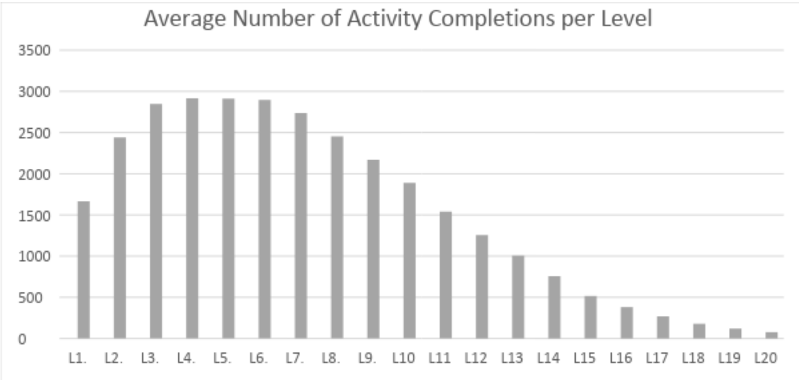

Fig. 2: Average activity completions per level

The following chart shows the distribution of WSE students enrolled in May 2018 across major language groups:

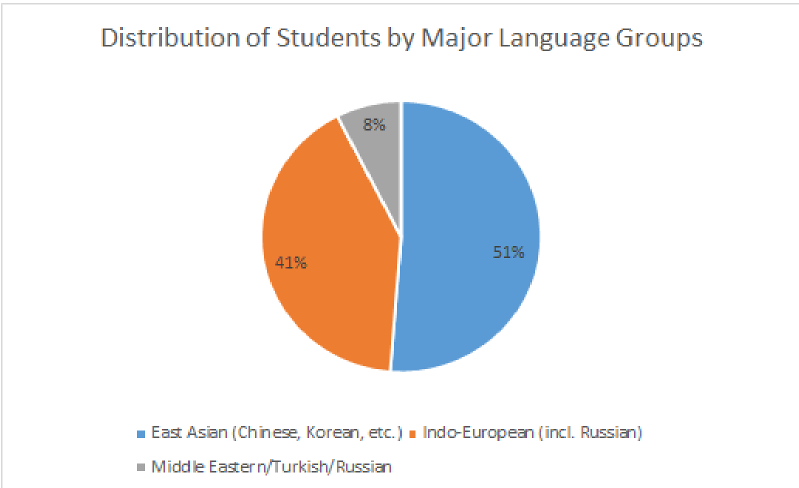

Fig. 3: Breakdown of students by L1 (major language groups)

The average total study time in hours per level was computed, applying a 5% trimmed mean (removing the top and bottom 5% of timings) to the online multimedia activities. This was in order to eliminate students whose recorded study times did not accurately reflect time spent studying because on one or more occasions they started an activity and then left it without finishing it or logging off. When they returned to complete the activity, the time spent away would be added to the activity time, giving a false result.

3.2 Comparisons with other studies

The following chart compares the Cambridge Assessment [12] with WSE learners (guided instruction – Multimedia and Encounters – only):

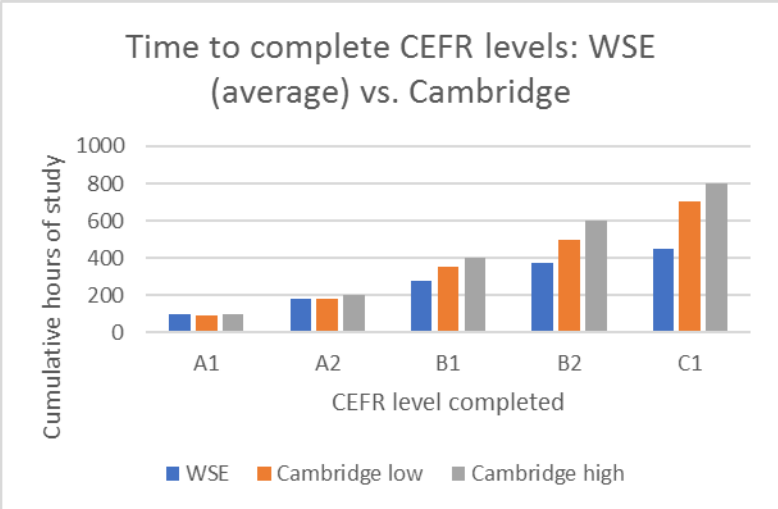

Fig. 4: Cumulative hours to reach each CEFR level - Cambridge estimates vs. WSE

Note that:

- C2 is not included, as the WSE curriculum does not go beyond C1.
- The WSE estimates for B2 and C2 are tentative and may need revision following further studies.
- The WSE figures represent a global average across all students, including China.
- As the Cambridge Assessment figures [13] are in the form of a range, both low and high estimates are shown.
- The WSE hours include time spent on levels 1 and 2 (below A1). This, as explained above, is not considered in CEFR-based learning programs, as no learning below A1 can be assessed within the framework.

Despite these provisos, the total time taken for WSE students to reach B1 (274 hours) is significantly (21%) below the Cambridge minimum (350 hours).

The WSE figures will now be compared with the Cambridge and Pearson estimates [14]:

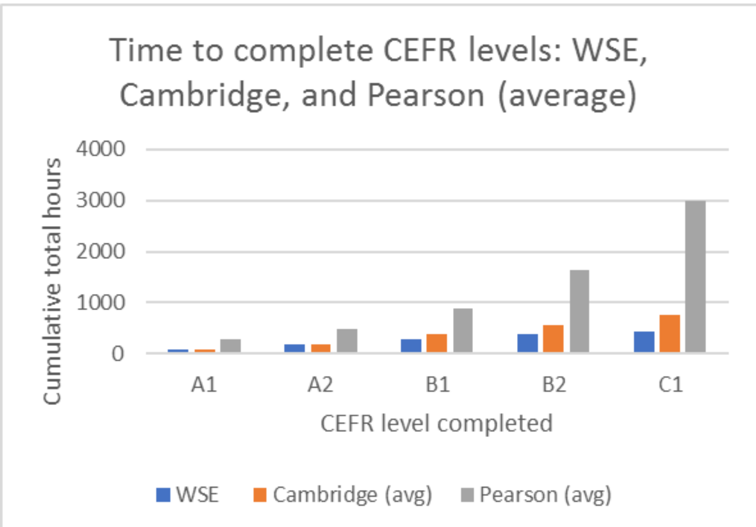

Fig. 5: Cumulative hours per CEFR level – WSE, Cambridge, and Pearson (average)

The huge difference between Pearson's estimates and the others is explained by the fact that the study times for 'slow learners' are 3 to 4 times those for 'fast learners.

3.3 Digital workbooks

The Cambridge and Pearson definitions do not relate to the same definition of study: Pearson also includes written exercises not corrected by or discussed with teachers ("… time explicitly devoted to learning the language, through instruction and exercises." [15]).

Time spent studying including the WSE digital Workbooks is compared with Pearson's average figures in the chart below:

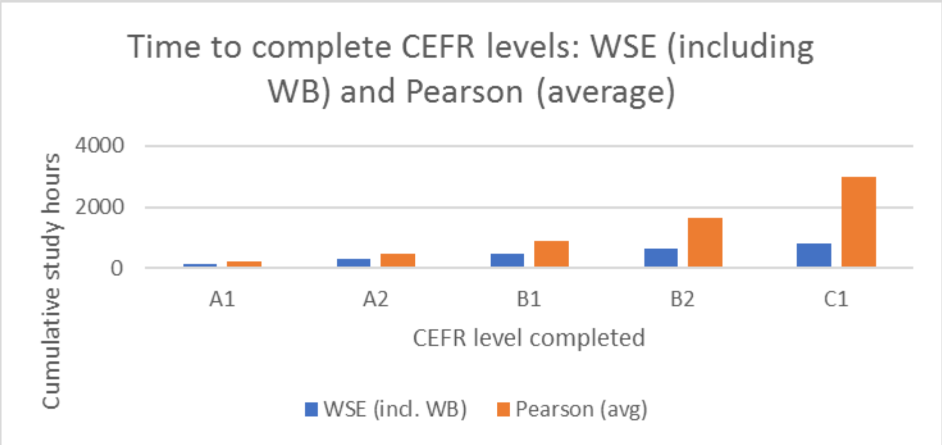

Fig. 6: Cumulative hours per CEFR level – WSE (with WB) and Pearson (average).

4. Conclusions

It would be easier to draw firm conclusions from the above if other large-scale international English teaching organisations had carried out or published similar studies.

Meanwhile, the following tentative conclusions are suggested:

i) Pearson's 'slow learner' estimates appear to be outliers, while WSE, Cambridge and Pearson 'fast learners' track each other fairly closely up to B1.
ii) 'Guided learning' times for WSE students are generally below the Cambridge lower estimates, and the gap becomes wider at higher levels.
iii) 'Active study' times (i.e. including digital Workbooks) are considerably lower for WSE students than for the average of Pearson's estimates.
iv) WSE students can expect to reach the end of the B1 level on the CEFR in 21% fewer guided learning hours than estimated by Cambridge Assessment, and, with Workbooks included, 42% fewer than the Pearson estimates (average learners).

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Open Educational Resources in Enhancing Thai University Students' English Language Learning

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Abstract

With the emergence, growth, and widespread availability of education technologies, English language teaching (ELT) needs to be shaped differently. That is, technology integration has created a potential educational environment in which language learning across the entire paradigm can be supported. Advancing technology is not only changing the way courses are developed and delivered but also the way a language is learned and taught. These impacts tend to be particularly relevant in higher education in which educational technology more easily accessible and available. This paper aims to explore the potential of open educational resources (OER) in enhancing university students' English language skills through the Moodle system. Methodologically, sets of OER were systematically compiled, and subsequently their content validity was assessed to assure their appropriateness for the university students' English proficiency level. A total of 189 first year students in humanities from a medium sized university participated in this study during a semester break. Prior to the OER exposure, the participants completed a questionnaire eliciting personal information and relevant information regarding their English learning behaviors and attitudes, followed by a pretest on English language skills. Then, the students were encouraged to freely explore and exploit the OER available on the Moodle system for a period of 19 days. After the OER exposure, a parallel online posttest was administered, and semi-structured interviews were conducted. The pretest/posttest score comparison shows significant gain scores in all language skills. The findings suggest that the integration of the OER bears significant pedagogical implications and applications for curriculum designers, teachers, and students. The questionnaire and interview data reveal interesting findings about the students' engagement and interaction with the system, which should be considered in the future when blending technology-oriented methodology into the instruction process for Thai learners. This study represents a wake-up call for ELT stakeholders to prepare to shift away from traditional teaching approaches, to modify teachers' behaviors, syllabus, and curriculum, and to empower teachers to successfully cope with the changing educational environment.

Keywords: OER, university students, English language skills, Thai learners

1. Introduction

Technology has had a massive impact on the way we lead our lives since it was globally introduced. It is clear that technology affects all aspects of our life; education is no exception. The emergence, growth, and widespread availability of education technologies has had a considerable impact on English language teaching. That is, technology integration has created a potential educational environment in which language learning across the entire paradigm can be supported.

Consequently, how English education is delivered needs to be adjusted. Advancing technology is not only changing the way courses are developed and delivered but also the way a language is learned and taught. Specifically, in higher education around the world, the impact of advancing technology is particularly relevant, allowing teaching materials to be more easily accessible and available [1].

Despite the availability of education technology and the importance of English as a common means of communication regionally and internationally, it is unfortunate that Thai learners' English has been found to be unsatisfactory, be it gauged by national tests or international tests. For instance, according to the O-NET (Ordinary National Educational Test) national tests in English administered to Grades 6, 9 and 12 students nationwide, Thai students' average scores have been low for a number of years.

Similarly, Thai learners' English as assessed by TOEFL of ETS or EPI of EF has been labeled as low proficiency. These indicators are forcing Thai educators to realize that some crucial action needs to be taken immediately to rectify and ameliorate the situation. At this juncture, given the prominent and positive role of technology in enhancing language learning as evidenced by a number of previous studies conducted in multiple settings and across educational levels [2, 3], it is interesting to examine whether the application of technology could enhance Thai university students' English language skills.

2. The study

2.1 Objective

Given the existence, prevalence, and a wide range of open educational resources or OER on the internet, this paper primarily highlights the role of OER in enhancing various English language skills.

The objective of this study is to determine whether the sets of OER could increase Thai university students' English language skills: grammar, expressions, listening, factual reading, vocabulary, and literary reading.

2.2 Participants

The participants of this study included first-year students in the Faculty of Arts at a medium sized university near Bangkok, because it is known that the students particularly in humanities are highly motivated to learn the English language. The final pool includes 189 first year university students who volunteered to participate.

2.3 Instruments

Several instruments were devised. First, six sets of OER links were systematically compiled representing the six language skills for the students to be exposed to, and subsequently scrutinized by three faculty member experts (2 international and 1 Thai) for content validity, accuracy, and appropriateness. Once validated, the lessons were made available online through the Moodle system.

Next, a profile questionnaire was distributed to elicit personal information and relevant information regarding the students' English learning behaviors and attitudes. Then, six sets of pretests and parallel posttests were developed to assess whether the students had gained additional English knowledge from the OER exposure. The pretests and posttests, containing 40 items for each skill, followed the same multiple-choice format. The three experts validated the parallel nature and content of the pretests and the posttests.

2.4 Procedures

The participants were informed about this project objective and volunteered to participate in this study. On the pretest day, each set of the pretest with 30 minutes allocation was traditionally administered on campus. After the pretests, the students returned to their home for the university semester break. The OER lessons were made accessible through the Moodel system. The students were encouraged to freely explore the OER on the Moodle system for a period of 19 days. After the OER exposure, the parallel online posttests were administered, and semi-structured interviews were conducted. The pretest and posttest scores were calculated using descriptive statistics. In addition, the mean scores of the pretests and posttests were analyzed using a *t*-test to determine if the gain score difference was significant.

3. Results and discussion

It should be noted that the integration of ICT in language learning allowed the students to have freedom to access the materials at their leisure. As a result, the students' access to the lessons through the Moodle system was not controlled. The descriptive statistics conducted on the pretest and postest scores produced the following results (Table 1 and Fig. 1).

	Grammar		**Listening**		**Expressions**		**Factual Reading**		**Literary Reading**		**Vocabulary**	
	Pre	**Post**	**Pre**	**Post**	**Pre**	**Post**	**Pre**	**Post**	**Pre**	**Post**	**Pre**	**Post**
Max	39	39	36	37	38	40	37	39	38	31	37	40
Min	9	12	11	12	4	7	10	8	0	6	8	5
Mean	**28.41**	**31.77**	**24.25**	**26.62**	**30.47**	**34.16**	**30.47**	**31.34**	**15.14**	**17.54**	**23.22**	**29.41**

Table 1: Pretest and posttest scores across the six language skills

As shown, the students' mean pretest scores of individual language skills varied to a certain extent, ranging from 15 (literary reading) to 30 (expressions). The low literary reading mean score in the pretest can be attributed to the fact that this skill is relatively new to the students, as it is generally taught to second year students. However, the comparison of the mean pretest and posttest scores of individual skills are elucidating (Fig. 1).

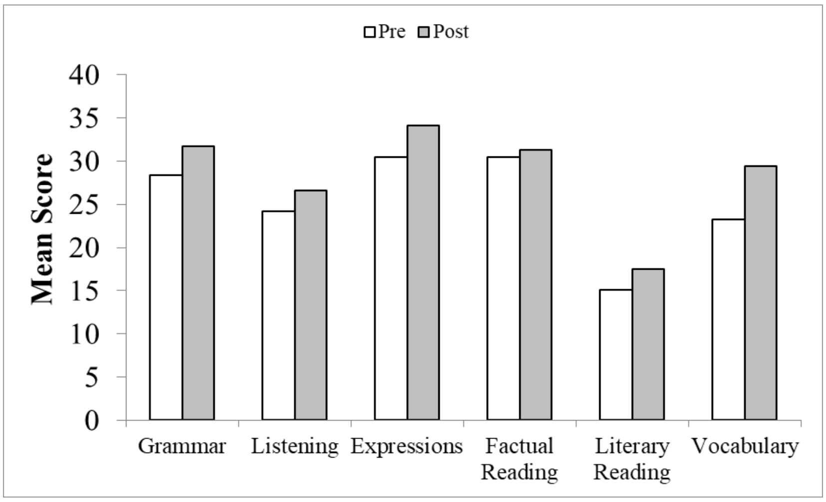

Fig. 1: Comparison of pretest and posttest scores

Focusing on the mean scores across the six language skills, the comparison shows that, after 19 days of exposure to the lessons, the students' language skills improved across the board, as shown in Figure 1. In order to establish whether the knowledge gained in each language skill is significant, a *t*-test was conducted. In Table 2 and in congruence with [3, 4, 5, 6], a significant gain was observed across the board.

Paired Samples		**Paired Differences**					**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
		Mean	**S.D.**	**Std. Error Mean**	**95% Confidence Interval of the Difference**				
					Lower	**Upper**			
Pair 1	Grammar	-2.373	4.317	.412	-3.189	-1.557	-5.764	109	.000*
Pair 2	Listening	-1.765	5.053	.500	-2.757	-.772	-3.527	101	.001*
Pair 3	Expressions	-2.772	5.505	.496	-3.755	-1.790	-5.585	122	.000*
Pair 4	Factual Reading	-3.510	5.578	.564	-4.629	-2.392	-6.229	97	.000*
Pair 5	Literary Reading	-1.976	4.999	.444	-2.854	-1.099	-4.455	126	.000*
Pair 6	Vocabulary	-4.447	5.616	.526	-5.489	-3.405	-8.455	113	.000*

Table 2: t-test on test scores of the six skills

Based on interviews, the students were generally content with the lessons and enjoyed the free availability of the lessons. However, as confessed in their interviews and supported by their sporadic access to the lessons recorded by the system, they seemed to lack control when disciplining themselves to access the lessons. When asked to choose either to learn the lessons online or in classrooms, they opted for the combined nature of both traditional classroom and online learning.

They believe that with this combination, they would be somehow forced to be more disciplined and responsible, attending classes while enjoying freedom to access the online lessons whenever they wanted to.

In conclusion, this study has shown that an online system plays a part in scaffolding language learning. As demonstrated, catalyzed by the rise of the digital age and the ubiquitous, exponential technological changes, teaching/learning needs to change. The notion of learner-centered and non-traditional teaching should be embraced, rendering traditional teaching in a teacher-fronted classroom to be challenged. This finding resonates with the blended learning approach [7], a strategy emphasizing individual learning which intentionally transfers instruction from a teacher-oriented to a learner-centered model. In this approach, teachers being recognized as an important component of high-quality education programs, reshaping the way teaching/learning takes place. In short, integrating ICT in instruction to captivate and engage learners is substantiated by this study.

This research suggests that the OER integration bears a number of practical pedagogical implications and applications for curriculum designers, teachers, and students. Moreover, while the students are expected to be lifelong learners, the teachers are also strongly encouraged to be lifelong learners. That is, teachers need to be aware of and updated on new or latest technologies. The interview data highlights the students' engagement and interaction with the system, which obviously needs to be considered in the future when blending technology-oriented methodology into the instruction. Although Thai students agreed that online lessons are beneficial and accommodate their needs, the opportunities to physically be in classrooms with the teachers compel them to be responsible. This study represents a wake-up call for ELT stakeholders in Thailand to prepare to shift away from traditional teaching approaches, to modify teachers' behaviors, syllabus, and curriculum, and to empower teachers to successfully cope with the changing educational environment.

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Self-Assessment Descriptors for Second Language

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Abstract

The poster presents pilot study in which an illustrative bank of self-assessment descriptors for Czech as a second language was evaluated. The project is related to Common European Framework for Language teaching and learning and was implement by National Institute for Education in Prague. The descriptors define at an ascending series of levels (from A1 to B2 level) and in four age categories (under 11 years, 11-15 years, 15-19 years and 19+ years) various aspects of language proficiency. In pilot study was evaluated the methodology to establish the difficulty level of descriptors and the ability level of learners. The subject of the study were 753 descriptors evaluated by 50 teachers and 640 students. They are analyzed with questionnaires and controlled interviews. The analysis shows that many teachers are not sufficiently informed on second language acquisition. Another finding is the inexperience of many teachers with the language levels following the CEFR; they label words or grammatical elements as an inappropriate level, but their estimate is very often incorrect. The teachers mark sayings, proverbs and idioms as the most problematic. The students are often able to express the given meaning, but they are shy to speak in a foreign language.

Keywords: second language, self-assessment, descriptor, pilot study

1. Self-assessment in language teaching

The traditional view was that language is only important in language lessons and the assessment was one-way process pointed from teacher to the student. Today however, language is no longer seen as a goal in itself, but also as a tool through which students interact with friends and peers in schools or at work. Language is also o tool through which students learn content matters in subjects like science, literature, maths and history [1]. Self-assessment helps learners take ownership of their learning. Self-assessment descriptors can be used to encourage students to set goals and make them aware of what they need or want to learn. One of the effects of self-assessment is the encouragement in setting academic, professional and personal goals. Self-assessment can increase the interest and motivation level of students for the subjects leading to enhanced learning and better academic performance, helping them in development of critical skills for analysis of their own work. In case of school instruction, self-assessment should become an integral component of teaching, where it should be a part of further discussion and work in class [2]. It should be complemented by the assessment of the teacher or lecturer. Self-assessment helps students to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and to regulate their further learning in an appropriate way. The evaluation of the teachers has a control importance for the student; it can also be motivational.

The self-assessment descriptors are descriptions of the specific skills, which correspond to the given level according to the CEFR. The descriptors form a uniform scale and are formulated clearly, concisely and positively (the goal is to name what the student knows how to do, not what he/she does not know how to do). One example of well-known self-assessment is European Language Portfolio (the part called evaluation portfolio). The ELP is defined as a document in which those who are learning or have learned a language – whether at school or outside school – can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences [3].

2. The specific nature of the acquisition of Czech as a second language

The self-assessment descriptors can be used not only for foreign language evaluation, but also for second language teaching. It is necessary to modify the content for second language learners. One example can be the Project of self-assessment descriptors for Czech as a second language.

From the perspective of linguistics, acquisition of the majority language seems to be the most important process, i.e., achievement of a certain linguistic competence allowing the individual successful realization in the foreign-language milieu. In this process, a certain specific form of bilingualism is achieved in a relatively short time, which is characterized by an imbalance of the knowledge of Czech in its function-style stratification: the spoken language has the primary position, the degree of acquisition of written Czech is negligible with almost half of the respondents and the vast majority speak of linguistic difficulties in official situations, especially in written speeches [4]. The position of a second language is predominantly given by its importance in the life of a person; it is a language on which the user is existentially dependent. In children, it is the language of integration into school attendance; in adults it is the language that makes it possible to integrate into the majority society, so it is the languages that are necessary for working in a given society [5].

The level of the acquisition of Czech is usually very different within the individual language skills; the different needs of the students appear mainly in socio-cultural competence and the different psychological relations between the student and the language. It is particularly the issue of a forced language, the language which the student has not chosen freely based on his/her interest).

In instruction, it is at first mainly the instruction of compensation strategies and basic linguistic functions (greetings, thanking, a request…). In the first phase, instruction of speaking and listening predominates over instruction of reading and writing and the instruction of the basic lexis over the instruction of grammar.

3. Project

The creation of the descriptors for Czech as a second language is implemented by the National Institute for Education, a ten-member team of linguists and language lecturers were engaged in the project. The project's aim is support of Czech as a second language both in the area of the education of minors and also adult migrants. The conception of the self-assessment arises from the descriptors for foreign languages of the European Language Portfolio. The project lasted from June 2016 to November 2018. The creation of the descriptors was divided into four phases:

1. analysis of existing descriptors from the ELP and other foreign projects,
2. reformulation of existing descriptors and creation of new descriptors with respect to the second language,
3. piloting of the descriptors,
4. processing the results of the piloting and final formulation of the descriptors.

For the creation of new descriptors, four age categories and four levels of advancement were established: under 11 years and 11-15 years, levels A1, A2 and B1, 15-19 years and 19+, levels A1, A2, B1, B2.

4. Conception of the piloting study

A piloting of the descriptors took place from September to December 2017. The piloting had two phases – in the first phase a language diagnostic was conducted; in the second phase the descriptors in cooperation with the teachers were tested.

The aim of the piloting study was to verify whether the descriptors correspond to the given language level and whether the descriptors are comprehensible for the individual language levels and reflect the life reality of the target group. The questionnaires were broken down by age and language level.

5. Research design

The selection of the sample took place using a stratified sampling; pupils and teachers from primary, secondary, tertiary and language schools were included in the piloting. Pupils from the 3rd grade (inclusively), hence from age 9, with whom elementary literacy is already developed and who know how to read and write in the Latin alphabet, were included in the piloting.

A total of 35 schools and more than 50 teachers were involved in the piloting. The total number of pupils tested was greater than 640. According to our expectation, it was confirmed that the low language levels of A2 and A1 are also prevalent in the low age category (up to age 11). It is caused by two factors; the first is the short time of their stay in the Czech Republic, the second is the level of the cognitive abilities of children in the given age (a child at age 10 cannot read at level B2 even in their mother tongue, because they do not have a sufficient level of developed reading skills), but level A2 predominated also in another two age categories (15-19 years and 19+). We judge from that that in the case of adult respondents it is a category which Czech is most often learned institutionally; the higher categories apparently continue more commonly in private courses or the language is not learned systematically.

6. The results conclusion

The total number of the tested descriptors was 753. The most commentaries by the teachers (approximately 70%) monitor the language level, especially on the lexical level. It shows that many teachers are not sufficiently informed on Czech as a second language, they evaluate the descriptors from the perspective of a foreign language.

The vocabulary of a second language is distinctly deeper and more specific than that of a foreign language, specialised phrases from many areas appear (health condition, communication with offices, communication with the school, social life). Some commentaries of the teachers suggest the use of synonymous phrases, thanks to which the formulations of the descriptors will be simpler and clear.

Another finding is the inexperience of many teachers with the language levels following the CEFR; they label words or grammatical elements as an inappropriate level, but their estimate is very often incorrect. The teachers marked the descriptors which contain facts not related with the life experiences of their students (e.g., young students who are still studying do not have experience from a work environment). An interesting and repeated finding is the fact that students do not use dictionaries.

Some examples are evaluated as misleading and recommended for reformulation. The teachers mark sayings, proverbs and idioms as the most problematic. An interesting comment is that students are often able to express the given meaning, but they are shy to speak in a foreign language.

The teachers consistently state that there is usually a significant difference between the level reached in listening versus speaking, as well as reading versus writing [6].

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The Paradox of Harmonizing Teaching and Research in a Research-Dominated System of Education

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Abstract

The EFL population in Iran has been burgeoning in recent years, and hundreds of enthusiastic Iranian students enter universities every year, hoping to pursue their future in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. Along with this, language educators and learners are barraged with cutting edge research in the field, much of which has little instructional efficacy. An obvious consequence of this is a superfluous amount of focus on theoretical knowledge rather than the practical applications, and research now dominates contemporary EFL at higher education level in Iran. One reason for this imbalance and mismatch between purely theoretical research and practical applications might be rooted in Massification; the increase in EFL population, which is apparently making it virtually impossible to pay proper attention to the application of theory in practice. Simply put, it seems we are gradually failing to remember that the ultimate goal of all research is to improve the quality of what is done in the language classroom. We are drowned in statistical analyses without understanding the implications of our findings in real situations. While arguing for a combination of theory and practice, the present paper intends to discuss the possible options for bridging the gap between the two, while being mindful to keep both on the front burner.

Keywords: Massification, EFL, Theory, Practice, application

1. An Overview

The research-practice divide seems to have become the spicy food and the buzz-phrase of many conferences and is vastly disputed in academic circles. It is not a new issue though, and many scholars have been repeatedly voicing their concern for some years now, and as we advance in time, it seems to grow even stronger, and the need to bridge this gap seems to be more critical than ever before.

However, the enthusiasm to bridge the gap seems to be greater in teachers/practitioners than in researchers/theoreticians. This might be indirectly translated to a lack of interest or even reticence on the part of the researcher community to fill this gap; as if they do not regard the issue as crucial as it is for practitioners.

In ELT, one reason for this mismatch is that many researchers are drowned so deeply in their research that they hardly find the time to contemplate on the ways to minimize the gap between research and practice. They occasionally argue that it is the duty of practitioners and teachers to decide on the how's of applying research findings in practice. They also complain that teachers/practitioners very often expect researchers to dumb down and oversimplify their research findings and make them more digestible so as to provide quick and easy solutions for classroom application. Teachers, on the other hand, complain that very often they are even further puzzled by the cryptic findings of most research and find the results barely discernible let alone applicable. They find most research findings inaccessible due to their convoluted jargon and obscure statistics.

A major consequence of this rather poor connection between TEFL research and practice in Iran has been manifested in our MA theses and some of our PhD dissertations. A review of many unpublished theses reveals that many of these research attempts do not have much to offer and fail to contribute at all to the already available literature. Some are even inadequate reverberations of previous research.

Nevertheless, the question of how we have to fill the gap between theory and practice does not necessarily mean that we are confronted with a conflicted educational community which is in dire need of being peaced together, rather it is a question of finding how each one of these two may contribute to the quality of the other.

The present paper intends to provide a picture of ELT research and practice in my local context, and in my educational setting, namely higher education, and discuss the issues which might very well be the case in many other contexts as well. Needless to add that the discussion by no means intends to finger-point or blame any of the groups for the existing problems because that is definitely not the best way to find an answer.

2. Researcher-Practitioner Categories

In order to provide a clearer picture of the situation, a closer analysis of the researcher-practitioner types is deemed necessary. Four major groups can be identified in any discussion regarding research and practice:
1. Teacher-researchers;
2. Researcher-teachers;
3. Teachers;
4. Researchers.

The first group includes teachers who are interested in research as well and perform action research, but they are more into teaching than research. The second group are researchers who believe in order to verify their research findings, they need to be directly involved in the teaching profession. The third and the fourth groups are respectively teacher-only and researcher-only. The focus of the present paper is on the first two groups, and how to bring them together.

The 3rd and the 4th groups will progress not far on their own because mere researchers believe teachers need researchers to lead them to the right path, and mere teachers think researchers need teachers to test the validity and reliability of their research findings. This can be interpreted that researchers and teachers are independent and do not need each other. They may also assume there is nothing much each can offer to the other. Medgyes (2017) for instance, argues that researchers do not have much to offer to teachers, while Paran (2017) emphasizes the positive role research and theory play in providing teachers with insights into ways of enhancing their understanding of what they do. Lourdes Ortega (2018) emphasizes that although many language teachers believe SLA research has revolutionized their outlook on teaching, there are many others who argue that SLA research has almost nothing to offer to language teachers, nothing to help them find answers to 'some of their most urgent classroom questions'.

Yet the truth is both communities need each other to reach their goals. This is not just about ELT; a simple internet search shows that this is the concern of many other fields of education and science as well.

3. Statement of the Problem

In any discussion regarding research and practice, two issues are often raised. The first one is related to the research-practice gap and how to bridge it, and the second issue concerns the outcomes or consequences this gap entails.

Many ELT researchers and teachers agree that the primary goal of all research is finding the best way to improve the quality of language education. However, if the immediate customers of research findings are teachers/practitioners, then how is it that the exchange of knowledge and information between them has turned into a challenge?

A prominent reason why researchers and practitioners usually find it hard to have a clear conversation is that they speak totally different discourses, and the often unnecessarily abstract jargon of research might be intimidating for teachers and obscure the effectiveness and importance of research findings. Clark (1994) for instance refers to this as the 'dysfunctional discourse of research and practice'.

The next reason for this lack of mutual understanding might be that those involved in research believe what they are doing is much harder and more time consuming than teaching, leaving them no time to consider how their findings have to be or can be applied in the classroom. This may inadvertently create the notion that researchers look down on practitioners, regarding them as inferior users of the outcome of their research.

Some research projects on the other hand make researcher-teacher connection problematic because they seem to be done simply for the sake of research, as if their findings are not supposed to be applied by anyone, just like when someone cooks a lot of food and prepares a lot of desserts without intending to feed anybody. This type of research which can rightly be titled "The-Effect-of-the-Spoon-on-the-Fork" type of research includes all research papers which are so rudimental that even a novice practitioner/teacher can predict their results with a high degree of precision without employing unnecessarily complicated statistical computations.

An unfortunate consequence of this lack of ELT research-practice balance at higher education level in Iran has been an increasing number of MA theses (and a few PhD dissertations) which have fallen into this pit. Some local experts believe this is also the consequence of Massification; an increasing number of TEFL students who enter the field for various reasons, and a considerable number of whom have no intention of pursuing a career related to teaching at all. They are already employed and only seek a job/salary promotion. Regarding the fact that writing a Master's thesis is part of a Master's degree, many of these students only awkwardly reduplicate/copy what others have done before them.

The theses they write, mostly in the form of quantitative research, can hardly be considered a research paper at all. They simply lack scientific rigour expected from an academic endeavour. One may as well argue that these students step on the road of higher education without being adequately prepared to perform a research work.

Another reason that makes this research-practice gap wider is the socio-political orientation of education in Iran. Foreign language teaching in particular has been downgraded during the past few decades. The educational system which is highly influenced by the political system of the country, regards foreign language learning and teaching inconsequential, enough reason to deprive language teachers and language educators from all the benefits, rewards, and support available to their peers elsewhere in the world.

4. What is to be done?

The two issues presented here raise the vexed question of whether there is any way to reconcile ELT research and practice. The problem is clear, and we need expert solutions to solve it. However, no matter how trivial or significant it may seem, if one group does not try hard enough to fill this gap, we will not go even one step farther than where we are. This is an issue which calls for the close cooperation and collaboration of both parties. As long as there is not an equal consensus between the two groups regarding the problem, nothing much can be achieved.

Promoting action research is one way to bridge this gap. Teachers have to be encouraged to perform research and try to find answers to their questions with the help of researchers. In other words, they have to involve themselves more in the theoretical aspect of their profession and the 'process of knowledge generation' (Ferguson, 2005). However, without proper support from educational sponsors too, this may never happen.

Teachers who currently perform action research in Iran, do not receive much support whatsoever from anywhere, and it is entirely their own choice and personal interest to do research. These teachers are not under any pressure by their respective educational organizations to perform a research work either. Therefore, one way to bridge this gap can be supporting action research, both financially, and intellectually. Although their research endeavours may initially seem to be half-baked ideas, they have to be encouraged to step on the road.

Teachers are the carriers of information and knowledge, and they are responsible for the transfer of knowledge to their students. If students are well-equipped with knowledge and information, they will enter higher education with an adequate understanding of their role in the bigger picture of generating new knowledge. The content of that knowledge then entails a full understanding of the objectives of doing research.

What we need is research-driven teaching as well as practice-based research. Even if we regard teachers as the mere customers/consumers of research findings, it is a huge misunderstanding to think that researchers can be fully successful if they stay completely away from the practice community. If this is solved, then the second issue regarding the theses will also be solved. I would like to call this the 'Domino Effect'.

Another option can be to give up any attempts to bridge the gap and accept the current state of affairs in the ELT community, and look for other options to ameliorate the quality of what is done in the language classroom. In that case, we have relinquished our responsibilities as educators.

This debate is by no means exhaustive, and as long as the ideas for or against the argument vary widely, or the two parties involved refuse to undertake part of the responsibility to bridge this gap, the ELT community will keep on turning around a vicious circle.

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The Significance of Task- Based Instruction in the Improvement of Learners' Speaking Skills

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Abstract

Experience in language teaching learning has showed that involvement of the learners in the learning process yields the best results. There cannot be a better way to involve learners than by devising activities which can be carried out in the classroom. Hence, assuming that Task-Based Instruction can be an effective way to teach a second language, the researchers studied the extent of effectiveness, the attitude of the teacher and the attitude of the students towards Task Based Instruction. The results showed a positive attitude of the teacher and the students. In TBI using language for communication is more important than correct use of language. Engaging the students in communicative tasks is the main principle. TBI provides students with an opportunity to use the target language and keeps them engaged in activities. The class sessions become useful, meaningful and interesting.

Keywords: Task based, communicative tasks, activities, communication skills, attitudes

Introduction

The purpose of language classrooms is to provide support for language learning and to try and involve learners in the learning process. According to Ellis [1], language instruction holds a central place in the learning environment. The kind of task assigned by the instructor directly affects the learner's performance. Hence the tasks in the curriculum are designed in such a way that they foster language learning and enable the learners to communicate fluently and effectively [1; 2]. There are different ways of creating language learning contexts and Task Based Instruction (TBI) provides opportunities to employ a range of meaningful and effective activities to promote communicative language in the classroom.

The Significance of the Problem

A number of students admit that they lack communicative competence necessary in their subject-wise departmental courses even after completing the intensive English programme in the preparatory courses. There are two possible reasons for this. Either the students do not practice speaking enough in their classes or they do not get opportunities to use the language they have learnt.

TBI is not a novel idea in ESL classrooms; yet there have been few attempts to apply it in EFL speaking classrooms at the university level. Hence, it can act as an additional tool to improve the speaking skill of students at university level. At the local level, the study may contribute to the re-thinking and re-design of speaking courses in the curriculum renewal process at Kerbala University and, in turn, encourage a more thorough examination of task-based instruction in all language areas.

Section Two: A Theoretical Background

Speaking is regarded as a critical skill in learning a second or foreign language by most language learners, and their success in learning a language is measured in terms of their accomplishment in oral communication [3; 4]. In spite of this, speaking was not given much importance in the past. In the past, the focus was on the development of vocabulary, language structure and rote memorization of sentence patterns, [5]. However, with increasing research in language learning, teaching grammar for grammar's sake was discouraged and replaced by communicative competence in foreign language.

People travelled for the purpose of business and establishing personal relationships through European languages.

Although this approach favoured the spoken language, the emphasis was mostly on the use of accurate pronunciation and structures while speaking in the target language [5]. The aim was to enable students to gain mastery in communicating orally in the target language accurately and with native pronunciation. The structural use of language continued to play an important part. The inadequacy of these methods led to the emergence of Communicative language Teaching (CLT) in the 1960s.

Unlike the other methods, the goal of CLT was comprehensible pronunciation rather than native like pronunciation. CLT gave equal importance to the functional as well as the structural nature of language [6; 3]. In CLT, meaningful and communicative activities are used to provide learners with the ability to use authentic language. As in CLT, language is viewed as a tool for communication. The aim of TBI too is to communicate in the target language. The time factor is the distinctive feature in these different approaches.

TBI tends to focus on a short duration. The tasks assigned can be completed in a single classroom session. In TBI tasks are the chief tools that promote interaction and use of language. Tasks are at the core of language learning curriculum in communicative approaches including TBI. Tasks are not just a framework for practising language forms and functions. Tasks promote the role of speaking in negotiating meaning and collaborative problem solving. The tasks aim at encouraging leaners to use authentic language in real life situations in order to achieve definite outcomes [7; 1].

When tasks are used as instructional tools, they possess certain distinctive features. Tasks involve conveying meaning through language. They have a definite work plan and they are related to the real world. The specially designed tasks involve cognitive processing and have well-defined communicative outcomes. (Kumaravadivelu, cited [1]; [7]).

Skehan [8] suggests that it is necessary to set proper goals for TBI, the three main goals being accuracy, fluency and complexity. To achieve fluency, learners are given an opportunity to use the target language in real life situations without interruptions. According to Skehan [8] pausing, hesitation, redundancy, rephrasing and use of lexical items are key components in achieving language fluency.

But, occasionally learners have difficulty achieving spoken fluency. An adequate level of fluency is necessary to be accepted as a member of an interaction (Larsen-Freeman & Long; Level, cited in [8]; Schmidt, cited in Canale, [9]).

Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993, cited in [7]) state that tasks are categorized into the following groups: jigsaw, problem-solving, decision making, information gap and opinion exchange tasks. There are 3 phases in TBI – the pre-task phase wherein the learners are prepared for the tasks, during task phase when they actually carry out the task and post task phase when they focus on the language that they have used while performing the tasks.

Section Three: Methodology

The participants are one English teacher working at Kerbala University, College of Education, Department of English (KUCEDE) and 45 students who belong to the first stage in this department.

The data collection tools include one perception questionnaire, pre and post treatment oral tests and interviews. The perception questionnaire was used to measure perceptions of the experimental group students in response to the use of task-based instruction in their speaking classrooms. The data gathered from the perception questionnaires aimed to answer the second research question exploring students' perceptions of tasks used in the task-based treatment. The same questionnaire was also administered to the control group after three tasks parallel to the ones used in the study. In the pre- and post-test oral conversations the learners' oral language abilities were graded. The third tool was interviews.

During the treatment, the control group had their usual speaking courses. The experimental group did a variety of task types included in the researcher designed lesson plans. The task types included ordering items, elicitation, sorting, creative tasks, problem solving tasks and information gap filling.

Section Four: Data Analysis

Research Questions

1. How far is TBI effective in Kerbala University, College of Education, Department of English in terms of improving students' speaking skills?
2. What are the students' perceptions regarding employment of task-based instruction in speaking classes at KUCEDE?
3. What are the attitudes of the teacher using TBI in her speaking class at KUCEDE?

This study was conducted with two groups of the first stage students in their speaking courses. The first group was the control group and the other were the experimental group. While the control group followed their existing syllabus, two out of eight hours of speaking classes were devoted to TBI in the experimental group. This section includes the findings about the effects of task-based instruction in developing first stage learners' speaking skills at KUCEDE and teacher's and students' perceptions of TBI. The data analysis will cover both qualitative and quantitative data collected.

Quantitative data

Two separate sets of instruments were used for gathering quantitative data: oral tests administered to both groups before and after the treatment. The tests were designed by the researcher and the administration together. The questions in both tests were the same. The exam was conducted in pairs.

One student selected a slip and read out aloud the role to be played by the partner. It was a role-playing activity. Different situations were mentioned on the slips.

The students were given one minute to prepare a conversation as per the situation mentioned on the slip. As they played their roles, the supervisors observed and marked them on the basis of oral assessment rubric. The same procedure was repeated for different slips. If the supervisors came across a 10 or more points difference in the grades, they discussed and arrived at a consensus to a common grade. The perception questionnaires were distributed to the experimental group after completion of all the 11 tasks. Also, three questionnaires were distributed to the control group after three tasks from the current course book tasks which were similar to the tasks used in TBI treatment.

The purpose was to compare the affective responses of both groups on these three tasks.

The data collected from the study were statistically analysed using the Statistical Packages for

Social Sciences, 13.0 (SPSS). In measuring the quantitative data collected after the study, means and standard deviations of the pre- and post-treatment oral tests in the experimental and control groups were compared using t-tests. Also, the data from students' responses to the perception questionnaires was analysed quantitatively. Lastly, the interviews were analysed and interpreted qualitatively by the researcher.

It was observed by the teacher as per her expectation that students in the experimental group were more participative compared to the students in the control group. The former was active and motivated while the latter class was more teacher-centred than the former.

The students in the experimental group held similar views regarding the tasks. They enjoyed the participation and activity. They were happy and satisfied with the language learning that had occurred during the class. They realized that not only their speaking but also their listening activities had increased. Also, they reported that classes were so interesting and entertaining that they were unaware of the passage of time.

In the pre-interview, the teacher expected to be less active during the study than she was in the current speaking classes and that classes would be more learner-centred. She was also aware that the presentation of particular language functions would be different in the TBI treatment. Trials using new functions and structures take place first in TBI.

Section Five: Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of task-based instruction on the improvement of learners' speaking skills. Mean scores for the control group moved in a positive direction and mean scores for the experimental group also showed a positive trend in oral skill improvement. According to qualitative data analysis results, the experimental group admitted that the treatment was satisfied and thought that they benefited from it in the long term, although they did not make significant progress in the post-test when compared to the control group. The teacher's observation showed that the treatment helped learners participate and communicate with each other in the lesson more, and improve both their accuracy and fluency in speaking. These results imply that task-based instruction is considerably effective in improving students' speaking skills and could be viewed as an alternative teaching method that can be integrated with current methods for all students and, perhaps, used more extensively with those students who respond to TBI most positively.

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Multilingualism

Being a Bilingual "National" Poet: The Case of Dionysios Solomos/Dionisio Salamon

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to highlight the case of the national poet of Modern Greece, Dionysios Solomos, whose Italian-Greek expression constitutes a case of bilingualism, which is probably unique in Modern Greek studies, if not in bilingual studies in general. Count Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857), a native of the Ionian island of Zakynthos, grew up in the environment in which diglossia was a fact of life, since the Ionian islands had been under Venetian rule for more than four centuries (1386-1797). In the case of Solomos, this state of diglossia coupled with the fact that he studied in Italy for ten years, from the age of ten to the age of twenty (1818-1828). In fact, Solomos's manuscripts reveal unambiguously the interference between the two languages, Italian being the "dominant language" of his culture and Greek being a "mother tongue", which was, however, acquired as a second language. This interference can be traced in a wide range of code-switched and code-mixed productions, a sample of which will be presented in the paper. Evidently, the depth of Solomos's bilingualism goes beyond a merely linguistic approach to his idiom. It reaches all the way down, from the very conception of the poetic idea to the constitution of the poem (composition, diction, style). This is what makes Solomos's bilingualism such a complex, yet critical issue. Solomos's case constitutes an ideal case study, especially in the context of the multilingual and multicultural societies of our time. Firstly, his language raises significant issues in various disciplines of applied linguistics (i.e. sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and neurolinguistics), but also, and most importantly, it raises issues of identity: who "am I", being a bilingual/multilingual. Secondly, Solomos's manuscripts permit one to examine the creation process of an organically bilingual poet, which is of interest to both stylistics and editing (especially, genetic criticism). In conclusion, Solomos's case study, I believe, could open a path to explore language acquisition and intercultural education through literature.

Keywords: Bilingualism; Diglossia; Languages in contact; code-switching; code-mixing; Dionysios Solomos

Count Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857), a native of the Ionian island of Zakynthos, is the first major writer of New Hellenism after the War of Independence (1821). His *Hymn to Liberty* (1823) has been the anthem of the Modern Greek State since 1865. And yet, this "national poet" was bilingual. The aim of this paper is to summarise the grid of issues that constitute the so-called "Solomos problem", highlighting a case of bilingualism which is probably unique not only in Modern Greek studies but also in bilingual studies in general. More specifically, I will examine three interrelated issues: 1) the hybrid nature of Solomos's language, as evidenced by his manuscripts, 2) the fragmented state of his oeuvre, and 3) the challenge of compiling a "standard" edition of his complete works. The pioneering work of Weinreich, Ferguson, and Steiner provides the starting point for examining these issues in the framework of bilingual studies from a socio-linguistic [1], a psycho-linguistic [2], and a pure linguistic (grammatical) point of view [3].

1. Bilingualism and Diglossia

Solomos grew up in an environment in which diglossia was a fact of life, since the Ionian islands had been under Venetian rule for more than four centuries (1386-1797). Italian was considered the high variety, while Greek, or more precisely the local dialect, full of Italianisms and Venetian elements, was the low variety. Variations in the choice of language were determined by class criteria and educational background. Thus, the aristocratic and bourgeois circles used a language that tended towards Italian, while the lower classes used a language that tended towards Demotic Greek. In fact, the written evidence of this period – mainly notary documents and correspondence – suggest that the distinction between Italian and Greek was by no means clear. It would be more appropriate to refer to a "canvas" language, a linguistic foundation on which elements of both languages were interwoven at a different rate depending on social class, occupation, and occasion. In the case of Solomos, this state of diglossia coupled with his dual origin, being born to 61-year-old Count Nikolaos Solomos and his 16-year-old housekeeper Angeliki Nikli, but also with the fact that he studied in Italy from the age of ten to the age of twenty (1818-1828). He signed as Dionisio Salamon (or Solomòs), thought, spoke, and wrote in Italian. The only published poetic collection of his, composed in his early years, was written in Italian [4]. So were the comments, notes to self, and contemplations on his major works that can be found in his manuscripts (interestingly, none of them concerns his bilingualism).

The dominant line of interpretation of Solomos's bilingualism in Greek scholarship since Polylas, the first editor of Solomos's oeuvre [5], is that the poet made a distinction in the use of the two languages in different cases and contexts. According to this interpretation, he spoke or wrote to his friends in Italian, conceived his poems also in Italian, but ultimately wrote them in Greek *or* in Italian (in his last decade). Solomos's manuscripts, however, published in 1964 [6], reveal not a distinction but an *interference* between the two languages, Italian being the "dominant language" of his culture and Greek being a "mother tongue", which was, however, acquired as a second language after his return from Italy. In fact, the poet wrote in Greek following the simplified phonetic spelling of Italian, often substituting Greek for Italian letters within the same word. The language interference can be traced in a wide range of code-switched and code-mixed productions. In order to identify the grammar of the poet's mixed or fused language, I have proposed two terms, "surface interference" and "depth interference", for the fundamental distinction between *evident* and *latent* code-mixing in Solomos's expression (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics) [7]. Here follow a few indicative examples of the "surface interference" between Greek and Italian in the poet's manuscripts:

a) Phonology – Morphology: The name Lambro (it.)/Λάμπρος (gr.) in the drafts of *the same poem* is written as follows: *Λambro, Lambros, Lambρo*, *Lamπρος*, *Lambro* (*Autographs*, p. 36, v. 10; p. 34, v. 12; p. 41, v. 11; p. 53, v. 12-18: the last three forms occurred *in the same passage*). Other examples: *μεσυτις*, *μεσυτίς*, *μεσiτiς*, *μεσσïτiς*, ομπρος – ομrος, *μatiα* – *ματiα*, tεtiα, φriχτον, *τρομara*, χερυς, and so on.
b) Clauses: *il nanotto εμεγαλονε* (p. 260, col. B, v. 14-15); *mi ricordai τ□ θεοκαταρατ□* (p. 259, col. B, v. 20); *prendendo il pitale για κ τρ π χi* (p. 285, col. B, v. 18); *στò μερος della Visione* (p. 290, v. 9-10); *τò χρομα del velo* (p. 290, v. 17); *il laccio τ Ζοναρι* (p. 297, col. B, v. 4-5); *E mi sentii τà σοθiκà* (p. 280, v. 16-17); *E mi trovai sta tria pigadia* (p. 297, col. B, v.13): in the last case a Greek phrase (*στα τρία πηγάδια*) is written with Italian characters.
c) Sentences: *E andai dietro allo specchio e vidi la donna del Zante που εκρεμοτνα κ΄ εκiματiζε e sotto καθiσμενος το δiπλοποδι un nano che imitava perfettamente quel ridere* (p. 294, col. B, v. 16-20);
d) *προτα τη στοχαζετε την αδελφι κ΄ επιτα λει τη πονηριà τ πκάμισ, sei tu invidiosa, bugiarda, folle, τiχτικιασμενi σαπια* […] (p. 294, col. B, v. 2-12: the sentence continues in Italian);
e) *Sul principio della Visione introdurre il fantasma del Diavolo che si fa grande come gigante fino π εδοσε τα κερατα στα σiγνεφα e stendendo una mano all' Oriente, e l'altra all'Occidente avec une grimace εδο κατ κατ iπε fino che dura sta macchinetta, θελi εχο κ' εγò ο καiμενος νà παριγοριθò μαμ λìζοντας* (p. 261, col. B, v. 17-28). This example is trilingual.

Evidently, the depth of Solomos's bilingualism goes beyond a merely linguistic approach to his idiom. It reaches all the way down, from the very conception of the poetic idea to the constitution of the poem (composition, diction, metrics, etc.), and it raises not only issues regarding the aesthetic/stylistic aspect of creativity, but also issues of identity: who "am I" being a bilingual/multilingual. This is what makes Solomos's bilingualism such a complex, yet critical issue [8].

2. Fragmentation

Solomos's oeuvre has been preserved in manuscripts that contain various messy drafts of fragmented poems, which the poet constantly reviewed and eventually abandoned without ever arriving at a final version that could be published. In effect, Solomos demonstrated a characteristic and bewildering negligence in publishing his works, except for just a few and not the most mature ones.

This has given rise to different interpretations among Solomos scholars, all of which boil down to two main interpretative approaches, a "positivist" and a "negativist" one. According to the positivist approach, fragmentation – a theoretical and practical imperative of the Romantic movement – is not a "problem", but a distinguishing feature of Solomos's romantic poetry [9]. On the other hand, the proponents of the dominant negativist approach blame the fragmentation of Solomos's oeuvre on his bilingualism and on diglossia in general [10]. It should be noted that in the historical-literary context of Solomos's time (first half of the 19th century) diglossia existed also in Greece proper. The difference with the Ionian islands (which were incorporated in the Greek state as late as 1864, after the poet's death) was that in Greece diglossia was intralingual ("katharevusa", i.e., the purist formal language vs the Demotic Greek), while in the Ionian islands it was interlingual (Italian vs Greek). This makes Solomos's "language problem" even more complicated in a period in which Modern Greek language was not fixed and the debate about the language question was at its peak.

3. The editor's impasse

Solomos's manuscripts, fragmented into multiple drafts written in a mixed language with no final version, pose a huge challenge to editors and scholars. After Polylas's editio princeps (1859) and Politis's edition of the *Autograph Works* (1964), the following solutions to the editing problem have been proposed: a. "analytical" edition; b. "synthetic" edition; c. no edition at all beyond the autographs themselves; d. "genetic" edition, which has been gaining ground lately in the framework of genetic criticism.

Although Iakovos Polylas was the first to see the state of Solomos's manuscripts in which Italian and Greek intermingle often beyond separation, he inevitably published a "refined" (hence, distorted) version of what he found. He dealt with the different drafts, favouring one "principal text" for each poem and placing the remaining versions in annexes, he translated *tacitly* all Solomos's notes written in Italian, and he ultimately published a purely Greek edition, devoid of any trace of Italian. One could accuse Polylas of mere "fabrication", but could also argue that this editing approach was quite understandable for an Heptanesian, for whom bilingualism was a fact of life, but who nevertheless sought to comply with the language policy of the Modern Greek nation-state in order to promote the bilingual Solomos as the "national poet" of Greece.

Linos Politis's edition of Solomos's *Autograph Works* in 1964 is undoubtedly the most important edition in Solomos studies, given the fact that is the only edition which reveals the *real nature* of Solomos's bilingual and fragmented work. The basic difference between the "analytical" and the "synthetic" edition, which are based on the *Autograph Works*, is that the analytical edition reveals Solomos's progress through the different stages of composition *without proceeding to the synthesis of a completed poem*, although it promotes the final stage of the composition as the "final form" of the poem [11]. The synthetic edition, on the other hand, presents the poet's works as completed *by selecting and re-arranging the "best" versions* of the draft verses according to the editor's "language sense" and aesthetic criteria [12]. Peri, however, argues that *any* edition of Solomos's oeuvre is impossible, because the poet's drafts are a spontaneous expression of his creative unconscious that defies (philo)logical ordering [13]. Finally, the "genetic" edition seeks to reveal Solomos's creative process by presenting the various versions and revisions of a poem not linearly but as a constellation, in which the central poetic idea spreads out into different Greco-Italian drafts that are equivalent [14].

In conclusion, Solomos's case constitutes an ideal case study for bilingual studies, especially in the context of the multilingual and multicultural societies of our time. Firstly, because his language raises significant issues in various disciplines of applied linguistics (sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, and so forth), such as: how two or more languages co-exist in the human brain and co-operate at the creative level; who "am I", being a bilingual/multilingual; what Solomos's language theory and practice tell us about the status of diglossia and bilingualism of his time. More specifically, Solomos's bilingualism permits one to examine: a) the grammatical uniformity of standard languages and of "standard editions" as a means of regularising the plurilingualism of individuals and of ethnic communities in the context of the language policy of the modern nation-states of the 19th century onwards; b) the language variation (high/low variety) and strategies of bilingual performance (code-switching, code-mixing) in formal and informal contexts: home/school, oral/written, private/public, etc.; c) the negative and positive impact of bilingualism on creativity and the formation of an author's style.

Secondly, Solomos's manuscripts permit one to examine the creation process of an *organically bilingual* poet, which is of interest to both stylistics and editing (especially, genetic criticism). In this perspective, the most interesting issue, in my opinion, is that the bilingual and "fragmented" Solomos became the *par excellence* national poet of Modern Greece, achieving a quality of poetic expression that is considered unrivalled so far in Modern Greek literature. My hypothesis is that, *being bilingual*, Solomos faced the problem of expression in a way that a monolingual poet can hardly grasp simply because his native language is too familiar to him. This hypothesis ultimately allows one to evaluate in a different light Solomos's unpublished fragmentary oeuvre, not (only) as an evidence of a noble, yet failed effort, but (mainly) as a precious legacy of a devotee of the "perfect expression". This knowledge could contribute to understanding better the works of other bilingual poets in Greece and beyond, and most importantly, could open a path to explore language acquisition and intercultural education *through literature*.

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Από τον υποκειμενισμό των “συνθετικών” σολωμικών ανθολογιών ώς την ακρίβεια της “αναλυτικής” μεθόδου έκδοσης των κειμένων»), *Mantatoforos*, no 41, 1996, pp. 50-64.
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Language and Translation: Interdisciplinary Effort and Synergetic Effect

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Abstract

Discourse oriented approach to language in translation acquires clear interdisciplinary concern that can be addressed from different focuses: cognitive science, linguistics, sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, artificial intelligence, etc. that have marked synergetic effect for mediated scientific communication. Complex interrelated problems inherent to cognitive and linguistic structuring and processing of information within mediated communication imply the need for efficient strategies of neutralization of differences arising between contacting languages, cultures, and scientific traditions viewed through the prism of communicative equivalence, inter alia, in different fields of knowledge. This article is aimed at analyzing specificities intrinsic to the interrelation between cognition, language and communication that are crucial for sign's real meaning flexibility within cognitive processing and linguistic presenting of knowledge within pragmatic presuppositions and implications, discourse inferencing encumbered by multifaceted phenomena of interdisciplinarity and translation. The methods of comparative and semantic analysis, as well as the method of translation and the questionnaire method find application in this research. The questionary engaged Ph.D. students from RUDN-university (n=112) from different countries, such as Russia, Albania, Algeria, China, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Jordan, Kirghizia, Vietnam, etc. We come to the conclusion that the role of an efficient tool for resolving a wide scope of problems concerning the functioning of language with respect to different areas of human knowledge in the context of mediated communication is acquired by the interdisciplinary effort that facilitates effectiveness of sense generation, perception, and interpretation within translator's activity aimed at achieving adequacy and equivalence when modelling cognitive space that ensures possibilities for the reconstruction of communication presuppositions and reinforces functional and semiotic potential of the mediated discourse in the target language. The article is of practical value for linguistics, theory and practice of translation, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and discourse studies.

Keywords: cognition, translation, language, synergy, interdisciplinarity, cross-cultural communication

Introduction

Owing to interdisciplinary nature, modern scientific paradigms offer specific instrument or tool that is viewed as a strong manifestation of the tendency that characterizes all fields of science to widen and facilitate intensive usage or application of analytical procedures and mechanisms, analytical apparatus elaborated by one scientific discipline in the way that it may be applied to make insight into the phenomena of other areas of scientific study.

Persistent necessity of arranging knowledge within scientific results, accumulated data, and information along with the need for acquired findings and facts of interdisciplinary nature derived from different fields of scientific research in what concerns one and the same object, *i.e.,* language, to be correlated, predetermine respective changes in paradigms in linguistic science.

Close interconnections between language and translation, conceptually reconsidered or reviewed within the frames of cognitive discursive paradigm, have given rise to certain alterations or changes concerning the vector taken or imposed when viewing linguistic phenomena in the light of relationship thereof with scientific disciplines or a given field of study and to the new impulse of further development of the theory of translation as interdisciplinary science.

"The interdisciplinary status of translation studies, their close links with contrastive and text linguistics, socio- and psycholinguistics and semiotics, arise from the very nature of translation viewed as not only a speech act but also act of cross-cultural communication" [1:212].

Discussions

When exploring translation/interpreting as a particularly complex type of speech communication in the course of which new texts are created, though the lens of translation theory, the analysis does not come reduced to linguistic mechanisms, for translation *per se* implies not only interaction of languages, linguistic systems thereof, but also brings the latter into mutual relation or interrelationship with cultures, branches of knowledge where reciprocal effects or influence thereof upon each other are viewed through the prism of sense generation and perception processes that take place within synergetic potential of mediated communication.

The latter acquires special relevance within the frames of a given act of mediated scientific cross-linguistic communication due to peculiarities that characterize exhibiting and presenting of scientific structures of knowledge or human experience in the source language [SL] and the target language [TL] that are crucial for semiotic and functional potential of scientific communication in what concerns communicative efficacy thereof and adequacy of comprehension *per se*.

Continuity and succession in science is materialized or facilitated and evolution in scientific cognition within time and space in a given area of scientific research is embodied by scientific text that is created by the author and that plays the role of a channel in scientific communication. Intertextuality or intertextual links, in this connection, acquire particular relevance as they ensure sense augment of scientific text and constitute an important pragmatic prerequisite in what regards outlining and overcoming corresponding scientific problems within scientific text translation.

Thesauruses of scientific communication participants, their linguo-cognitive personalities, and social status are tacitly involved and represented in the communicative act as categories of presuppositions. Cognitive aspect of scientific communication is also viewed through the prism of equivalence of the participants' thesauruses that constitutes relevant parameter of presuppositions in what concerns scientific communication intertextuality and efficacy along with transfer adequacy and equivalence in sense perception.

Methods and participants

Ph.D. students from RUDN-university (n=112) from different countries, such as Russia, Albania, Algeria, China, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Jordan, Kirghizia, Philippines, Syria, Vietnam, etc. that learn academic writing and translating from the English language into Russian and *vise versa* in different fields of scientific research such as Medicine, Pharmacology, Stomatology, Veterinary Medicine, Landscape Architecture, Landscape Gardening, etc. were engaged in this study. They were divided in five groups according to the models outlined in our previous article [see 2] (general structure, parameters of presuppositions, and ranking features of fundamental models that describe specificities of interaction of conceptual systems of the author, translator and the addressee within the given context of scientific communication) with special focus on the following variables:

- stage of learning: advanced and intermediate;
- type of text to be translated: scientific articles and reviews;
- type of learner: foreign language vs second language learner.

In our research the English-Russian combination of languages in translation was used by Ph.D. students that are neither English nor Russian native-speakers (64%) or with mother-tongue language different from the Russian, the English, the French or the Spanish languages (36%).

Results

We have carried out a comprehensive analysis based on such methods as comparative and semantic analysis, as well as the method of translation and the questionnaire method in what regards epistemic conditions that ensure adequate comprehension and translation of such metaphorical medical concepts as "*a la carte* treatment", etc. that are widely used in scientific discourse as neologisms emerging in medical terminology in the English language. The following example may be given:

"In addition, Bureau *et al*., explored the possibility of adjusting **medical therapy *a la carte***, <u>by adding</u> isosorbide mononitrate (ISMN) to patients <u>not responding to propranolol alone</u>, defined as a reduction in portal pressure gradient (by means of the hepatic venous pressure gradient or HVPG) below 12 mm Hg or 20% from baseline. The goal was to maximize the number of patients in whom this target reduction of HVPG could be achieved (responders). They further proposed that non-responders to combination pharmacologic therapy would benefit from being offered an <u>alternative therapy</u>".

(**A La Carte** or Menu Fixe: Improving Pharmacologic Therapy of Portal Hypertension//Hepatology. Volume 36, Issue 6, December 2002, p. 1330)

The synergetic potential thereof to model new referents' conceptual features (*i.e.*, the ones of phenomena, objects and situations) and their combinations when shaping new metaphorical entities are crucial for sign's real meaning flexibility within cognitive processing of information in a given area of knowledge, *i.e*. a branch of medicine, due account taken of pragmatic presuppositions and implications and scientific discourse inferencing.

Having strong synergetic effect, the latter are potentiated by activating implicit cultural information manifested in French adoption "*a la carte*" that only in combination with professional background knowledge acts together to accomplish the aim of adequate verbalization thereof in the target text and TL exhibiting new conceptual qualities and attributes that encode intertextual links and predetermine efficacy of scientific communication.

Moreover, when forming new complex terminological units "*a la carte* therapy", "*a la carte* medicine", etc., they evoke predictable associations within special background knowledge frames and ensure adequate perception of the subject and referential situation in the English language. Along with terminological units "personalized medicine", "targeted therapies", "person or individual-based treatment", medical concepts just referred to above get adequate pragmatic reflection in medical discourse in the SL what can be illustrated by the following example:

"Personalized Medicine: An Emerging Standard of Treatment "*a la carte*".

(Acta Scientifica. Cancer Biology 2.6 (2018): 01)

Conceptual information that is explicitly or implicitly present in cognitive experience of specialists and scientists persists in human consciences in verbal and non-verbal forms and reflects pragmatically relevant specificities that characterize functioning of conceptual world picture in different languages.

It is of special relevance that in contrast to the English, the Spanish or the French languages, the Russian language (along with the Arabic, the Chinese or the Vietnamese languages) fails to produce similar parallel knowledge structures due to the differences of linguistic and extralinguistic character that predetermine involvement of extralinguistic knowledge in the sense perception and generation along with verbalization process in translation in what concerns French adoption "*a la carte*": 69% of Ph.D. native speakers of languages just mentioned above confronted difficulties in comprehension and translation thereof into Russian, according to our questionnaire.

Cognitive transparency and ranking features of the English metaphorical concept in the Russian language do not come facilitated and contoured by the artificial nature of combination of Roman and Cyrillic alphabets within terminological word combination – "*a la carte* – лечение" and profiled as an adequate verbalization of the special medical background knowledge, particularly within the cognitive frames of professional backgrounds.

Moreover, another French adoption "menu" – «меню» is widely used in the Russian language when similar culturally prescribed situation is referred to in such word combinations as: «по выбору из меню», «заказывать порционные блюда», etc. Our questionnaire has shown that within opposition settled out in the scientific articles referred to above, as well as the title "*A la carte* or Menu Fixed Therapy of …" lexical unit "*carte"* is mostly associated with the Russian word «карта» or "map", *i.e.*, "chart" in the English language (71%). When compared with particular characteristics thereof in the SL the latter activates another term and totally different referential situation in what regards the encoded and pragmatically intended one in the original English medical text predetermining failure or lack of understanding within translation into the Russian language.

Conclusions

Based on equivalence of linguo-cognitive knowledge of participants of scientific communication and communicative situation specificities including those of presuppositions that may add new implications, it is special information and cognitive equivalence thereof in SL and TL that predetermine the scientific text content and establish grounds for adequate actualization of relevant communicative and pragmatic features thereof at the level of specificities regarding modelling of cognitive space in a given scientific discourse.

On the problem of modelling cognitive space that ensures reconstruction of cross-cultural cross-linguistic communication presuppositions and that reinforces functional and semiotic potential of the mediated discourse in the TL, effectiveness of sense generation, perception, and interpretation within translator's activity, it is the interdisciplinary effort that profiles synergetic effect that acquires the role of an efficient tool for resolving a wide scope of issues concerning the functioning of language with respect to different areas of human knowledge in the context of mediated communication.

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Lingua Franca in/beyond E-Learning: Future of Multilingualism

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Abstract

Powered by active social participation in advanced informational age, new media in/beyond the Internet of Things (IoT) regime of social reciprocities transform not just both the form and substances of knowledge exchanges but also expanding new learning opportunities across spaces and time. The new e-learning and e-sharing experience are in/beyond different linguistic-cum-visual and cultural spaces; like the Instagram, Facebook or Twitter. Hence, socio-economic activities at a global scale are more and more borderless and just-in-time, allowing most forms of communication: one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one and many-to-many. More specific, the ever-increasingly opening-up of cyber-experience for "inter-personalized" mediated communication, facilitates the interactivity, timeliness, active participation, and the cross-border/cultural encounters in/beyond both in virtual and real social communities. Yet the challenges, for cross (or multi-) cultural and temporal-spatial communication in both cyberspace and the real world, quest for not just linguistic (text, semantic and phonetic) adaptation but also audio-visual interactive revolution, towards the communicative capacity building for Lingua Franca: all shaping our linguistic adaptive skills, say the least to acquire the basics of foreign language(s) as the core part of our new cross-cultural encounters in a globalizing world. As cross-cultural exchanges are mostly mediated by and with Lingua Franca in 21st Century information age, ICT-driven linguistic world transformations are more than obvious with inter-and-cross-linguistic mainstreaming. Juxtaposing the once dominance of English as Lingua Franca (over 50% of the world webpage), in/beyond cyberspace; there is yet strong a rejuvenation and revitalization of local (new and highly differentiated cyber-) languages. All these mediated multilingual communications have been instrumental to further stimulating social innovations for progressive inter-cultural exchanges, questionably benefiting e-learning at large. Critically examining policy issues on (new) language for e-learning and cross-cultural communication in/beyond cyberspace, this paper highlights the challenges for, and contradictions embedded in, multilingualism in a globalizing world. It discusses new phenomenal (e-)learning of new languages; as cyber-linkages are revolutionary in changing socio-cultural interactions, global-locally, behavioural repertoires among people in different geographical regions and time zones. The most important one arguably is the enabling of multilingual, cross-and-inter-cultural communication – hence learning from, with a discovery of, new experiences.

Keywords: e-learning, information society, multiculturalism, new media

1. Lingua franca as overture for multilingualism?

Humanity is in a new epoch of lifelong re-learning regime for continuing survival!

The 21st Century defines a new era for communication with the advanced application and omnipotent of information and communication technologies (ICT) – digital global advanced capitalism with Internet of Things (IoT). New media with their dynamics and cyber-linkages are revolutionizing mode(s) of socio-economic interactions locally and globally, virtually -cum- reality, as well as behavioral repertoires among people in different geo-temporal spaces. Socio-economic activities at a global-cum-local scale are more and more borderless and just-in-time, allowing most forms of co-communication: one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one and many-to-many.

The new media regime's conditions of e-learning define language acquisition: increasingly embedded in the ubiquitous information and communication technologies (ICT)-driven mediated (new and highly differentiated cyber-) communication; are juxtaposing the ever-increasingly opening-up -cum- deepening of cyber-experience for "inter-personalized" mediated communication, all these dynamics facilitate the interactivity, timeliness, active participation, and cross-border/cultural encounters in/beyond virtual and real social communities. New language e-learning becomes a moment-by-moment specific practice for everyone: timely shifting one's linguistic worldview from one's mother tongue (L1) to acquire foreign language (L2), or the *lingua franca* (say, English).

Under economic globalization, the common *lingua franca* (ELF) for international communication is obviously English and its variations in different socio-linguistic context; the use of ELF has more and more for non-native speakers than native speakers. Timeliness and strategy-wise, the *lingua franca* serves as a catalyst of learning new language(s), reinforcing e-learning for foreign language(s) with new media. It has been shown that most students' ideas on using English remain consistent: they cared less about grammar when and after using English as a *lingua franca* in their written communication; and more importantly, started to perceive English as a language they may be able to use with greater confidence (Lai 2014). More specific for highly differentiated in cyber-communication, socio-cultural context and communicative dynamics yet define the parameters and extends of foreign language learning, in both traditional and new media-driven learning milieu – it is revealed that English (as *lingua franca*, ELF) users' institutional roles are culturally determined, and not fixed but vary in different phases of the discourse. E-learning prompts such challenge of losing the contextual, or even temporal, conditions of communication. More critically, both identity and power interplay are involved in ELF communications, and the macro linguistic context plays a role in constructing identity and negotiating power relations in ELF conversations (Gu, Patkin & Kirkpatrick 2014). Here, the question is how far, and how (or when) strategic-instrumental, is *lingua franca* enabling us to develop multilingualism – engendering multiculturalism (Lai 2015)?

What characterizes new communication in/beyond cyberspace of e-learning is not just the linguistic (text, semantic and phonetic) mode but also the non-linguistic (visual and symbolic) communication are changing; *lingua franca* is only one of the many option-possibilities for communication and comprehension of meanings, say the emoji figurative symbolism, other than para-linguistic symbols and abbreviations. The phenomenal communication, including learning and knowledge acquisition here is the opening up of new ways and modes of communications as far as interactivity, timeliness, active participation, and the agenda setting are concerned, both in virtual and real social communities.

For their differential fluidity and variety, most communications, ranging from the core to peripheries, the real vis-a-vis the virtually, are yet subject to inter-interpretation and exchanges in reality, in personal experience.

2. Beyond the codified e-learning @ cyberspace?

With the mostly optimistic rhetoric on the promising e-learning for foreign language(s) acquisition, a prelude to multilingualism, the successful experience is still by far a limited one. The most critical one is to keep learners engaged and motivated to using new media for positive learning processes – the so-called student "stickiness" (Clark, *et al*., 2014). Accordingly, eight aspects of learning experience, relevant to active engaging pedagogical approaches for enhancing learning outcomes. Taking the case of Form-focused instruction in cross-training and "stickiness"; aspects of form-focused instruction applied to cross-training that promote "stickiness" highlight eight dimensions of new language learning, which are all relevant for new media-based language learning.

The new media milieu is, different from the one with following grammatical syllabus and learning grammar rules as the focus of, the interactivity which can be motivating for the learners. In short, the essence of the "stickiness" is anchored upon the motivational realm of learners and learning community at large. To keep up motivation with focus language-learning, not distracted by other incoming messages and images in new media, is a real challenge. Similarly to the mobile phone's attachment for many people's daily life encounters for social activities, to enhance student's "stickiness," to learning new language activities – defined as keeping learners engaged and motivated to continue using the platforms of learning, new media is a likely logical choice for using as new language learning media; but the interferences from many known and unknown sources embedded in new media are not irrelevant: it is both a blessing and cursed for new media active engagement.

The cross-(or multi-)cultural and temporal-spatial communications in both cyberspace and the real world quest for not just linguistic (text, semantic and phonetic) adaptation but also audio-visual interactive revolution with multiple re-presentations, towards the communicative capacity building for foreign language (L2) and/or *Lingua Franca,* beyond the linguistic spaces of one's mother-tongue (L1): all re-shaping our linguistic adaptive skills to acquire the basics of foreign language(s) as the core part of new cross-cultural encounters in communicative borderless world.

The 21st Century's global communication highlights the most salient aspect of the new experiential learning discoveries: not just of the multilingual, but also the cross-and-inter-cultural, communication, in both virtual and reality milieus. This implies that educational goals for *lingua franca* and/or foreign language(s) L2/L3 should consider facilitating or condoning multilingual practices, in addition to implementing a corporate language such as English as lingua franca (ELF). Yet for global business, a policy of multilingualism alone would be too expensive and goes against the wish to control and to coordinate information flows within the company: in many multinational corporations' multilingualism exists in combination with ELF as the official corporate language in that for the international workforce negotiating language practices is a daily routine.

3. E-learning @ differentiated fluid exchanges for multilingualism?

New media communication tools and modes like *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitters*, *WhatsApp* or the *Line* transform the landscape of inter-cum-cross cultural communication. Obviously shown in the history of cross-cultural communications, the practice for *Lingua Franca* (Espanol/French/German/English) is a consequence of socio-economic necessity under specific geo-political hegemonic influence. English is commonly used today as business language – in our present global advanced capitalism, a new (post)modernity based upon the highly ubiquitous networking of ICT around the world: the real-time and just-in-time global factory and capital-financing networking.

Perhaps, more even so in the ICT development sector and the business inter-activities: more jargons and/or acronyms are used not just for communications between people only, but for the products branding and marketing themselves; like *Windows 10*, *Twitter*, the *Line*, *Instagram* and *Facebook.*

The new regime of e-learning (the manifestations and underlying contradictions in particular) for new language acquisition poses risk as well as opportunities for educators and learners; as cyber-activism and virtual linkages are revolutionary in changing the *modi operandi* of socio-cultural communicative actions and interactions, global and locally, behavioural repertoires among people in different geographical regions and time zones.

One of the keys (mis-)manifestations of cyber-communications, the mobile one in particular, is the shared meaning and mutual usage of common characters, words and text. What most important is the shared meaning, identity and trust derived from the existing social relationship, and with this commonness of sharing, there is an emergence of new linguistic form(s) in the mediated communication in general and the mobile communication in particular. But the fluidity of new learning dynamics can be shown by the frequent, if not abusive, use of the highly differentiated, not fully shared meaning, code in txt.msg is a tendency towards standardization of characters, seemingly implying that the standardization of life experience, as well as the harmonization of languages in/beyond cyberspace referring to the simplified English text and ideas.

To recapitulate our brief: the challenge for new language learning in new media spaces with a particular *lingua franca* is the ampleness of contextual fluidity with new and old verities and differences – which need to be specified and articulated by learners and instructors in new media spaces and gaps. Hence, the lack of contextual specificity and relational orders in new media poses challenge for the fostering echoed and responsive learning milieu (Lai 2014, 2015).

The saying of "What we think determines what we speak/write/communicate" is seemingly the otherwise. For our contemporary, the time/space compression engenders certain reductionism towards techno-monolinguist communications, multilingual encounters and creative (unique culturally specific) interpretations should be promoted: the written (text, txt msg based SMS) and audio-visual (behavioral, MMS) communications should be liberalized from the simple codification of txt.msg.

Hence, languages and communicative actions are the operational representations, and integration, of our complex ideas and thoughts; the embodiment of socio-cultural arrangements for history and contemporary socio reciprocities at large. The call and actions for multilingualism therefore are to embody the essence of multiculturalism and historico-specificity of time and space, hence the highly differentiation of socio-cultural life experience. Yet the fluid dynamic processes of socio-linguistic reciprocities towards multilingualism with many resonances are yet noises – the path for multiculturalism is likely full of uncertainty.

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*This paper draws extensively from Lai (2014, 2015).

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Linguistic and Cultural Identity of the University Students

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Abstract

A modern higher education institution is an example of such educational environment where representatives of different nations communicate and collaborate. The success of the mutual activity depends on the awareness of the interlocutors' culture, their own communicative abilities, the previous experience and skills of intercultural communication. This paper attempts to show various aspects of interpersonal communication and interaction of the students with diverse language, cultural and religious background. Some issues of the linguistic and cultural identity of the students, their adaptation and assimilation are examined. Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) is an example of multinational, multicultural environment where young people from many countries study. The common educational environment provides great opportunities for the internalization and socialization of the students and their mutual understanding of the current realities. The practical experience of teaching and training the representatives with diverse language norms and cultural traditions is presented. The findings of the paper are supposed to contribute to further understanding of the ideas of linguistic and cultural Identity of the young people studying at the higher education institutions and to ensure the efficacy of these concepts.

Keywords: higher education, linguistic and cultural Identity, intercultural communication, multinational educational environment

1. Introduction

Contemporary educational environment is characterized by its multinational character. The programs of academic mobility give a student many opportunities to study in various world universities with different languages of instruction and cultural traditions.

An individual getting into a new cultural system usually has an intension to be integrated into the new society with a specific culture and social rules. The socialization takes place through the assimilation of social norms and values. The language (especially a foreign one) is one of the ways of this integration.

On the other hand, the importance of the integration in a new society overlaps with the need to keep the individual's native cultural identity.

2. Methodology

Any person can be considered as a stable integrity of socially significant features that characterize an individual as a member of a particular society with a specific system of social relations and culture.

Language and cultural identity are a product, a subject of history, culture development. The intellectual ability of a person is most intensively manifested in the language and is examined through the language [1].

The practice of teaching a foreign language should take into consideration the learner's linguistic identity that is connected to the development and use of a certain sign system. In this sense, the linguistic identity is a composition of linguistic abilities, skills, and willingness to implement speech acts of various degrees of complexity. The linguistic identity includes the characteristics of motives and goals, the intention to evolve a student's personality and his/her behavior.

When studying the language identity, the axiological, cognitive and behavioral aspects of this concept are focused on, it complies with the value, cognitive and pragmatic levels of the language identity [2].

The value constituent of the person includes the values of ethical and pragmatic norms of behavior typical of a certain ethnos in specific time. These norms are fixed in the moral code of the people; reflect their historical and general views united by one culture and language. These norms are expressed in the universal utterances, the communicative strategy of politeness, and the meanings of words.

The cognitive aspect of a person is revealed by analyzing the picture of the world. Here, the substantive ways of interpreting reality connected to the individual's certain awareness of the world and language, are distinguished.

The behavioral (pragmatic) aspect of the language identity is characterized by a specific set of speech characteristics and paralinguistic means of communication. These include the speech signs of men and women, children and adults, educated and less educated native speakers. There are also such signs of communication as: the distance between the interlocutors; the voice volume and the distinct character of pronunciation, the choice of words etc. Any deviation from the stereotype is perceived as a signal of unnatural communication, as a sign that an interlocutor belongs to another culture [3].

When a foreign language is learnt, a "secondary linguistic identity" can be developed. It can be viewed as a combination of a person's ability to learn foreign languages at an intercultural level, which means the adequate interaction with the representatives of other cultures and an effective participation in intercultural communication.

The creation of a secondary linguistic identity is associated not only with the verbal code of a foreign language and the ability to use it in communication, but also with the "picture of the world" typical of the native speaker of this language and a particular society [4].

In conditions of intercultural communication, a secondary linguistic identity is realized within the framework of a dialogue of cultures. Consequently, learning a foreign language is related to the awareness of a corresponding national culture, which involves not only the assimilation of cultural knowledge (facts of culture, ethnic and religious specifics of learners), but also the formation of the ability to understand the mentality of the speakers of the language under study, and the awareness of the communicative behavior of people in the country.

At the same time, linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the national culture should be accompanied by the development of the non-verbal behavior standards. The background knowledge serves as an indication of the skills and abilities, the national cultural component of the vocabulary, non-verbal means of communication, rules of communication, social symbols. The trainees must be taught how to use the language material, its background and nonequivalent vocabulary.

The secondary linguistic identity of a foreign language interlocutor is formed under the influence of the primary linguistic identity, based on the person's native language.

However, in the conditions of multinational Russia, a contradiction arises between the native language, i.e. the language in which a child begins speaking with his mother, and the language that a 5-6-year-old child is aware. In this connection, when choosing the language of instruction in an educational institution, the concept of "a mother tongue" is replaced by the notion of "basic functional language". It means that the child's proficiency level of the languages is almost the same, it makes very difficult to distinguish languages into native and non-native.

The trainees are constantly forced to live in the circumstances of two different sociocultural communities as far as the multicultural educational environment of a modern university is concerned, it also seems important to take into consideration the situation when the learner considers the Russian language as not native.

Training a foreign language in this case is carried out with the support of the main functional language of the mediator, while the communicative orientation of instruction implies the exchange of information in conditions of the combination of more than two sociocultural communities. It is essential that the students understand these differences; they can determine and explain the motives and attitudes of the individual that belongs to the community with a different system of values.

A good example of multinational and multicultural environment is the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University). Here the youth from 155 countries study at bachelor, master and post graduate programs. They all speak their mother tongues and have their cultural background.

One of the main goals of the University is to help these students to be integrated into the Russian educational environment of the higher education institution. As the language of instruction in most educational programs is Russian, the students can preliminary learn the Russian language at the Faculty of Russian Language and General Educational Disciplines. Here the young people get acquainted with the in-house rules of learning and professional training of the University, socialize with the students from other countries, learn the history and the culture of Russia. The preliminary study at the faculty usually lasts for 10 months (one academic year) 36 hours a week. Special short-term training programs for trainees and masters (3-4 months) are also available. Besides the linguistic and cultural studies, the learners also get the basic knowledge of the subjects of their profession-to-be.

After classes, the students get an opportunity to go sightseeing in Moscow, Moscow region and other cities and towns of Russia. As a result, on completion of the preliminary course, the students get socio-cultural adaptation to the social and intellectual environment of the university, to Moscow and Russia as a whole. What is more as the students' group consists of the learners from different countries the students learn about the customs and traditions of other foreign countries.

The students can perfect their Russian language skills and improve their knowledge of the Russian culture studying at bachelor, master and postgraduate levels. They also have an opportunity to study English as a second foreign language and German, Spanish or French as the third foreign language.

Finally, the foreign students perceive themselves as an integral part of the Russian culture and their deep involvement in the social life of the university prompts the idea of the students' second linguistic and cultural identity. What is more, many foreign students express their intention to continue their professional career in Russia after graduation.

On the other hand, the students' affection and love to the mother tongue and culture is always supported. At classes, the students from one country are very often grouped in a small team where the learners with a better level of language proficiency help their fellow students with a lower level of the language proficiency to understand the instructor and to cope with the assignments. Moreover, all students always participate in a great variety of projects connected with the national issues. The university regularly holds the festivals of various national communities where the foreign students present national cultural traditions and customs, show national dances, cook their favorite dishes. This way the learners from other countries save their national linguistic and cultural identity.

3. Conclusions

The above convinces us that learning a foreign language in a multicultural educational environment of higher school should provide the communication of cultures.

Accordingly, the content of the training includes various issues for discussion connected with different culture.

Appropriate training materials are needed to integrate relevant technologies into the educational environment.

Numerous learning methodological complexes, created by the native speakers, should include original materials on the traditions of peoples speaking the students' languages, offer tasks for discussing the cultural values of different generations, the sociocultural problems of modernization and globalization; examples of the language and culture integration, ethno-cultural features of verbal or non-verbal communication, etc.

The development of linguistic and cultural identity is carried out through the components of communicative competences: linguistic (theoretical knowledge about the language), language (practical language skills), discursive and socio-linguistic (language use in accordance with the communication situation, the skills of correct speech behaviour), cultural (entering into the culture of the target language, overcoming the cultural barrier in communication).

Regular and systematic activity on the awareness of cultural specific features of the students from various countries, the improvement of their communicative skills in the "basic functional" and foreign languages can support the students' language and cultural identity and provide the conditions of the development of their second language and cultural identity.

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Mediated Discourse Dynamics: Semiotic Potential and Cognitive Space Generation within Cross-Cultural Cross-Linguistic Communication

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Abstract

Cognitive specificities that characterize dynamics of mediated discourse production and impact of the latter on semiotic space potential of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication reveal dialectic interaction between peculiarities of perception, cognition, and language use and constrains in mediated communication. The phenomenon of interrelation between language and cognition is viewed in this article through the prism of adequacy and communicative equivalence as fundamental postulates underlying the process when certain notions and concepts of source language are transferred into target language, generating relevant inferences and implications within corresponding conceptual systems of participants of cross-cultural mediated communication. The aim of this study is to analyze linguistic and cultural features, as well as cognitive aspects of verbalization processes within mediated discourse generation that have direct impact on its semiotic potential and intertextuality phenomenon in a given mass media discourse and ensure efficacy of mediated cross-cultural cross-linguistic communication. The methodological base of the research is formed by the methods of semantic and comparative analysis, the method of translation, and the questionnaire method which involved Ph.D. students of RUDN-university (n-105) from different countries (Russia, the Netherlands, Ecuador, Philippines, Colombia, Cuba, Syria, Argelia, Jordan, etc.).
We conclude that in translation cognitive flexibility of frames for conceptual meaning and linguistic form compatibility and correspondence that facilitates appropriate sense interplay and successful sense actualization within the cognitive space of a given mediated discourse in target and source languages is to be considered as one of the key points that guarantees the dynamics of the latter when alluding to common facts and ideas, as well as predictable associations and stable representations of a given socio-cultural society in the context of respective presuppositions of communication. The scope of practical value of the study includes linguistic and translation researches, language teaching, discourse and lexicographic studies.

Keywords: translation, language, semiotic potential, cognition, cross-cultural communication

Introduction

In recent decades, linguistics has extended the frames of critical and exhaustive investigation of systemic phenomena of language having for this aim discovery of new facts concerning language functioning in speech acts, insight into speech generation and perception and covering in first place usage-based areas of linguistics such as discourse oriented studies, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, etc., what has swept linguo-semiotics, cognitive linguistics and some other branches of cognitive science into the orbit of research interests regarding cognition, communication and artificial intelligence as well.

Factors that, while being external to language, have their effect on the latter, and come endowed with increasingly important role by modern functional and sociolinguistic approaches to language in dynamics, predetermine gradual amplification of the scope of issues concerning effectiveness of cross-linguistic cross-cultural communication.

In the realm of translation modern scientific researches have as a starting point wide interpretation or wide concept of translation as activity phenomenon. The latter is universally regarded as a process that actually or potentially involves mental function what preconditions special relevance of cognitive mechanisms of sense actualization and sense interaction to be studied through the prism of synergetic potential of mediated communication.

It should be emphasized that adequate theoretical description of translation and a deeper insight into the essence thereof, as well as further development of new approaches to the issues that, *inter alia*, refer to equivalence, translatability, and translation strategy, inevitably require the process of translation in its dynamics to be explored in a wide socio-cultural context and with due account taken of extralinguistic factors – its social, cultural, phycological and other determinants, as well as communication presuppositions.

Discussions

In the realm of mediated discourse textual interaction (*i.e.*, linguistic and cognitive processing of information within knowledge transfer) is realized at the level of mental processes what implies and preconditions the usage of common cognitive and communicative-discursive strategies applied to different text systems by the author or the sender thereof in the source language [SL] and the translator as the secondary sender in the target language [TL].

When addressing the problems just referred to above the theory of translation calls for interdisciplinary efforts in terms of interaction with other linguistic disciplines and non-linguistic disciplines or fields of study while focusing on elaboration of comprehensive and integrated approach to the strategy of decision-making that implies multidimensional analysis of translation/interpretation, for it has significant impact on speech act efficiency criteria when modelling sense interaction within verbalization processes in target language in accordance with the translation norm of adequacy and equivalence, the intertextuality phenomenon in mediated discourse dynamics along with contextual effects and implications to be preserved in the target text (TT).

We should note that not all the determinants of translation are explicitly manifested in the target language text, especially within mediated communication in what regards providing or centering attention on necessary and helpful information that may be inferred and may be derived only as an implication in the source language.

The latter acquires special relevance within the frames or boundaries of a given act of mediated cross-linguistic communication due to pragmatic peculiarities which characterize structuring and presenting of human experience in the SL and the TL that are crucial for semiotic and functional potential of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication in what concerns communicative efficacy thereof and adequacy of comprehension *per se*.

Materials and methods

Analyzing relevant linguistic and cultural specificities of verbalization processes in SL and TL through the prism of communicative equivalence in the way they contribute to frame semiotic potential and cognitive space of a given mediated mass media discourse we apply methods of semantic and comparative analysis along with method of translation. The questionnaire method involved Ph.D. students of RUDN-university (n-105) from different countries (Russia, the Netherlands, Ecuador, Philippines, Colombia, Cuba, Syria, Argelia, Jordan, etc.).

Results

Defining cultural Spanish concept **tertulia** lexicographic sources M. Moliner, LAROUSSE, etc. state its essential constituents as follows: "2. *reunión de personas que se juntan habitualmente, con frecuencia en un café, para conversar y también, a veces, para jugar a juegos de sobremesa (círculo, club, velada, reunión; contertuliano, contertulio, miembro)"* [2, 4].

As part of cultural, social and linguistic heritage Spanish concept *"tertulia"* represents/constitutes both key sense and presupposition marker that encodes particular relevant cultural and spatio-temporal information within the frames of conceptual world picture. Cognitive perception of this multidimensional phenomenon in the SL comes related to the object and the situation *per se* and is marked by positive connotations along with pragmatically relevant associations used to identify Spanish national and cultural space. Example:

"*Creo que podríamos haber aprendido muchísimo de las* ***tertulias de la Generación del 98****, de la labor de esta generación, por lo menos de sus componentes más eminentes. Son escritores extraordinarios. Valle-Inclán, Azorín, Baroja, Unamuno…Es gente de gran talla. Después, siendo ya autor más conocido, hablé bastantes veces en las* ***tertulias*** *con Benavente, allí ví con otros escritores que pervivían...*" (Cambio 16, 9 de December de 1995, 63).

Moreover, modelling of adequate cognitive perception and successful discourse usage thereof is rooted in background knowledge and stereotype associations of the carriers of South American variants of the Spanish language, pragmatic context and respective presuppositions of cross-cultural cross-linguistic communication when transferred into the English language, particularly its American territorial variant used mainly with regard to invoke and define Latin cultural contexts and new or similar referential situations. It is mainly the phenomenon of interdiscursivity in combination with other relevant factors of a given communicative situation in the SL that activates sense-generating mechanisms that reinforce pragmatic markedness and cognitive transparency thereof and facilitate appropriate sense interplay, along with adequate processing of conceptual information and communication efficacy. Examples:

"Owners husband + wife duo Tim and María Sanchez are Oakland/Bay Area natives. Having roots from Puerto Rico and El Salvador lead them to fulfill one of their passions of mixing their love for coffee with art.…Today the coffee shop and commercial art gallery serves as a place for the community to come together every day. We offer a space where artists can exhibit their art in a professional gallery setting. A space to share their talent and creativity with the community. Art is legacy, it's what remains after we leave this earth. Art tells stories ... we see ourselves reflected in it. In it you find our beliefs, history, familia, convictions and our everyday lives". (www.tertuliacoffee.com/)

TERTULIA Chamber Music

Tertulia is a chamber music series that presents concerts in restaurants, in an atmosphere that combines lively conversation and dining with the opportunity to hear the greatest performers of our time. Tertulias are dinner-concerts, with three performances separated by extended intermissions.
(https://www.tertulianyc.org/#home)

TERTULIA

"Tertulia is a Spanish word meaning 'a social gathering of friends. We chose this name because we believe there is no better way to enjoy a fine bottle of wine than amongst friends. At Tertulia Cellars, our focus is to make wines of quality and distinction from the finest vineyards in both the Columbia and Walla Walla Valleys". (www.tertuliacellars.com/#circle-up)

In contrast, translation of this highly nationally marked as lexical unit Spanish concept into the Russian language faces and reveals certain impediments and constrains within decision-making strategy related to the sense verbalization process (82%), *i.e.*, adequate representation of implicit background knowledge, in first place, when engaging conceptual representations of the Russian language user and forming pragmatically intended cognitive context of a given discourse, especially when advertising forthcoming events or emphasizing desirable qualities so as to arouse interest to buy or to call public attention, in particular.

The Spanish-Russian bilingual lexicographic sources [5, 6] contain the following meanings for reference in the Russian language: «компания; кружок; вечеринка; галерка (в театре); часть кафе для игры в карты, бильярд и т.д.» that eventually fail to guarantee cognitive transparency and generate relevant inferences and implications within respective conceptual systems of participants of mediated communication [85%].

Highly nationally marked as lexical unit (LU), Spanish "*tertulia"* refers to the set of relevant semantic components enumerated below:

- "reunión (de personas)";
- "con frecuencia (juntarse habitualmente);
- "en un café (juntarse, reunirse);
- "a veces (a veces jugar a juegos de sobremesa" [2, 4] and reflects broader differences in original understanding thereof when translated into the Russian language [1].

By contrast to the English language, transliteration of this Spanish LU is cognitively invalid and cannot be applied mechanically for it depends on the level of generality for the comparison at which the referential situation and relevant pragmatic presuppositions of the SL are restored in the TL.

And even then, we should note, cognitive space generation through contextualization of the Spanish concept just referred to is needed within the limits of translation for the latter does not constitute social and cultural thesaurus of the Russian-speaking addressee (93%). Our analysis based on the questionnaire method has revealed that in 95% neither such a referential situation (partially or *in toto*//as a whole) nor respective stereotype associations and perceptions become manifest in translation into the Russian language as markers of Spanish social and cultural reality. Only in 5% linguistic and pragmatic potential of this LU provide for such communicative effect.

Conclusions

We conclude that in mediated discourse there is a strong need for all the constituents thereof in the SL to be translated resorting to different types of transformations, *inter alia,* introducing radical change or transformation into another linguistic form without altering real sense and semiotic potential thereof in the TL, since implicit sense within the ST is to be adequately conveyed throughout conceptual system, conceptual picture, and particular communicative situation in the TL. The above given considerations track the central problems of adequacy and communicative equivalence at the core of translator's strategy of decision-making flexibility while identifying the possible universe of decisions in what concerns intertextuality phenomenon generating appropriate inferences and implications along with a broader cognitive context *in toto* when addressing corresponding conceptual systems of the participants of cross-cultural mediated communication.

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Migrant Crisis and Language Education. The Case of Serbia

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Abstract

The migrant crisis that has shaken Europe for years has also been reflected in the field of education and language policies through numerous challenges for which adequate solutions are continually sought. Language issues in this field are defined, inter alia, through problems related to the teaching of the recipient country's national language for personal, social and labor needs, integration into the recipient country and training migrants for equal and active civic participation in life, for the transfer of the baggage of origin as part of the new cultural capital and the advantage of the entire society. The paper reviews the responses of educational institutions and relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations in the Republic of Serbia to the linguistic needs of migrant children. The ways of possible realizations are seen in the affirmation of the educational, cultural and linguistic luggage of migrants, raising the awareness of all participants about linguistic needs and the tendency towards integration into life flows. Respecting the context of European values of multilingual education and intercultural dialogue, a critical overview of the proposal for the framework of the language support of Serbian as a foreign for migrant children is given.

Keywords: migrant crisis, cultural identity, linguistic identity, educational policies

1. Introduction

In recent years, migrant routes lead to developed European countries, particularly to Mediterranean countries. From the spring of 2016, the migrant crisis also enveloped Serbia, which found itself on refugee routes to a desired new life. Refugees, most often from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Palestine, Algeria, Morocco, Ghana and Libya, including a significant number of school age children, although they do not consider Serbia their final destination, remain in Serbia and stay in a number of state housing centers. Since mid-2017, competent state institutions have sought to organize the inclusion of the migrant population of school age into the education system.

2. Migrant crisis and migrant education in Serbia

After months of hesitation and dilemmas about which way to support the integration of refugee children, measures have been taken to include children of migrants into the Serbian education system.

In accordance with the uncertainties of the situation that depended primarily from international agreements and strategies for the appointment of migrants officially, the media used the fluctuating terminology: refugees, migrants, persons in need for international protection, etc. For the appointment of children who are included in the educational system of Serbia, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development uses the term children of migrants (See eg. Link 4). There were also dilemmas about the approach applied to the inclusion in the educational system of Serbia. Having in mind the many theoretical views (see Kovač-Cerović, 2016) and experiences of other countries, it is considered that the holistic support is the most appropriate, by which students are perceived as students with complex educational, social and emotional needs. Such support points to different types of support and how to understand support.

According to reactions from European officials, Serbia has responded to this issue in a very responsible manner in cooperation with a number of relevant institutions and organizations (Link 1), respecting international laws and nurturing the values of a humane and tolerant society (Link 2), and striving for as many school age children from migrant populations as possible to get included in the regular course of teaching. The positions of Serbia are in line with modern European political values towards migrants: they are based on the fight against racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination, on principles of openness and unity, values which form the basis of the European union and democracies of the West. Furthermore, Serbia respects international laws and nurtures the values of a humane and tolerant society (Link 1), while school is considered to be the place where, among other things, values and values of tolerance and communion are taught.

The affirmative attitude of the Government of Serbia in relation to the integration of migrants into all life flows in Serbia is clearly expressed in all public appearances during the years of the migrant crisis.

With the inclusion of school-age children into the education system, the integration of migrants into the labor market is also supported, so that migration is seen as an opportunity for economic growth, and that, including migrants in labor flows, it aims to create an inclusive society (Link 3).

On the topic of educational needs of children of refugees, the importance of language needs as primary issues in the integration process is prominent. (Kovač-Cerović, 2016:5).

3. Language needs and support in migrant education

It is known that language learning is a decisive factor in the prospects of migrants for a successful reintegration, a path leading to self-fulfillment and achieving social and economic balance. The success of students is in direct relation with the quality of the academic language (Short & Spanos, 1989, Cummins 1991, DiPerna & Eliot 1999). Language issues in this area are defined, inter alia, through problems related to language teaching, the English language as a specific lingua franca, which most migrants bring in their educational baggage. English can serve to accomplish first communication, and in preparation for any final choice that migrants will steer them to other areas of Europe; and the national language of the receiving country, in our case Serbian as a foreign lenguage, for equal and active participation in educational processes.

Concluding on the problem of education of children and youth of migrants, we emphasize that Serbia has significant experience in helping children and youth, refugees from the former Yugoslav territories, during the nineties' wars. Furthermore, we also consider that the establishment of feasible and comprehensive school approaches in Serbia can be hampered by the very limited autonomy of schools, the lack of donations to schools, the largely incompetent leadership of schools, the reduced number of school psychologists and pedagogues. In the analysis of international, European strategies and good practices for the education of children and youth of migrants, Cerović believes that should not be deprived complex holistic approaches to implementation (Kovač-Cerović 2016: 20). Holistic support implies a comprehensive, very complex school model that reflects the real needs of the migrant population (Kornhall, 2016). Students, asylum seekers, are viewed as students with numerous, complex needs of the educational, social and emotional type, and this attitude is reflected in the support system whose main goal is to contribute to the social inclusion, well-being and development of the students involved. Learning the language (English and the host country language) is seen as a means to enhance the students' ability to achieve in a school context, to follow the curriculum and to be included as equal members of society.

Suggested solutions are of a universal character and include language teaching, avoidance of segregation, parental involvement, capacity building and support for young people.

Criteria related to language needs include equal access to high quality education, psychological and educational support, teaching and learning of migrant languages, languages of education, and other languages, intercultural, cross curricular education and pre-service and in-service teacher training and continuous education.

4. The framework of program of language support

Taking the initiative for the implementation of concrete measures, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has taken action to help integrate refugee children into the school system of Serbia, with the support of UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. The document "From Serbian as a Foreign Language to Serbian as the Language of Environment and Education" has been compiled: The Framework Of Program Of Language Support (FPLS), which was created by the team of the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade (prof. dr Julijana Vučo, prof. dr Jelena Filipović, prof. dr Vesna Krajišnik, doc. dr Ljiljana Đuric, Ms. Nikica Strižak, Ms. Mina Suknović.), in support of persons who need to – for various reasons, the most frequent one being inclusion in the school system and the overall life in Serbia – acquire basic communicative competence of the Serbian language (Level A1 of the Common European Framework) needs and possibilities, master the basics of the Serbian language as the language of education (FPLS, 2017, 4).

By setting the foundations of their scope, the authors of the FPLS consider that the knowledge of language, especially the language of education, is the key factor to success in learning and in professional life which these sensitive groups are often ostricized from. (see Short & Spanos, 1989, Cummins 1991, DiPerna & Eliot 1999).

This very complex initiative is based on all the above cited principles (participatory action research with integrative cooperation of teachers with experience with migrant children and other sensitive social groups in Serbia (Romani children in particular).

Language support is understood as an integral part of a general educational support aimed at enabling the development of communicative competences needed in the integration process (relational and cognitive and mediation which both involve language mediation, Coste & Cavalli, 2015: 28), plurilingual education with elements of translanguaging, based on a developmental bilingual model of plurilingual education (Roberts, 1995) in which language support is provided in specifically tailored language classes but also within all other subjects (cross curricular language support), targeting both BICS and CALP (Cummins, 2008).

Special emphasis placed on learning outcomes, which are not in any way correlated to those of native speakers, but rather on the content of communicative interactions, meaning and academic adequacy (including translanguaging).

Both speaking and writing should mediate different languages, scripts and cultures present in the experiences in both migrant and local children and their teachers.

CLIL is one of the main instruments of such knowledge construction within a general socio-cognitive approach, which places the student in the center of the educational process.

The manual is designed in three age-defined modules, based on the CEFR descriptors for the A1 level: age 6-10, age 10-15, age 15 and above (this module could also be further expanded in order to satisfy the communicative needs of migrants in the process of integration into the labor market).

The document put the emphasis on evaluation: language education and language support become an integral part of the Educational portfolio (based on the concept of ELP) which should include relevant information regarding ALL languages and intercultural experiences, thus opening the space for their formal recognition within the educational system.

The manual also includes didactic and methodological guidelines and sample classroom preparations and activities, which could help less experienced teachers.

5. Conclusions

The education of migrants, who found themselves in the Republic of Serbia due to the migrant crisis since the spring of 2015, began in September of 2017. For the purpose of regular education of migrant children (and adults) of different ages and provenances after initial hesitation and seeking adequate political, educational and pedagogical response, as well as the form of language support, the document "From Serbian as a Foreign Language to Serbian as Language of Environment and Education: Framework of Program of Language Support" was produced. The language education offered by this document is based on the democratic principles of tolerance and respect for the other, on recognized European principles of multilingualism and multiculturalism, on a holistic approach and a combined method that assumes that the teaching of the language of education takes place in Serbian as a foreign language and in the teaching of non-language subjects, translanguage skills, principles of communicative teaching of Serbian as a foreign language, integrated teaching of Serbian as a foreign language and content. The language basis for migrant education is directed towards the goal of promoting the cultural and linguistic identity of migrants, which, according to theoretical knowledge and previous experience, is undoubtedly the most reliable path leading to a harmonious life in the new community.

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Multilingualism in New Zealand

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Abstract

This article considers the issue of multilingualism and language policy in New Zealand. The author takes into consideration the social status of English and Maori, draws reader's attention to the state policy of the Ministry of Education of New Zealand and the activities of governmental and non-governmental organizations concerning the English language, Maori and the New Zealand Sign Language. The author analyses New Zealand state reforms, aimed at cultivation of the cultural, educational and communicative value of the Maori language and culture. The paper draws attention to the growth of ethnic consciousness of the Maori people, communicative expansion of the Maori language usage in public, political, educational, scientific and cultural spheres of New Zealand. The language situation in New Zealand is unbalanced exoglossic. The most common language in New Zealand is English, and it continues to occupy the most prestigious position in all the spheres of communication.

Keywords: New Zealand English, New Zealand, Maori, language policy, language situation, education in New Zealand

1. Introduction

New Zealand was established as a resettlement colony of British colonizers, whose language policy was designed for the long term. Currently, English continues to occupy a prestigious position in all areas of communication: politics, economics, education, science, art and culture.

From the point of view of the prestige of language formations, the Maori language could not be considered developed, because it had a low level of linguistic preparedness: the lack of writing, literary traditions, scientific and technical terminology. The linguistic situation resulting from colonization created the basic prerequisites for the development and formation of the English language in New Zealand. In 1790 the country became a new colony of the British Empire. New Zealand's considerable socio-ethnic diversity should be noted, as the vast majority of immigrants were from Scotland, England, Australia and Ireland.

From 1831 the New Zealand Association had been very active in promoting the immigration of Britons into New Zealand. Settlers from England, who arrived on a two-year contract program to assist immigrants, were called a two-year artist. Since the late nineteenth century, non-British persons have been restricted from entering New Zealand.

In our opinion, a significant scientific interest is the statistical data of documentary archival sources on the demographic characteristics of New Zealanders. The development of the English language in the country was continuously influenced by the inter-ethnic composition of the settlers. Among the visitors were immigrants from England, Scotland and Ireland, native speakers of various dialects, which had a significant impact on the formation of the English language in New Zealand. According to the statistics of 1871 of all New Zealanders, 51% were English, 22% Irish, 27,3% – the Scots and 6.5% of Australians. The total number of Europeans was 256 393 people [4].

According to some historical evidence, the vast majority of British settlers were illiterate (25% in 1858) due to the lack of compulsory education in the UK during the mass colonization of New Zealand in the mid-19th century. The migration flow during the colonial period was based on the lower class, former prisoners, traders and ruined farmers [3].

As it has been mentioned, history of immigration to this country from the nineteenth century until the late twentieth century has been dominated by migration from Britain and other nation states where

English is a national language (Australia, the USA, Canada, South Africa). While there are long-standing Asian language communities (e.g., Chinese, Indian) as well as European language communities (e.g., Dutch, German, Greek, Polish) in New Zealand, all these communities have remained, until recently at least, relatively small.

There has also been a significant growth of South East Asian economic migrants to New Zealand over the course of the 1990s – bolstering long-standing, but previously very small Asian groups – along with the increased presence of refugee groups, initially from Vietnam and Cambodia and more recently from Somalia. At present, the language and education provision for such groups remains very limited, the result largely of the predominance of English in New Zealand and, the re-emergence of Maori aside, the ongoing valorization of English as both the pre-eminent national and international language [2].

New Zealand has come a long way in accepting ethnic diversity and cultural difference. According to data from the 2013 census, there were 598,605 Maori in the country, making up 14.9 per cent of the total population. Of this group almost half (46.5 per cent) identified Maori as their only ethnicity, with the remainder identifying alongside one or more other ethnicities. The Māori population has increased by close to 40 per cent since 1991, when they totalled 434,847.

2. Language situation in New Zealand

The language situation is subject to change due to the complex interaction of linguistic and extralinguistic factors. The study of the problems of the language situation applies not only to the field of sociolinguistics, but to linguistic science as a whole. The language situation should be studied as in its present state and in retrospect. The practical value of the solution of linguistic problems is to identify the trends of language development, the study of the causes and factors affecting the language situation, the evaluation of the prospect's language policy and other issues [1].

Language policy of the state includes the totality of linguistic and extralinguistic facts, which require registration in the formulation and implementation of language policy. A. D. Schweitzer and L. B. Nikolsky define a language situation as a system of socially and functionally distributed hierarchical relationship of language systems and subsystems that coexist and interact in a given ethnic community or administrative territory. Association and in respect of which the members of the respective language and speech teams adhere to certain social attitudes [6].

To create a typology of linguistic situations of primary importance is the selection of relevant parameters. The language situations are divided into two groups: 1) exoglossic and 2) endoglossic.

The first group is a collection of individual languages, the second includes a set functional style.

Exoglossic and endoglossic situations can be divided into two subgroups: 1) balanced language situations, if their constituent languages or language subsystems are functionally equivalent; 2) unbalanced language situations, if their components are distributed over the areas of communication and social groups. Thus, theoretically, the following types of language situations are as follows: 1) exoglossic balanced; 2) exoglossic unbalanced; 3) endoglossic balanced; 4) endoglossic unbalanced [6].

One of the most important factors shaping the language situation is a language policy. The language policy is part of the general policy of the state, social groups, parties, class, social institution, i.e. activities pursued by them in their interests in the name of their political goals. The language policy can be either constructive or encouraging, and destructive and restrictive. In the first case, the language policy directed on expansion of functions of languages and their scope, increase their social and communicative role, while the second – the narrowing of their functions, limiting their scope.

When describing the language situation, we need to consider the specific features of the coexisting systems, such as the presence of a developed language system of writing, the presence of a range of functional styles inherent in the language, social functions and the socio-communicative role. When describing the language situation, a social status of languages must be considered. An official status is enshrined in law in the status of languages, and the actual – an amount of evidence to judge their actual role in the language team.

The language of intergovernmental and interethnic communication largely depends on how the proposed conversion is consistent with the overall trends of ethnolinguistic development directions in the dynamics of the language situation, social and national interests of ethnic communities, classes and social groups. Ethno-linguistic development is characterized by two features. First, the processes of consolidation of ethnic groups as due to the fusion of ethnic groups with similar culture and language, and by the assimilation of major smaller communities that differ in culture and language.

Second, the process of consolidation of ethnic groups occurs generally within a particular country.

This process leads to the conclusion that the language of a large community which is the core of ethnic consolidation, outside the ethnic territory, and circulated to the consolidation or assimilated communities [3].

A fundamental feature of New Zealand society is “multiculturalism” in which many ethnic minorities retain their cultural and linguistic diversity. The most common languages are English (3 673 623 people) and Maori (157 110 people).

With the growth of ethnic communities in New Zealand appropriate conditions for the preservation of immigrants were created, their national identity and cultural identity. The strategy policy of «multiculturalism» finds expression not only in the socio-cultural, economic and political spheres but also education. The result of New Zealand’s constructive policy was the distribution of foreign languages in school education. In the primary education sector from 1995 to 1998 was “Draft for second language learning” for children 7-10 years. Other programs of motivation of learning a foreign language from an early age are: “International language courses” and “English as a second language” (Maori).

3. The social status of the Maori language in New Zealand

From the point of view of prestige linguistic formations of the Maori language could not be considered as developed, because he had a low level of linguistic proficiency: the absence of writing, literary traditions, scientific-technical terminology.

The Maori language in New Zealand has existed for eight centuries and it has been experiencing a strong influence of the English language. Until the mid XX century Maori spoke only in their native language. New Zealand Council for linguistic studies, Department of the study of the Maori language at the University of Massey, Auckland express great public and scientific interest in the development and strengthening of the Maori language. Data research centers with the cooperation of the government organizations conduct effective work on the revival of the cultural Maori heritage carry out major socio-cultural events among the wider population of New Zealand.

Among native speakers of the Maori language, 73,4% of Maori are monolingual and 23,8% are bilingual. Most of them are the representatives of business circles and intellectuals. According to the 2001 statistics, there were 160 524 speakers of Maori, that is 4,6% of the population throughout New Zealand. [5].

Interestingly, in 1950s the Maori language was taught in some secondary schools in New Zealand.

In those years, there was a need for the development of educational materials, linguistic dictionaries, the training of qualified pedagogical staff. An important step of the government in 1959 was the creation of the Language of the Advisory Committee on the Maori language. This Committee was mandated to create a series of the first pedagogical textbooks in Maori “Te Rangatahi” and a linguistic journal “Te Whare Kura”, which published work on the Maori language in New Zealand. The Oxford dictionary of the Maori language (1978) included the sustainable word and combination of a distinctive, vernacular, vocabulary [4].

Migration of Maori in urban areas (Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch) in the 1930-1950, and separation from their traditional cultural traditions has created a real threat of ethno-cultural survival of Maori. It was explained by the rapid pace of industrialization of the country and the poor living conditions in the villages. 1960s marked a period of intense inter-ethnic relations, active cultural-political protest against racial discrimination.

The number of Maori who left rural areas and moved into cities grew rapidly. Only 8% of Maori were employed in management, and the European population consisted 40%. In unskilled jobs 50% of the Maori were employed and European population – 35%.

In the 1970-1980 young Maori began to unite in gangs (Nga Tamatoa, Te Reo Maori Society and Nga Kaiwhakapumau), cases of mass civil unrest in the form of protests and petitions happened. In 1973, 30 thousand Maori held a collection of signatures under the petition to recover the position and status of his native language, which was lost in the colonial period [7].

The Maori were forced to oppose to the onslaught of the Europeans, to fight for their rights and freedom. Short life expectancy, unemployment, disease and the worst living conditions pushed the Maori antisocial lifestyle that only fuelled the hatred and racial discrimination.

Since 1980 of XX century the language policy issues in New Zealand has been constructive, centralized, that is binding at national level and regulated by the Ministry of education. A constructive policy is aimed at the expansion of the communicative functions of the languages, their scope; increase their social and communicative role in the creation and development of literary languages.

Since the colonization of New Zealand, the Maori language reached the process of linguistic self-assertion only in the ‘1980s of the XX century. According to legislative act “Maori Language Act” in

1987, the Maori language was declared the official language of New Zealand. In the same year the Language Commission was established to promote the Maori. It is aimed at the study of the state and prospects of development of the Maori language in New Zealand, training guides using new scientific and technical terminology, improvement of lexical and grammatical systems in accordance with the communicative needs of society [1]. Through the policy of biculturalism, and the practice of the Waitangi Tribunal, New Zealand governments have sought to enable Maori development. Major government reform in New Zealand aims at the cultivation of cultural, educational and communicative value of the language and culture of Maori. Currently, there is an increase of ethnic identity, Maori, expanding the communicative use of Maori language in public and political life, education, mass communications and New Zealand. The prevalence of the Maori language, except for colloquial everyday circle, is also seen in educational institutions as a teaching subject.

4. Conclusions

The language situation in New Zealand is defined as unbalanced exoglossic, as in functional relation English and the Maori language are officially recognized and legally equal. The most common language in New Zealand is English, and it continues to occupy a prestigious position in all spheres of communication: in politics, economy, education, science, art and culture. The Maori language had a low level of linguistic proficiency: it had no writing system, literary tradition, and technical terminology.

New Zealand colleges, universities, and research centres with the cooperation of state organizations, the Maori of the older generation conduct effective work on the revival of the cultural Maori heritage, carry out major socio-cultural activities amongst the general New Zealand population, develop a special method of teaching the Maori language as an ethnic group as well as to persons who do not belong to this community. Relative to most ethnic groups in New Zealand, other than Pacific Islanders, the Maori are disadvantaged socially and economically. Most Maori are concentrated in areas of unskilled employment, where wages are low and unemployment rates are high. While there have been significant improvements over the last two decades in many areas, such as employment levels and life expectancy, significant disparities remain. Poor living conditions and health, with inadequate housing in inner urban areas and relatively high rates of unemployment, have contributed to poor self-image, violence and criminal behaviour. In many parts of the country the Maori language lost its role as a living community language in the post-war years. In the past decade there has been a steady increase in the percentage of Maori at all levels of education, and at the same time there has been a renaissance in the teaching and learning of Maori language and culture, partly through increasing numbers of bilingual classes in primary and secondary schools. There have also been growing numbers of specifically Maori-language schools, extending from pre-school to secondary level. This focus on education has contributed to arresting the decline in Maoritanga (Maori culture) that tended to follow urbanization. Indeed, there has been a steady increase since the 1990s in the number of children being taught in Maori. Policies promoting the recognition of Maori culture and the visibility of Maori identity in the national arena have been a positive factor in the revitalization of the language. An important step forward was taken in August 2017 when Rotorua became the first official bilingual city in New Zealand.

Currently, there has been an increase of ethnic identity among Maori, expansion of the communicative use of Maori in public and political life, education, and mass communications in New Zealand. The prevalence of the Maori language, except for colloquial everyday circle is also seen in educational institutions as a teaching subject.

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Obstacles in Multilingual/Translingual Approaches to Teaching Writing at a "Monolingual" American University

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Abstract

A number of scholars have touted the advantages granted to language learners when the learning environment gives them the opportunity to draw on all their linguistic resources as appropriate (as opposed to confining them to one "target" linguistic code). Additive multilingualism and translingualism are two approaches that seek to mitigate or reverse the harms of a strictly monolingual language education, particularly in second language writing classrooms. However, many classroom teachers find it difficult to employ these approaches meaningfully in the classroom.

The authors have both taught college composition courses dedicated to multilingual students, and the goal of this project is to illustrate some of the ideological and practical obstacles to teaching a multilingual or translingual writing course at a university where one language (English) dominates. A variety of artifacts from both the classroom (e.g. syllabi, assignment prompts, instructor feedback, etc.) and from the institution (e.g. student fees, mission statements, course requirements, etc.) will be analyzed and based on these analyses, practical suggestions will be made as to how teachers may move further away from a monolingual standard.

Keywords: Translingualism, multilingualism, monolingualism, second-language writing, higher education

1. Introduction

We can identify three distinct ideologies to language, each with a different attitude towards multilingual writing: monolingualism as dominant, multilingualism as residual, and translingualism as emergent [1]. These ideologies correspond to what has been referred to, respectively, as code-segregation, code-switching, and code-meshing [2], or as the "inference" model, the "correlationist" model, and the "negotiation" model [3]. The models in question differ considerably in dealing with linguistic and cultural differences of multilingual writers. Specifically, they view "difference" as, respectively, a deficit, an estrangement, and as a resource [4]. Drawing on contrastive rhetoric, the first model attributes all errors made by multilingual writers to their L1. The second model, while an improvement over the first, acknowledges the existence of difference, but does not engage with it critically enough, thus stopping short of crediting agency to the writing choices made by those writers.

The third model treats writers "as agentive, shuttling creatively between discourses to achieve their communicative objectives" [3]. What this means is that translingualism extends the previous efforts made in an attempt to accommodate different varieties of English, but goes further to encourage user's agency, promote linguistic heterogeneity, and fight monolingual policies that do not reflect the nature of language use and language relation. In other words, translingualism assumes that languages are dynamic and interactive rather than static and discrete, and, as such, the presence of language differences is considered normal and desirable. Now, while the term "translingualism" itself might be relatively new and was only recently adopted into composition studies [5], as a practice it has always been present in the real world, and it has been in use in several other academic disciplines including applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, new literacy studies, comparative literature, and translation studies [6].

2. Translingualism and Equitable Language Teaching

Among the basic tenets of translingaulism is the belief in the naturalness of variation, which puts all varieties in relation to standard English (or, indeed, all languages in relation to English) on the same equal footing and contributes to more equal power-sharing between various linguistic codes. Not only is a translingual approach seen as a better model for the way langauge is actually used, but a major goal of its adoption is to mitigate the linguistic inequalities that are built into language teaching, and particularly English language teaching, in a world shaped by imperial conquest [7]. Yet, a misconception about translingualism is that it ignores standard English and, therefore, prevents students' access to a variety that is realistically needed in the academy and beyond. But the reality is that translingualism does not advocate for such a position at all. What it does is that it tries to deconstruct the ideology informing standard English, informing students that it is a social construct that was historically privileged [6].

3. Obstacles to Taking a Translingual Approach

3.1 Globalized Obstacles to a Translingual Approach

Both authors work as composition instructors, and a recent examination of our international students' introductory essays shows the global influence of monolingual hegemony. For example, in a recent quarter, several students expressed a lack of confidence about their English abilities, particularly because they learned varieties of English that they feel have become adulterated by the surrounding country in some way, such as "Chinglish" (China) or "Singlish" (Singapore). Instead of finding ways to resist the monolingual ideology exhibited by our students, our own responses to their writing reveal a tacit acceptance that one language is the norm of human linguistic behavior and a continued privileging of the "native" varieties of English over other varieties (See Figure 1.)

"I am impressed that you are taking English, Spanish, and French classes all at once-make sure that your brain doesn't explode with all of those languages in their [sic] at once!"

"Thank you for your initial essay! I also hope that I can teach you some nifty and native idioms this quarter."

Fig. 1: A Writing Instructor's Tacit Acceptance of Monolingual Ideology

It seems that our desire to build rapport with our students has conflicted with our desire to challenge monolingualism.

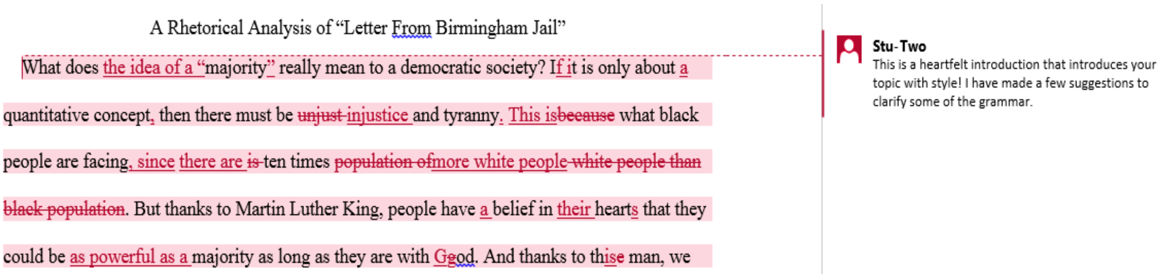
Our students' attitudes (and ours) have, moreover, been influenced by global-level language policies that subordinate other linguistic codes to prestige dialects of English. The active promotion of the English language by the governments of English-dominant countries [7] and the economic hegemony of English-speaking corporations [8], have devalued other linguistic resources and contributed to larger and larger numbers of international students seeking degrees from US and UK institutions of higher learning.

3.2 Institutional Obstacles to Taking a Translingual Approach

At many universities, including the University of Washington, international students are required to pay fees above and beyond those required of domestic students [9]. These fees are justified, in part, by the "need" to provide extra language support to these students and thus the considerable linguistic resources of these students are framed as a burden. Indeed, in a recent survey of teaching assistants and faculty at the University of Washington, only 29% of the teaching assistants and 33% of the faculty felt that international and multi-lingual students' ability to read and write in other languages was a benefit that such students brought to their classes [10]. In such an environment, it isn't difficult to see how multilingualism is devalued (we even had a student write an essay arguing that it is better to be monolingual at the University of Washington). In such circumstances, even efforts to give support to students by offering them designated multilingual sections of composition can end up re-inscribing monolingualism as normal and making multilingual a marked and othered category [11].

3.3 Classroom Obstacles to Taking a Translingual Approach

While its proponents argue that a translingual approach to student writing requires extra time and patience [5] and a willingness to take deviations from a putative norm as meaningful choices rather than simply errors [12], the monolingual traditions of the academy, and the need to assign a grade in limited time are obstacles for teachers who wish to take a translingual approach in their comments on student writing. When we examined the assignments, we give our students and our feedback on their writing, we found that our prompts regularly excluded the non-English linguistic resources they might use while writing and our feedback, despite our efforts to emphasize content and meaning, often fell into traditional patterns of error correction (see figure 2). We are by no means unique in these monolingual tendencies [13].


A Rhetorical Analysis of "Letter From Birmingham Jail"

What does the idea of a "majority" really mean to a democratic society? If it is only about a quantitative concept, then there must be ~~unjust~~ injustice and tyranny. This is~~because~~ what black people are facing, since there are ~~is~~ ten times ~~population of~~more white people ~~white people than black population~~. But thanks to Martin Luther King, people have a belief in their hearts that they could be as powerful as a majority as long as they are with G~~g~~od. And thanks to th~~i~~se man, we

Stu-Two
This is a heartfelt introduction that introduces your topic with style! I have made a few suggestions to clarify some of the grammar.

Fig. 2: A few grammar "suggestions" are clearly intended as corrections

4. Implications and Suggestions

The main implication from this brief look at our composition classes at the University of Washington is that teachers who wish to adopt a more translingual approach must immediately contend with a variety of inherited obstacles. While individual teachers have a very limited control over the global monolingual hegemony, the impact of this hegemony on students' attitudes towards English writing can immediately be mitigated through an explicit acknowledgment that monolingualism is ideological, not "natural" or "normal." An early statement to this effect, in class and in the course, syllabus would better enable writing instructors to build rapport with their students while still calling attention to problematic monolingual ideology in their early writing.

Institutional circumstances may also be difficult to control, but resistance is possible once discriminatory policies have been identified. The presenters participated in coordinating resistance to their university's international student fee and this fee was recently ended. Labels like "multilingual" that are used to categorize large numbers of diverse students will always be problematic, but their harmful discursive effects can likewise be mitigated through a more transparent acknowledgment that they are problematic.

While grades are firmly entrenched in most universities' bureaucracies, the problems discussed above can be reduced through curricular changes. For example, the curriculum for the course we teach deflects some of the temptation to grade in the quick and easy monolingual style by postponing all assignment grading until the very end of the course, when the bulk of a student's grade will be determined by a holistic evaluation of a writing portfolio. The presenters have also participated in efforts to change the writing program's goals to further deemphasize the role of uncritical grammatical conformity.

Composition instructors can likewise offer assignments that invite students to take their "non-English" language resources as a topic and allow students to write parts of their essays in another language and then to translate and annotate their own writing, as well as to reflect on the differences in writing in English and the other language. Introducing assignments of this sort can help students' harness more of their linguistic resources.

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Teachers' Use of Code-Switching in Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract

Code switching is defined as" going from one language to another in mid speech when both speakers know the same two languages" [1].
Code switching received interest as a specific phenomenon in foreign language teaching in 1980s, and since then there has been a heated debate on whether switching back and forth between languages, helps or hinders the student learning [2], [3].
The direct method of teaching which has been used since the 19th century emphasises that only the target language should be used [4]. Supporters of this method say that the students do not need to understand every thing that is said in the classroom, and that teaching exclusively in the target language exposes the learners to the new language functions, while using the first language deprives the learners of a valuable time, and argue that some students, may stop paying attention when the target language is used (Chambers; Halliwell & Jones; Macdonald, cited in Jingxia [2].
Researchers who advocate code switching argue that the students use of their native language allows them to express what they really want to say, and is the learners preferred strategy [1]. Studies showed that code switching can have useful functions in the classroom, such as management, and transmission of lesson content [5] and plays a role in reducing students' anxiety and lack of self confidence [6]. Stern et al reported that many students felt that failure to understand in taught language medium is caused by inadequate explanation, and argued that students relate their understanding of target language to the understanding and experiences they acquired in their native language [7], which implicates that code switching may help student's understanding of target language, and in orienting themselves in the new medium.
My aim is to discuss the good use of code switching in foreign language classroom drawing on the literature and my own teaching experience as well as highlighting some problomatic isssues which may associate this use.

Keywords: Code switching, The use of L1, Second language teaching, functions, language accusation

Introduction

Many recent studies have provided evidence in favour of using code switching (CS) in foreign language classrooms. Although, according to Sert [8] CS is not considered favourable by many teachers, it is nevertheless important to understand its functions and benefits as a language learning strategy. Such an understanding will allow teachers to re-evaluate their position relative to the practice, and help them understand the rationale of others who adopt CS in their classrooms.

This paper first presents the main arguments against and supporting CS, explaining that CS is generally unavoidable. Then it looks at the positive functions of CS in the context of foreign language classroom, drawing on recent studies and my own experience as a language teacher.

Code switching definition

Code switching is defined as "going from one language to another in mid speech when both speakers know the same two languages" [1].

Issues and debates about code switching (CS) in the language classroom

CS first received interest as a specific phenomenon in foreign language teaching in the 1980s, and since then, disputes have surrounded the issue of whether the practice improves or lowers students' outcomes [2], [3].

Arguments against code switching (CS) in the language classroom

The use of CS in the classroom has not been widely favoured in the literature [8], [9]; however, it is practised in community contexts, where this type of bilingual talk is acceptable. In many classroom contexts CS is viewed as inappropriate or undesirable, and a deficient mode of interaction [10]. In addition, it is still widely believed by L2 teachers that avoiding the use of L1 (first language) in the L2 (second language) classroom as much as possible is more beneficial than language mixing [11].

Consequently, teachers often insist that students use the target language (TL) and discourage students from CS [12]; thus, there is a sense of guilt present when not using the TL [13].

The direct method of teaching been used since the 19th century emphasizes that only the TL should be used to establish a direct association between experience and expression. Thus, a word or sentence and its meaning should be taught through demonstration and dramatization, without the use of the mother tongue [4]. Supporters of this method state that students do not need to understand everything that is said in the classroom (Chambers 1991; Halliwell & Jones 1991; Macdonald 1993 cited in Jingxia [2]. Furthermore, it has been argued that when a teacher chooses to use the L1 as part of the usual pedagogy in their classroom, he/she is depriving learners of classroom input in the TL [14], which for most students is the only opportunity they have to expose themselves to the language [13].

Arguments supporting code switching (CS) in the language classroom

Many scholars have questioned the monolingual norm in Foreign Language classrooms in recent years, suggesting that teachers should aim instead to “create bilinguals” [15], [16]. Swain and Lapkin [17] reported in 2000 that the use of the L1 should not be prohibited, as the L1 can be put to good use to support second language learning.

Researchers who advocate CS argue that students’ use of their native language allows them to express what they really want to say, and that it is often the learners preferred strategy [1]. Studies have shown that CS can serve useful functions in the classroom [3], [11], such as enhancing students’ understanding and providing them with an opportunity to participate in the discussion [3] management, and transmission of lesson content [5]. Moreover, it can play a role in reducing students’ anxiety and addressing lack of self-confidence [6]. For example, Stern *et al.*, [7] reported that many students felt that their failure to understand the taught language medium is caused by inadequate explanations.

They further argued that students relate their understanding of the TL to the understanding and experiences they acquired in their native language [7], which implicates CS may advance student’s understanding of TL, orienting them more effectively relative to the new mode of communication. It builds a bridge from the known to the unknown and can be considered an important tool in language teaching when used effectively [8]. It can also provide a smooth transition between the two languages [6], and thus, denying students access to their L1 deprives them of the option to use an invaluable cognitive tool [17].

Cook called for a reconsideration of the view that the first language should be avoided in the classroom by teachers and students, and insisted that treating the L1 as a classroom resource allows examination of how it can be used effectively; i.e. for teachers to convey meaning, explain grammar, and organize the classroom, whilst for students it can be integrated into collaborative learning and individual strategy use. The L1 can be a useful tool in creating authentic L2 users, rather than something to be shunned [15].

Moreover, the results of a survey of language teachers’ attitudes to and use of the TL in Queensland, Australia indicate that many teachers view the learners’ L1 as an appropriate medium for clarifying cross lingual, cross-culture comparisons [18]. Other results of a survey of language teachers found that although teachers are largely unaware of using or permitting L1, and even consider it inappropriate for use in ESL classrooms, their study shows some useful functions of CS [5].

Butzkamm [19] argued that L1 is the greatest asset people bring to the task of foreign language learning, as it provides a Language Acquisition Support system, given that using the L1 helps us to learn to think, communicate and acquire an intuitive understanding of grammar.

Inevitability of CS in the language classroom

There is a sizeable body of literature on the pedagogic value of classroom CS, and yet, surprisingly, official attitudes have tended to remain negative [9]. Moreover, CS practices in the language classroom should be viewed differently according to context; especially when teachers know it is inevitable, as when teachers and students share the same L1[1]. Studies suggest that not only does CS happen in the classroom, but teachers find to their surprise and dismay that they are using far more L1 than they would like, as in the case of teachers of English as a second language in Jaffna (Sri Lanka) [5]. More teachers realized this when they were pointed towards such instances in recorded data. They emphasized that based on their training and preferences they would prefer to use English exclusively as the medium of communication in the classroom [5]. Nevertheless, interestingly, teachers usually apply CS automatically and unconsciously in most language classrooms [6], [9], [10], which means teachers themselves might not always be aware of the outcomes and functions served by the CS process [8].

The above findings support the belief that CS is a natural phenomenon in settings where interlocutors share two language, so teachers should not necessary discourage it [1]. Arguably, as Turnbull [20] suggests, teachers should maximize the use of the TL in the classroom, but without making the judgment that L1 is harmful in some way. Nevertheless, either consciously or subconsciously, inevitably or not, CS necessarily serves some basic functions that might prove beneficial in language learning environments [8].

Functions of CS

The L1 can fulfil many functions in the L2 classroom, and these have been extensively studied [2], [3], [5], [11]. Bilgin and Rahimi [6] conducted a study that involved interviewing teachers from Turkish universities. They reached a conclusion about the functions, manners, reasons and contributions of CS as it effects the process of English language teaching from the perspective of Turkish universities teachers. The common view of all the instructors was that it serves as a facilitator, since it helps students comprehend the instructions and meanings of new words, as well as fostering their involvement in the learning process within a relaxing environment, providing them with a feeling of relief, by accessing the familiarity offered by the native language.

Sert [8] suggest that the most commonly observed functions of CS are:

- To support grammar instruction;
- To build solidarity and intimate relations with students (creating a supportive language learning environment in the classroom); and
- To repeat information given in the TL (whereby the teacher code switches to the L1 to clarify meaning).

In their research Swain and Lapkin [17] also mention that L1 serves as a tool to helps students understand and make sense of the instructions and content of a task; to focus attention on the language form, vocabulary use, and overall organization; and to establish the tone and nature of their collaboration. They suggest that without the use of L1, the task presented to the students might not have been completed as effectively.

The majority of the above findings of the functions of CS in the classroom, if not all, fall under Canagarajah's [5] two broad categories. He obtained the data for his study through observations of classroom teaching by 24 teachers in Jaffna, and he grouped these functions into two broad categories.

CS for classroom management, that includes: Opening the class, requesting help, managing discipline, teacher encouragement, teacher compliment, teacher commands, teacher admonition, mitigation, pleading, and unofficial interactions.

CS for content transition, this includes: Review, definition, explanation, negotiation of cultural difference, parallel translation, and unofficial student collaboration. Canagarajah [5].

Ferguson [9] also suggests that there are similarities in the study findings, which explore the function of CS in different classroom contexts. He grouped these functions into three broad categories.

Two are the same as that proposed by Canagarajah [5]; there is also CS for curriculum access and CS for classroom discourse management, and the third category added was CS for interpersonal relations: the "classroom is not only a place of formal learning but also a social and affective environment in its own right, one where teachers and pupils negotiate relationships and identities" [9].

It is also relevant to mention here the new concurrent approach, which is a teaching method developed by Rodolpho Jacobson, which also echoes the categorizations proposed by Canagarajah [5]. it helps teachers to balance the use of both languages within a single class; this includes CS when concepts are important, when students are becoming distracted, or when students need to be praised or admonished, and when revising lesson content previously presented in the L1[1]. This approach is believed to be the most fully developed form of bilingual instruction Faltis [21], although it was designed for classes of Spanish children, being taught English.

Conclusions

With respect to all the points mentioned above, it is crucial to stress that teachers should maximize their use of the TL in the language classroom. However, this does not mean that CS impedes language learning; in fact, it can be considered a useful practice during classroom interactions and can serve diverse and useful functions.

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Quality and Innovation in Language Teaching and Learning

"School" Box Office aka "SBO": Pretext and Context for English Learning in Grade 5

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Abstract

Our paper explores solutions to improve English learning among students who transition from elementary to middle school. It is part of a research project initiated at the Institute for Educational Sciences in Bucharest, Romania in the summer of 2017 that aims at promoting innovative practices. The research comprises: an analysis of the new curriculum, the design of learning activities and resources that enhance meaningful learning, the discussion of these innovative tasks within a community of practice, the implementation in two target groups (from rural and urban schools), the interpretation of the results. The research benefits from the participation of a group of young committed practitioners who teach in a variety of schools. Two of these teachers are involved in the actual school implementation while the rest of the group participate in the online discussion and sharing of the experiences. The research design offers a framework of film-based project work that give students opportunities to practice English within engaging contexts. The films are entertaining, rich in positive values and with plenty of pretexts to use and improve English. Students get involved in a search of meaning, discuss characters and events, work in group projects related to the film topic and present their 'product'. Throughout the school year, the two target groups worked on Zootopia (how to adjust to a new place); The Good Dinosaur (how to succeed in harsh circumstances: "You can do it!"), Cinderella (magic, colours and words of wisdom!), Waterhorse (how to deal with unexpected events and friendship), Pete's Dragon (how to reinvent a story! Or a dragon!), Wonder (everybody deserves a standing ovation!). Right before the summer holidays, the students had a meaningful revision and final assessment with the story of Winter (Dolphin Tale). The results are very promising: a lovely atmosphere, students' engagement, good quality projects and, last but not least, improved English!

Keywords: Meaningful learning, creativity, collaboration, English through films, project work, super simple stories

1. Curricular revision and the need for revised practices

Romanian public schools started implementing a new curriculum for middle school in September 2017, beginning with grade 5. One of the main features of this new curricular version is to offer learning opportunities for the development of the key competences [12]. In foreign languages for instance, there is a clear CEFRL-based progression from A1 to A2 between grades 5 and 7; the A2 acquisition is deepened in grade 8 where a few B1 elements are also included. The curriculum stipulates correlations with the other key competences: the most obvious connections are with the social and civic, entrepreneurship, cultural awareness, learning to learn and digital competences [9].

In terms of official provision, the students have a higher chance for solid acquisition, transferable in new situations. Nevertheless, a progressive curricular change is not always a guarantee for success. Romania has had about 25 years of more or less structured revisions, renovations, reforms and new laws of education and little has effectively changed at practice level [7]. The school remains clustered in lots of routines and rhetorics and shows little adaptation to the needs of the contemporary students: While Romanian teachers are more satisfied than other TALIS teachers about their ability to support their students' critical thinking and learning, the Romanian students have among the lowest scores in PISA in the EU! [11], [10]. Demotivated youth cannot find a meaning in learning and tend to distance themselves from school: sometimes they no longer do their homework, sometimes they stop reading and even drop out. A recent study on the state of the arts in the education system highlights discrepancies between urban and rural schools, the latter being disadvantaged from the perspective of school results, teachers' qualification, drop out rate [1]. Also, PISA shows that socio-economic factors are a predictor of school achievement, while macroeconomic indicators and emigration rates show that Romania does not make a lot of progress in the direction of a wellfare state. Is there any chance of improvement then?

The team, who initiated the project presented below, consists of young practitioners who are very committed to make a difference in their students' lives and to reverse the demotivation curve that tends to enlarge the more children advance in school. They teach in a variety of schools: rural disadvantaged community with students at risk, rural in the proximity of the capital, urban in an average area, urban in a well-off neighbourhood, urban in a multicultural community (Romanian, Hungarian and Roma). While trying to address the issue, the team started from the following assumption: If the curricular change is to become real then practices need to adjust and teachers have to shift from teaching a textbook towards teaching groups of students, with individual profiles, levels and expectations.

In the following we shall restrict the presentation to the English component of the research that directly involves two teachers and two groups of students (from a rural disadvantaged community with high drop out risk and an average urban school); the rest of the team came with feedback and planning suggestions.

2. A context for A1 grade 5 students' communication in English

After analysing the curricular provision for grade 5 a few elements have been identified as focal for a sound implementation: listening in order to grasp the overall meaning in familiar/stimulating contexts, reading for orientation in texts containing several paragraphs, participating in familiar discussions around interesting topics, writing short messages to one another that could make sense in a pragmatic way. In a nutshell, the focus is meaningful communication that is often hard to achieve in the class when routines prevail. After all, it is easier to write on the board about when Present Simple is used, to give standard examples and to ask students to make up sentences with the third person singular according to the model in the book. Sometimes textbooks become a hindrance because they create a distance between that frozen culture among the covers and a pretext for genuine "*ad hoc*" communication. From this perspective, without disrespecting the text – which needs to be read and understood – the research team looked for a pre-text (sic!), i.e. a communication frame to shape the real need to develop and understand messages.

We found inspiration in famous – old and more recent – literature: A century ago, Dewey and Ferrière insisted on discovery learning and direct activity of students in order to build up understanding and connect school to life [3]. Closer to our times, Bruner and Gardner highlighted the importance of interactive learning and the benefits of project work for meaningful learning [2], [4]. Also, small-scale Romanian recent studies highlighted that project-work brings about increased engagement and achievement [5], [6], [8].

Our choice was a film-based project, School Box Office (SBO), that allow students to watch films and cartoons as a pre-text and context for genuine communication as well as a generator for imagination. During the first term the teachers selected the appropriate films, whereas during the second one student were invited to pick up something of their choice from a group of trailers. This class selection stimulated their initiative, learning to learn as well as listening skills! It is very interesting to note that despite their socio-economic and geographical differences the two groups of students selected the same films, quite recent ones: Pete's Dragon and Wonder. We can infer that irrespective of their school background the children chose according to the current fashion. Students from rural areas have no opportunities to go to the movies and yet their tastes are up-to-date within the youth sub-culture.

The team members have produced resources (posters for the film project/ a communication aspect, illustrated reading texts about the film events and characters, hand-outs to support reading and writing, ppt-s with screenshots from the film to highlight a variety of language regularities – and to observe grammar in context!); they also provided feedback, shared plans, activity reports and photos from the class activities. Table 1 summarizes the projects that have been carried out.

Table 1: summary of films, main ideas, curricular focus and students'artefacts

Film	Curricular focus	Final project team product
Zootopia (adjusting to a new place)	Giving directions, instructions; daily schedule; general, current activities; simple descriptions	City plan and/or poster for an event to be held in Zootopia or elsewhere
The Good Dinosaur (how to succeed in harsh circumstances)	Expressing ability; instructions; activities, descriptions (characters)	A mural "I can do it" and a trademark sign for excellence
Cinderella (magic, colours, words of wisdom!)	Describing; current activities and questions; instructions	A dress and shoes/a magic scene/a castle
Waterhorse (how to deal with unexpected events and friendship)	Expressing likes and dislikes Telling a simple story (present tense)	SBO award: Best monster/best story/best film etc.
Pete's Dragon (how to reinvent a story or a dragon!)	Telling a simple story (present tense) Describing characters, places Presenting a friend	An illustrated story
Wonder (Everybody deserves a standing ovation)	Describing Presenting (very simple monologue)	Diplomas for everybody in the class
Dolphin's Tale	Revision	List of possible "save the nature" activities to carry out

3. When students get involved with SBO

The students' response to SBO have been positive. Both groups enjoyed the activities. Motivation for the class activities as well as for the home assignments increased. Students' engagement in developing their products has been fantastic. Some artifacts are highly creative and of good quality (see Fig. 1). Communication also improved, with better results in the urban school (75-90% achievement) than in the rural disadvantaged community (30-60%), an outcome that we have expected. Nevertheless, with the coming year we hope to diminish the achievement gap between the two groups.

Fig. 1: Students' products: trade mark for excellence, favourite character, "best monster", new perspectives on Cinderella

4. What's next for SBO?

The team is committed to continue the project. So are the students and their parents. There will be two new grade 5 groups and two grade 6 ones. Grade 5 resources will be updated, grade 6 will involve more choices on behalf of the students. We also plan to give more attention to oral assessment and metacognition. Students will fill in self-assessment grids weekly.

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A Discourse Analysis Study of Comic Words in the American and British Sitcoms

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Abstract

*This paper investigates discourse analysis and its role in studying comic words and their meaning in different contexts. This study aims at showing the relation between discourse analysis and comedy or comic words, presenting the types of comedy and comic words and how they give the meaning of mocking, teasing and sarcasm, presenting the difference between mocking, teasing and sarcasm, displaying interjections and their relation with comic words, in addition to analyzing the data in terms of tables. It is hypothesized that many people do not know the meaning of discourse analysis and comedy. Second, they do not have the capacity to differentiate between comedy, mocking, sarcasm and teasing. They also do not know how to use comic words in expressions. Above all, many of them cannot analyze a particular episode properly and people cannot know the intentions of the speaker concerning comic words. The value of this study is for people who are interested in linguistics. The data used in this study are the American sitcom friends and the British one which is bottom. The theory used for analyzing data is the Cooperative Principle and Taflinger model. There are many questions concerning this study, for instance, is comedy considered as a type of discourse? How many main types of comedy and are they considered as types of comic words? Is there any relation between comedy and discourse? What are comic words and their types? What is the relation between comedy, mocking, teasing and sarcasm? Is there any relation between interjections and comic words? The results of "Friends", the American sitcom and "Bottom", the British one, show that there are many comic words. The characters use interjections or onomatopoeia to communicate laughter and excitement. The use of teasing is also emphasized by the use of other comic words like: a*s, breasts, and idiot for presenting jokes and laughter sense.*

Keywords: discourse analysis, comic words, mocking, teasing and sarcasm

Section One

1. Introduction

1.1 Preliminary Remarks

This paper highlights the correlation between comedy and discourse analysis, or the analysis of comic words in American and British sitcoms. Comedy is considered as a type of discourse that is used for the sake of humor in order to amuse the hearers or the participants in the discourse. It introduces laughter that is characterized as a human behavior which makes humans elucidate their purposes, intentions and opinions in social interaction. Comedy is presented in any medium of entertainment. For instance, theatre, television, film, stand-up comedy, sitcoms, etc.

Many issues are tackled in this study. First, people misunderstand what is meant by discourse analysis, comedy, comic words in specific and the use of comic words in American and British sitcoms. Second, many people do not know how to analyze a piece of discourse and show how the comic words are used. Third, presenting and recognizing comic words are somehow a problematic matter for people, because they sometimes cannot decide the exact use of words or from which type they belong. Moreover, a great number of people may misunderstand the communicative intentions behind saying a specific comic word and they might use such kind of words with the wrong people and wrong situations.

Section Two

2. Discourse Analysis: A Literature Review

2.1 Preliminary Remarks

To begin with, the term discourse is defined by Matthews [1] as any combination of sentences in written form or any series of speech events in which sequential sentences or utterances come together. This term is used for both spoken and written language, or for any model of language used for any study. According to Johnstone [2], discourse, denotes actual patterns of communicative action that is occurred in the medium of language, or it is the “meaningful symbolic behavior”. So, discourse analysis is the analysis of language in use, [3]. Jaworski and Coupland [4] state that discourse analysis falls into three classes: (1) what is beyond the sentence pattern, (2) the use of language, and (3) the variety of social practice and behaviour which consists of instances of language that are non-linguistic and nonspecific.

There is a relation between relevance theory and discourse. Relevance theory concentrates on the connection between meaning and context, both text-external and text-internal context. Discourse analysis adds structure to this connection but focuses on text-internal context. Discourse is not an unorganized mass; it has both structural and conceptual patterns, and readers and hearers use both for the sake of delivering contextual assumption to interpret the text, (ibid).

2.2 Comedy

A comedy can be defined as a work in which the materials are chosen and ordered so as to amuse and interest people: the characters attract the persons’ delighted attention because the latter feels that no disaster will happen and the action is happily done. The term ‘comedy’ is usually applied to plays and the comic form also occurs in narrative poetry and prose fiction. [5]

Laughter creates laughter; this means that a little thoughtless laughter creates thoughtful laughter.

Almost always comedy presents different situations that are more potential, serious, and believable than farce. The laughter of comedy can be “warm laughter” in which people pass through problems with one another. It can also be “corrective laughter” of satire which is directed from a gentle to a savage one. The comedy of ideas uses situations and employs characters to create “thoughtful laughter”. All comedy, as the branches of a tree that are related to the trunk, is related with the sense of humor or comic vision. [6]

2.3 Types of Comedy

There are different main types of comedy that are listed under the comedy type: **Comedy of Errors, Comedy of Manners, Sentimental Comedy, Comedy of Humors, and Farce Comedy**

2.4 Comics

The modern comic artist Chris Ware as mentioned in Cohn [7], states that, “Comics are not a genre, but a developing language.” In fact, comics are a social matter which is created as a result of two human behaviors: writing and drawing. The images that are arranged in a logical order and used in comics shape their own visual language. The term comics is the way of expressing ideas and attitudes by images and usually joined with texts that are frequently characterized for being funny.

Comics by themselves are not a language, but they are written in visual languages such as the ways which novels or magazines are written in English.

Section Three

3. The Adopted Models

The adopted models are so helpful in analyzing the data. In this study, the models used for analysis are the theory of Cooperative Principle which consists of Grice maxims and Taflinger’s Model. These two models are significant in analyzing comic words.

3.1 Grice Maxims’ Model

Grice [8] discusses the cooperative principle which is considered as a guide for communication between two participants within a conversation. He explains four maxims that are existed as a component for any conversation: ***The Quality Maxim, The Quantity Maxim, The Maxims of Relation, and The Maxims of Manner:***

3.2 Taflinger's Model

Taflinger's [9] states the following three elements are required for something to be humorous:

1) **It must appeal to the intellect rather than the emotions;**
2) **The situation and its parts (the actions performed and the dialogue spoken) must be inconsistent or unsuitable to the surrounding or associations;**
3) **It must be perceived by the observer as harmless or painless to the participants.**

Section Four

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Data Collection

The data for analysis is the American sitcom 'friends' and the British one which is 'bottom'. Both of them are chosen as a data for comic words, because they are sitcoms or funny series which are considered as a helpful tool to be dealt with.

4.2 Friends

The American television sitcom 'Friends' is created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman. It is aired from September 22, 1994 to May 6, 2004.

Table 1: The Comic Words and their Categories

Comic word	Category	Meaning	Season	Episode	Line
A*s	Teasing	Bad meaning	1	101	11
Awww	Primary interjections	Disgust	3	321	19
B*****s	Mockery	Shows breasts	1	113	21
breasts	Teasing	-	1	113	26
Huh	Primary interjections	Relief	1	113	39
Idiot	Teasing	Expresses stupidity	3	321	4
oh	Primary interjections	Emotions to pleasure	1	101	8
Oooh	Primary interjections	Emotions to pleasure	1	101	4
Oops	Primary interjections	Astonishment	1	113	7
Precious	Sarcastic	Expresses the opposite	1	101	8
Uhhuh	Primary interjections	understanding	1	113	42
Whoah-whoah	Onomatopoeic word	laugh	1	113	34
Woo-hoo	Onomatopoeic word	Excitement	3	321	22
Wow	Primary interjections	Excitement	3	321	14
Wow	Primary interjections	Excitement	3	321	26

In the American sitcom 'Friends', the results show that there are many comic words. The characters use mostly primary interjections or onomatopoeia (like ooh, oh, oops, whoah-whoah, huh, uhhuh, wow, etc.) to reflect the characterization and the essence of laughter. The use of teasing is also emphasized by the appearance of other comic words like: ass, breasts, and idiot. The purpose behind such appearance is for presenting jokes and laughter sense. There is a use of sarcastic category such as precious to imply an opposite meaning for the sake of amusement. Furthermore, there is a sense of denoting mockery by the use of boobies to depict the spectacle of the unkind laughter or to make fun of someone.

4.2 Bottom

The second sitcom is Bottom which is a British television sitcom produced by Adrian Edmondson and Rik Mayall that originally aired on BBC2 from 17 September 1991 to 10 April 1995 across three series.

Table 2: The Comic Words and their Categories

Comic word	category	Meaning	Season	Episode	Line
Ah	Interjection	Expresses joy	1	1	9
bastard	Secondary interjections	Mocking	2	6	29
Da-la da-la	Sarcasm	laughter	2	6	1
Ha ha ha ha	Onomatopoeic word	Communicates laughter	1	1	3,15
Ha-ha-ha	Onomatopoeic word	laughter	2	6	17
Hoh	Interjection	surprise	1	1	16
Shit	Secondary interjections	-	2	6	4
Shit	Secondary interjections	Violence	2	6	28
stupid	Secondary interjections	Mocking	2	6	29

For the British sitcom 'Bottom', the results exhibit also the frequent use of comic words. Being in the visible scene, the characters use considerably interjections or onomatopoeia such as (ha ha ha ha, ah, hoh, da-la da-la, shit, ha-ha-ha, stupid and bastard) to communicate laughter, humour, and excitement. In addition, the characters use sarcasm to display humorous sense during the episode and the repetition of ha-ha word to communicate laughter.

Section Five

5. Conclusions

5.1 Major Findings

In both sitcoms, "Friends", the American one and "Bottom", the British one, the results show that there are many comic words. The characters use mostly primary interjections or onomatopoeia (like ooh, oh, oops, whoah-whoah, huh, uhhuh, wow, ha ha ha ha, ah, hoh, da-la da-la, shit, ha-ha-ha, stupid and bastard) to communicate laughter, humour, and excitement. The use of teasing is also emphasized by the appearance other comic words like: ass, breasts, and idiot, the purpose behind such appearance is for presenting jokes and laughter sense. In addition to the use of sarcasm to display humorous sense during the episode as "precious" for implying opposite meaning in order to amuse the hearers.

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Applying the Method of Design Thinking in Teaching ESP in the Context of Creative Tourism

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Abstract

Since one of the four objectives of today's education, as defined in the Strategic framework – Education & Training 2020, is to stimulate creativity and innovation, more and more universities have started to apply the method of design thinking (DT), a creative problem-solving approach used mainly in architecture and business. However, the potential of DT can be seen not only in terms of stimulating creative thinking, team-work or problem-solving skills, but also in terms of developing foreign language competences as well as making students more motivated. The present paper offers an insight into the possibilities and the benefits of applying DT in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP), providing the framework of the English lesson focused on the topic of creative tourism. In addition, the pros and cons of the method, based on the experience, are also summarized.

Keywords: English, Design Thinking, Creative Tourism

1. Introduction

Much has been said about the importance of inter-disciplinary, problem-based and creativity-fostering approach in education with respect to the rapidly changing needs of the 21st century society [8], [9]. As proved by several research findings [6], [12], the method of DT, that was originally developed in the USA by a design consulting firm called IDEO specialised in innovation and problem-solving at the end of 1990s, can effectively address this challenge. In education it was firstly introduced by the D-school at Stanford University (USA) [1], according to which DT can be understood as a process of five stages. [5]. *Empathising* teaches students to reveal the real needs of the imagined or potential customers through asking questions or observation. In the phase of *Defining* the participants try to identify the problem, while *Ideating* is about finding solutions to it. *Prototyping*, as the next stage, is about making the best idea concrete using various materials. The last phase, i.e. *Testing*, is about getting feedback from the costumers [6].

The main benefits of this problem-based approach are that it enables students to work successfully in multi-disciplinary teams" [11], forces the members of the groups to listen to each other's opinion and to discuss it, what means that it, undoubtedly, also improves communication skills [6], [12]. These positives have also been expressed by the participants of the workshop organised by the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia, launched as a complementary element of the "Tourism Products" course within the Regional Tourism Bachelor's study programme. What is more, according to the mentors, students were far more active and enthusiastic than in case of traditional teaching methods. Drawing on the success of the mentioned workshop, the method of DT was also piloted within the course of English language for tourism 2 in 2018. The idea of testing the method of DT in FLE has been supported by the action-oriented approach of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment to language learning and teaching [2], since it "views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action".

The syllabi of the given course are concerned with the relevant terminology and issues of the fields most related to tourism, such as gastronomy, hospitality or various types of tourism, for example cultural, health or creative tourism (CT). The topic of the lesson focused on CT, a relatively new field of tourism that is becoming more and more popular abroad in recent times; however, in Slovakia its development is still at a very early stage, even though the potential of this country for developing this type of tourism is extremely high, especially due to the rich cultural heritage and living traditions [7], [10].

The next part of the paper offers a brief description of the framework of the lesson, providing an insight into the phases of DT. In addition, the pros and cons of the method, based on the experience, are also summarised.

2. Applying DT in ESP in the context of creative tourism

The main objective of the lesson was to test whether DT as a teaching method can enhance communication in English and whether it can make the students more active and cooperative. In addition, its potential to help to understand the point of CT, the basic characteristics and expectations of creative tourists, to acquire the relevant vocabulary in the field without any theoretical preparation prior to the lesson, was also tested.

The participants

Participants of the lesson were first-year students of the Regional Tourism Bachelor's study programme and a teacher, who took part in a one-week course of DT in Italy and works as an Associate Professor at the Department of Tourism. The group of the 20 mixed-gender (15 women and 5 men) and mixed-nationality (4 Slovakian, 15 Hungarian and 1 Ukrainian) students was divided into 4 teams.

The framework of the lesson

The framework of the lesson was developed drawing on the Stanford Model [5]. However, certain modifications were made in order to make the task less demanding with respect to the special conditions of the university environment. Hence, the last phase, i.e. testing, which is normally realized before product launch, was omitted. See below a brief description of each stage.

Stage 1: Icebreaking (15 minutes)

The goal was to make the team members able to work together. The task was to create a paper air fleet, making as many paper aeroplanes as possible in ten minutes, using only one arm and at least three different methods.

Stage 2: Empathizing – understanding tourists' needs (30 minutes)

At first students were asked to visit the webpage of Creative Tourism Network [3] to find out information about CT, the most typical activities, the needs and main characteristics of creative tourists. They were also given some links of online dictionaries in case of having problems with the meaning of the words. Then students were informed about the problem, as follows: "*A group of 5 French tourists (aged 20-30) has come to Nitra to spend some days visiting the most important monuments and sights. However, they also want to take part in creative activities. They can only speak English. The task is to offer/create products of CT in Nitra and its surroundings for non-Slovak tourists*".

Each group had four members and a student who played the role of a young French tourist.

Students within each team were asked to divide themselves into two groups. Two of the students had to search for information on the Internet about the possibilities for CT in Nitra and its surroundings in the given field (cooking, painting, etc.). The two other students had to interview the fifth student, i.e., the role-player, about his/her interests and expectations.

Stage 3: Defining the problem (5 minutes)

The groups summarized the information gathered from the Internet and from the interviewed person by answering the W4 questions on a "W4 Board", for example: Who? (e.g., "a young, French tourist"), What? (e.g., "wants to try out pottery"), Why? ("because he wants to spend his free time in a creative way"), Where? (e.g., "in Nitra or its surroundings").

Stage 4: Ideating (20 minutes)

1. Step: Brainstorming (10 minutes)

The members of the group brainstormed on potential solutions to the given problem. Each student wrote on a paper 3 ideas and then these ideas were rotated among members of the group in order to add any ideas that came into their minds.

2. Step: Prioritising (5 minutes)

The list with the ideas was rotated between the team members again and they had to write a "Q", a "B" or a "D" to each idea, while:

Q – was the idea that is impactful but quick to create or implement (e.g. information about the existing creative activities in English language on leaflets in accommodation facilities)*;*
B – the idea unlikely to work, but most breakthrough if it did (e.g. to create a network of entrepreneurs in tourism and hospitality that would offer a variety of creative activities)*;*
D – the idea most likely to delight the people for whom we are designing (e.g. to establish a company/organisation, a creative centre in Nitra that would organize creative activities of different kinds).

3. Step: Deciding on the idea to implement (5 minutes)

Students had 5 minutes to decide on the idea they were going to implement.

Stage 5: Prototyping (10 minutes)

The groups created a prototype of the idea selected in the process of prioritization using their imagination and various materials, (e. g. paper, pencils, plasticine, lego parts, drinking straw, etc.).

Stage 6: Presenting the ideas: 10 min (2 minutes/group)

One of the students from each team presented the prototyped idea/solution.

3. Conclusions

The main objective of the lesson was to test whether the method of DT as a teaching method can enhance communication in English and whether it can make students more active and cooperative.

Based on the observation during the lesson, it might be assumed that the real-life problem-solving approach of the task motivated the students to use English without making them aware of the fact that they were actually completing a communicative task. In addition, in order to reach the goal and to be successful as a team, they were far more cooperative and active than in case of classic role-plays or discussions. What is more, at the end of the lesson some of the students expressed that they enjoyed the lesson and that they would invite more lessons with similar tasks and approach.

Furthermore, it might be said that the method of DT seemed to be appropriate in terms of helping to understand the point of CT, the basic characteristics and the expectations of creative tourists, since the phase of empathising comprised a sort of investigation in the field, searching for information on the Internet using relevant sources and dictionaries. In addition, since they had to work with the basic terminology of CT they had previously found on the given web page, they acquired it naturally and simultaneously with completing the task. It means that the later stages lead to the fixation of the vocabulary that the students discovered on their own in the phase of empathising.

Despite the mentioned pros of applying DT in ESP, it must be outlined that the method works well with students with upper-intermediate or advanced level of English proficiency; however, it might be very demanding and time-consuming with less skilled learners. Similarly, it might turn out very well as a teaching method in case of selected topics, but might not work so well with others.

In summary, based on the experience it may be concluded that DT can be very fascinating and efficient both in terms of enhancing communication and motivation, as well as with regard to the CLIL approach. However, as stressed above, it is advisable that the teacher consider the time limits of the particular stages and the level of difficulty of the topic in question according to the skills and language proficiency of the participants.

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Digital Storytelling in Education and Second Language Acquisition: The State of the Art

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Abstract

Since the early days of civilization, storytelling has been used to share knowledge, values and wisdom from generation to generation. From cave inscriptions to hieroglyphics, to novels and movies, stories have always fascinated mankind and have been adopted as a means to not only preserve traditions and cultures but also to entertain and, in particular, instruct.
Over the past two decades, drastic changes have been experienced in the field of storytelling due to the advent of new media technologies (e.g. computers, smartphone, digital cameras, editing software) that have provided new tools to create and share stories more easily than ever before.
As a consequence, these technological advances have completely changed the way 21st Century students, that are routinely exposed to digital technologies, communicate, interact, process information and learn [16].
By combining traditional storytelling with new digital multimedia, Digital Storytelling (DS) has progressively emerged as a powerful tool in teaching and learning as it provides a vehicle for encouraging on one side learners' motivation, attention, reflection and active learning and, on the other side, for helping teachers in building a constructivist learning environment that foster creative problem solving due to collaboration and peer-to-peer communication [12].
In particular, DS seems to play a fundamental role in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) because, due to the mixing of the textual and the visual, it not only empowers students to develop the necessary language and literacy skills (e.g. speaking, writing, listening and reading) (6) but also it provides them with a strong foundation in what have been defined as "21st Century Skills" [15].
According to these premises, this paper aims to draw a detailed analysis about the use of DS in education, with a particular focus on SLA. It specifically points to its development from its birth in the 1980s to today, how DS has changed over the years, which theoretical framework/concepts are adopted to support its innovative use in education and what are its effects on teaching and learning.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling, Second Language Acquisition, Innovative Learning Environments, 21st Century Skills

1. Introduction

In the late 1980s a performance artist and video producer called Dana Atchley went on a trip with his bus and began to make short narratives of anything he found along the way. This experience evolved into a show called the "Next Exit", where he would sit around a fire, discuss his travels and then show his digital stories [5]. Digital Storytelling was born. Consequently, he started a real "Digital Storytelling Movement" which culminated in the foundation of the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) by Atchley and Joe Lambert in 1993. In 2015 the CDS became simply StoryCenter (SC), a non-profit community arts organization in Berkley (California), that provides training and assistance to people who want to share their personal stories. With its motto of "Listen Deeply, Tell Stories" [5], SC perfectly embodies the idea that digital stories are a fundamental way to examine feelings and beliefs because they expand the story universe by means of different media offering people deep experiences.

2. Defining Digital Storytelling

At its core, DS combines the art of telling stories with a variety of digital multimedia, included recorded audio, video clips, images and/or music. In this way, digital stories allow people to become creative storytellers, developing interactive stories that are typically just a few minutes long (from three to five minutes), have a variety of uses, revolve around a chosen theme and often contain a particular point of view [12].

A pioneer in the field, the British photographer Daniel Meadows states that digital stories are "short, personal multimedia tales told from the heart" [7], that is they are personal stories created by using digital cameras, photos and music that result in short multimedia narratives [17].

On the contrary, Robin [12] has classified digital stories into three categories:

- **Personal narratives**: stories dealing with personal experiences;
- **Historical documentaries**: stories dealing with crucial historical aspects that help people understand past events;
- **Stories designed to inform or instruct**: stories teachers create to explain different instructional material.

2.1 The Elements of Digital Storytelling

The CDS has developed the "Seven Elements of DST" that are generally considered as a starting point in the creation of digital stories: 1. *Point of view*, the purpose of the story and the author's perspective; 2. *A Dramatic Question*, a question designed to maintain the audience's attention and that will be solved at the end of the story; 3. *Emotional Content*, a content that connects the audience to the story; 4. *The Gift of Your Voice*, the personalization of narration to help audience understand the story; 5. *The Power of Soundtrack*, appropriate music or sounds supporting the story; 6. *Economy*, the use of just enough content to avoid overloading the viewer with excessive visuals and/or audio; 7. *Pacing*, the rhythm of the story and how quickly or slowly it is told [17].

However, Robin and Pearson [10] have integrated and expanded the original Seven Elements with some additional items specifically designed to use DST in the classroom: 1. *The Overall Purpose of the Story*; 2. *The Narrator's Point of View*; 3. *A Dramatic Question or Questions*; 4. *The Choice of Content*; 5. *Clarity of Voice*; 6. *Pacing of the Narrative*; 7. *Use of a Meaningful Audio Soundtrack*; 8. *Quality of the Images, Video & other Multimedia Elements*; 9. *Economy of the Story Detail*; 10. *Good Grammar and Language Usage*.

2.2 The 8 Steps of Digital Storytelling

According to Samantha Morra [8], digital stories, in order to be successful, need to: *a.* be personal; *b.* start with the story/script; *c.* be succinct; *d.* use accessible source materials; *e.* make use of universal story items; *f.* allow collaboration at different levels.

To that end, she has developed and described the "Digital Storytelling Process" [8], that is made up of eight steps and should be helpful in the creation of digital stories:

- *Step One: Start with an idea/Write a Proposal*: choose a topic of interest related to personal experiences, historical events, educational material and so on.
- *Step Two: Research/Explore/Learn*: explore and learn about the chosen topic by creating the base for the development of the story.
- *Step Three: Writing the* Script: create a first draft version of the story in order to take ownership of the story itself and know what is worth to convey.
- *Step Four: Storyboard/Plan*: write or represent graphically all the elements of the story (e.g. images, text, music, transitions) ordered in the chronological way in which they will appear in the story, so to organize and revise the content.
- *Step Five: Gather and Create Images/Audio and Video*: choose, create and edit images, audio and video, paying attention to Copyright, Fair Use and Creative Commons.
- *Step Six: Put It All Together*: mix audio, text, video and revise all of the transitions, tone, illustration, visual hierarchy in order for the digital story to be completed.
- *Step Seven: Share*: share online the digital story in order to reach a broader audience.
- *Step Eight: Reflection and Feedback:* reflect on the work created and receive and give constructive and valuable feedback to others.

3. Theoretical Framework supporting DS in Education

As researchers suggest [3, 9] DS could be an effective educational tool only if teachers possess enough knowledge of technology and are able to integrate it into the curriculum. It is for this reason that one of the theoretical foundations of the educational uses of DS is *Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge Theory (TPCK)* according to which teachers should have deep knowledge of how to use technology to motivate students to learn more content via digital multimedia [12].

Furthermore, there are other theories supporting the educational uses of DS:

- the *Narrative paradigm*, as it considers all forms of human communication as stories, perceived as interpretations of aspects of the real world [4];

- *Constructivism:* developed by Piaget, it states that knowledge cannot be transmitted directly to another person because people interpret what they hear according to their experience and knowledge of the world that is acquired by interacting with people and things [1];
- *Constructionism*: developed by Papert, it affirms that learning takes place in a contest where people are actively engaged in constructing external artifacts, such as digital stories. Indeed, social constructionism considers the manipulation of digital technologies as crucial to the acquisition of new knowledge because, by constructing personal artifacts, people improve self-reflection and collaboration [16];
- *Cognitivism* emphasizes the role of the environment in facilitating the learning process, conceived as a dynamic process because created by the learners themselves [14];
- *Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning* by Richard Mayer whose major assumptions are that learning is an active process of selecting, organizing and integrating different content and that "people learn more deeply from words and pictures than from words alone" [6];
- *Cooperative Learning Theory* because, as DS fosters collaboration while managing to reduce competition between students, it perfectly embodies the idea of peer-to-peer education, that is a group working together in order to reach the same goal;
- *Neuroscience* and *neuropsychology* have demonstrated the active role played by storytelling on our long-term memory, in particular in the process of retaining and recalling information: as with DS students are actively engaged in the construction of their own knowledge, they are better able to improve their thinking and imaginative skills [13].

4. DS in Education and Second Language Acquisition

The early use of DS in education was as a self-reflection tool aiming to reconstruct the identities of the communities [16].

Today, the advent of Web 2.0 technology has drastically changed the learning environment, which is now characterized by easy access to an abundance of information, readily-available emerging technologies and the possibility to collaborate in a simple and productive way.

Consequently, researchers and educators have found themselves in the need of equipping learners with the skills required for 21st century citizenship because, as recent literature acknowledges [11], although today's learners live in a technologically-suffused world, they do not possess what Ohler calls the "media grammar", that is the ability to meaningfully apply technology to improve learning outcomes [9]. Therefore, the Partnership for 21st century learning [15] has developed a framework of the skills today's students need to acquire, focusing in particular on the development of critical thinking, learning motivation and information literacy.

According to Brown, Bryan and Brown [2], DS provides the development of what they have defined as "21st Century Skills": 1. *Digital Literacy*, the ability to communicate in an ever-changing society by gathering information, discussing issues and seeking help; 2. *Global Literacy*, the capacity to read, interpret and contextualize information from the global community; 3. *Visual Literacy*, the ability to understand, create and communicate by using visual elements; 4. *Technology Literacy*, the ability to use computers and other technological devices to improve learning, productivity and performance; 5. *Information Literacy*, the ability to find, evaluate and synthesize information [11]. In fact, researchers [9, 12] have demonstrated that, by creating their own digital stories, students develop and improve their literacy and academic skills because, by following the DS Process, they find themselves involved in what Lambert calls "the media-production process" [5], a process that consists in creating, editing and sharing original work.

In terms of SLA, the acquisition of these skills could make students improve, on one side, on content understanding while developing [11]: 1. *Research and Planning skills* because, by researching on a particular topic, they generate ideas, questions and also gather and evaluate data from different kind of sources; 2. *Writing skills*, because struggling in defining the topic, students gain more awareness of purpose, structure and form of the story; *Organization skills*, because due to storyboarding they learn how to manage the sources, the time it takes to complete the story and reflect on how to improve weaker elements of the narration; *Problem-solving skills*, because, in order to be concise and create a good, interesting story, students learn to make decisions by critically overcoming possible obstacles; *Technology skills*, as they learn how to use not only digital cameras, but also music, video and photo-editing software; *Presentation skills*, as students face the challenge of how to best present the story to their audience, which involves critical thinking and interpretation skills in order to be persuasive; *Interpersonal skills*, because, when working in groups, learners foster self-confidence and collaboration while at the same time reduce competition by guiding their efforts towards the same goal; *Interview and Assessment skills*, as students learn how to find remarkable questions to ask and gain expertise in evaluating and critiquing their own and other's work.

In particular, researchers in SLA [3] have demonstrated that DS is powerful in fostering vocabulary acquisition because the acts of choosing a topic and conducting research together with the repetition of words and phrases help learners collect and retain even difficult content. Finally, the combination between oral and written information and non-verbal and non-written information allows L2 learners to experiment with language at a very early stage, improving their skills through the discussion and collaboration with their peers.

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Educating the Language Learner as a Cultural Mediator in the English Classroom

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Abstract

Developing mediation education though a FL is a new challenge facing ELT methodology and to meet this challenge we need to have a clear methodological vision of how the learner becomes able to act as a mediator in the world where English is a lingua franca. This paper looks at different types of mediation in English from the perspectives of the globalized cooperation and communication in our culturally diverse world, it gives an insight into major sociocultural roles that the learner is expected to act out in real life with the view to the level of his language command. Among these roles are: a) a cultural casual observer (A1+), b) a communicative ethnographer (A2), c) a cross-cultural collaborator (B1l, d) a cross-cultural mediator (B2), e) an intercultural mediator (C1) and f) a pluricultural mediator (C2). The paper gives a methodological vision of mediation in English as a communication mode in the context of the dialogue of cultures and civilizations, specifies methodological parameters for describing each of the sociocultural roles that the learner should be able to fulfill in academic intercultural communication. The paper ends by listing graded problem-solving activities for developing the English learner as a pluricultural mediator.

Keywords: mediation education, sociocultural roles, ELT, CEFR

1. Introduction

Nowadays modern issues relating to mediation education, training and evaluation have become widely discussed in the fields of law, business, education, social workers and medicine education, linguistics & literature and many contributions to the development of general theory of mediation methodology and innovative practices through a mother tongue [Honeyman, 2007; Pel, 2008; Shapira, 2016; Waldman, 2011]. As far as the FLT field is concerned, it was only in “The Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, teaching, assessment” that language educators’ attention was drawn to the concept of mediation as a mode communication to be taught and assessed in the FL classroom [2001: 87-88]. Much later the “CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors” has introduced 15 multi-level scales for mediation, including scales for measuring the learner’s skills in mediating a text, mediating concepts and mediating communication [Council of Europe, 2018]. Though these scales give us some teaching ideas about what mediation activities are to be taught and assessed, the methodology of teaching mediation through a foreign language /FL/ is far from having been developed, especially with reference to the three-cycle system of higher education. In other words, developing mediation education though a FL is a new challenge facing ELT methodology. But can we respond to this challenge without specifying mediation objectives for each cycle of higher education? What may be the learner’s way to becoming an efficient mediator in a FL in his/her professional/academic communication? This paper looks at different types of mediation in English from the perspectives of the globalized cooperation and communication in our culturally diverse world, sociocultural context of FLT & FLL, and the major sociocultural roles that can be introduced in the process of developing language learners’ powers in English language teaching with a view to their level of communicative language competence.

2. Literature Review of the works on mediation education

In FLT methodology mediation has been conceptualized in terms of one of (communicative) language activities added to perception, interaction and production [Council of Europe, 2001].

Mediation activities through a foreign language may be bilingual (involving translation or interpretation), or they may be monolingual (if a mediator uses his foreign language repertoire, sociocultural knowledge and skills to help other participants of intercultural communication understand each other better and co-operate more efficiently, being involved in their team work. In Europe it has been already reached a consensus on the following: "In mediation, the user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation). The focus is on the role of language in processes like creating the space and conditions for communicating and/or learning, collaborating to construct new meaning, encouraging others to construct or understand new meaning, and passing on new information in an appropriate form. The context can be social, pedagogic, cultural, linguistic or professional" [Council of Europe, 2018:103].

The 2001 CEFR Publication mentioned above has given rise to a number of researches relating to mediation in FLT and among the most important research results were such as: a) the conceptualization of the notions of cultural mediation (Zarate, 2004), cross-cultural mediation (Stathopoulou, 2015); b) the definition of cultural mediator as a social agent (Zarate, 2004) c) approaches to the design of mediation tasks answering the needs of intercultural education through FLT & ELL (Zarate, 2004); d) mediation assessment tools (Dendrinos, 2014; Stathopoulou, 2015). Nonetheless, the results of the gap analysis of these works have clearly demonstrated that:

1) Most of the FLT researches are mostly related to secondary school education (see, e.g., Coste & Cavalli, 2015; Zarate, *et al*., 2004; Gómez Parra, 2009; Cheng, 2011) and much less attention is given to teaching mediation in tertiary language education.
2) There has been an evident gap between what has been done in the FLT field of mediation assessment & the lack of *multi-level* syllabuses & teaching materials specifically designed for developing the university learner as a cultural mediator.
3) Rather often, the theoretical framework for teaching mediation neglects the sociocultural context of contemporary language education and the specific characteristics of learning environments in which a particular FL is studied.

In order to bridge some of these FLT gaps in the field of ELT, it seems reasonable to give an additional clarification of the notions of mediation and mediator, taking into consideration today's social status of English and its didactic potential as a university subject to develop step-by-step university FL students' mediation powers.

3. Discussion

3.1 Mediation & Cultural Mediators as ELT Didactic Concepts

The definition given in the "CEFR/CV" [2018] is purposefully a language neutral and that is why it needs a further clarification with the view to the social status of a FL, its functions & values as a means of modern intercultural communication. The fact that English, being nowadays a lingua franca, is more used in intercultural communication as a means of communicating with non-native speakers (pluricultural settings) than with native speakers (in cross-cultural settings) speaks for the necessity of educating English learners to act out not only as cross-cultural, but pluricultural mediators as well.

With English as a lingua franca in mind, and on the basis of interlinking such concepts as *mediation* [Council of Europe, 2018], *dialogue of cultures* [Kagan, 1988: 213-215] and *intercultural dialogue* [White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living Together As Equals in Dignity", 2009:17], communicative & cognitive activities performed by a pluricultural mediator in English should aim at creating intercultural communicative space for: a) an open and respectful exchange of views in English between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, geopolitical views; b) developing the-dialogue-of-cultures model of perception, production and interaction in pluricultural settings of communication by promoting respect to different cultural and language communities & fostering equality, human dignity and a sense of common purpose between intercultural speakers/writers; c) helping people feel comfortable, free and willing to express themselves in a FL and to demonstrate their art of listening to others, d) developing a deeper understanding of diverse worldviews and cultural practices, e) making international co-operation between intercultural speakers mutually beneficial, clear and purposeful.

An effective pluricultural mediator is thought to be able to: a) act as pluricultural intermediary between culturally different interlocutors, helping them to overcome sociocultural barriers & cultural prejudices and to destroy cultural stereotypes; b) create comfortable pluricultural space for interlocutors from different ethnic/national, regional, religious, geopolitical communities and social subcultures in order to let them interact & cooperate fully; c) use communicatively appropriate pluricultural repertoire [Council of Europe, 2018] and exploit it with ease in pluricultural situations of academic, business, professional and science communication.

It seems that this rather a sophisticated and complicated social role of the pluricultural mediator can hardly be acted properly if s/he has not deliberately chosen intercultural dialogue as his/her own life style and the language level is lower than C1. But does it mean that university language leaners' mediation skills are to be developed only when they have already reached B2 level in English? I am afraid, there is no simple answer to the question.

3.2 Developing university students' mediation powers in English

The 2013-2015 interdisciplinary analysis of data on sociocultural roles that 100 Russian learners from Lomosov Moscow State University with different language levels of English were able to fulfill in intercultural environments cast a new light on the didactic hierarchy of sociocultural roles that may be introduced into language courses in order to develop language learners' mediation powers. It includes:

a) a casual cultural observer at A1+ level,
b) a communicative ethnographer at A2 level,
c) a cross-cultural collaborator at B1 level,
d) a cross-cultural mediator at B2 level,
e) an intercultural mediator at C1 level
f) a pluricultural mediator at C2 level.

There are three stages in introducing these roles for the didactic purposes in ELT. Firstly, each of the sociocultural roles is didactically characterized in terms of:

- spheres of intercultural communication (everyday communication at A1-A2 levels, academic or business communication at B1-C1 levels and science communication at C1-C2 levels) and communicative events typical of them;
- the world of Englishes involved in communication events (Standard BE or Standard AE for Elementary Language User, European English for Basic User, the Outer circle of English for C1 language User and the Expanding circle of English for C2 language User);
- learning activities (pre-mediating or mediating communicative and cognitive activities).

Second, these sociocultural roles are didactically described in terms of mediating knowledge and skills (such as information skills, interpreting skills, behavioral verbal and nonverbal skills, relational and reflective skills) relating to a particular sphere of intercultural communication that is of a special educational focus in a particular learning environment. And, finally, a series of tasks have been designed, starting with ICT cross-cultural or pluricultural tests and quizzes, profile-oriented problem-solving tasks based on the YouTube materials, cross-cultural/pluricultural communicative & cognitive reflexive tasks, cross-cultural/pluricultural simulations and case-studies, intercultural discussions and debates.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that a sociocultural approach to developing the mediation powers of FL learners through graded tasks that involve them into practicing different sociocultural roles (typical of academic and/or professional intercultural communication) is an attempt to establish a theoretical framework for teaching mediation in Russian universities and not only. And It provides a basis for designing graded tests for measuring university students' macro- & micro skills (needed to mediators) within the international project "Developing a Multicultural Pedagogical Package of Evaluation Materials for Assessing University Students' Academic Mediation Skills", that has started in June 2018.

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Good Practice Blended Learning & Flipping the Classroom in Foreign Language Education

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Abstract

Today, business-related higher education in Belgium has to deal with a complex situation in foreign language education, and specifically for French. First, we see how the general level of incoming students decreases every year. Often, first-year students barely achieve level A2 at the start of their higher-education studies, where the expected level is at least B1. Even though French is the second foreign language in Flanders (Dutch speaking part of Belgium), and children are introduced to the beautiful French language when they are 10 years old, today's students are barely motivated to learn and speak French. They assume they can solve everything with English, which is absolute nonsense considering the bilingual context of Belgium. Further, we notice a growing influx of foreign students (e.g., from the Netherlands), and these students often have little or no basic knowledge of the French language. But in this group, we also find bilingual students with French as first or second language. The significant discrepancy between the different language levels of the students causes traditional education and classical teaching methods to fail, as there is always a specific group of students who are insufficiently supported or challenged and thus drop out. Up to about two years ago, we used to focus on the average students, but we were often criticised by French-speaking students, who found the lessons to be uninteresting, not challenging enough and lacking in quality. From the professional field we received feedback that the French language level of our graduating students was insufficient. As a result, many students did not qualify for certain jobs, even though they had the right diploma. As a motivated and passionate French lecturer, these past few years I have been looking for methods to deal with the linguistic diversity in my class groups and to support and coach every student individually to help them achieve a higher level. Thus, blended learning and flipping the classroom became the basic principles of my approach. With these two principles, I was able to make my lessons interactive, motivating, authentic, language-supportive, self-guiding and talent-creating.

Keywords: Blended learning, flipping the classroom, Foreign language education, e-learning, French

1. Introduction

Over the past five years, French lecturers at Artevelde University College (Ghent) have been confronted with three challenges. The first challenge is the high degree of heterogeneity in the mastery of the basic French language (knowledge and skills). Secondly, the lecturers have witnessed an increasingly higher level of absenteeism. The last problem is the low success rate at the end of the course. To address these issues, the teachers team looked for innovative ways to increase differentiation among students, to raise self-direction and to stimulate spontaneous use of their foreign language skills during contact hours. Under my guidance, French lecturers teaching within the field of Office Management took on the challenge of redesigning the course of second-year students. Even though there is still considerable debate about the benefits and impact of the educational concept of ‘blended learning’ and ‘flipping the classroom’, this team succeeded in increasing the language skills and the attendance considerably. Preliminary results show a positive effect on the success rate, but further study is needed.

This paper will firstly analyse the initial challenge with which the French lecturers were confronted in previous academic years. Secondly, the paper will describe the new approach adopted in the French course ‘Communication professionnelle 2’, as well as the specific teaching methods that are student-centred and based on flipping the classroom.

2. The initial challenge

Nowadays, business-related higher education in Belgium has to deal with a complex situation in foreign language education, and specifically for French. First, we see how the general level of incoming students decreases every year. French is the first foreign language in Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium, and children are introduced to the French language when they are 10 years old. Nevertheless, students are barely motivated to learn and speak French. Neglecting the bilingual context of Belgium, in which the French language has an official position that equals Dutch, Belgian students assume that English is the *lingua franca* of the 21th century and thus the only language that really matters. More than half of first-year students barely achieve level A2 at the start of their higher-education studies, whereas the expected level is at least B1.

Furthermore, our department notices a fast-growing influx of foreign students, for example from the Netherlands, because of the Belgian low entry fees in higher education. Even though those international incoming students are highly valued and more than welcome at Artevelde University College, the limited or absent basic knowledge of the French language causes a significant discrepancy in a student group already characterised by a difference in language level.

This discrepancy between the different language levels causes traditional education and classical teaching methods to fail, as there is always a specific group of students who are insufficiently supported or challenged. In addition to this, there was also the problem of the practical organization of the courses: class groups of minimum forty students take this course at a weekly ratio of 3 hours in a row. First, the large groups did not allow a lot of oral practice. Presentations had to be rushed and only confident students dared to take the opportunity to speak French during a spontaneous oral exercise.

Neither did the practical organization of the courses leave enough room for individual writing practice. Students always had to work at least in pairs, in order to maintain an acceptable amount of correction work for the lecturer. However, pair work has of course its own disadvantages and does not allow lecturers to give individual feedback, which students really desire.

3. A blended learning and flipped classroom model

Our traditional foreign language education faced a vicious circle, leading to unmotivated and\or frustrated students who stopped attending classes and risked failing the courses. The initial challenge described above encouraged the lecturers to remodel the course. The first step in this process was the transition into a blended learning and flipping the classroom approach, which allows a more student-centred approach. The lecturers created learning paths integrating vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension and reading comprehension exercises based on existing and newly developed materials.

Introducing these obligatory learning paths in the course ‘Communication professionnelle 2’ was a unanimous decision of the French lecturers’ team.

During classes, more in-depth exercises and activities are linked to the digital preparations, necessitating the thorough understanding and preparation of the digital paths. The Edumatic platform offers a track-and-trace system, thereby giving the lecturer the opportunity to check what the students exactly did on the digital paths and how they performed during the exercises. The lesson schedule clearly indicates which digital paths should be completed for each course, enabling students to prepare each course individually and at their own pace. Students who did not prepare the digitalised exercises are not allowed to attend class and are sent to the media library to finish their preparations.

In compensation for the additional preparation’s students have to do outside the classroom, the lecturers give the same course of 1.5 hours two times by splitting the class group into two smaller groups of 20-25 students. This new approach implies that the lecturers still teach three hours per class group, but that students have 1.5 hours of preparation at home and only attend a weekly course of 1.5 hours. Working in smaller groups allows the French lecturers to teach in a student-centred and interactive manner.

Under my direction, the French lecturers team remodelled the classical courses into workshops and conversation tables. In this stimulating and safe atmosphere, students are invited to continuously improve their French competences. Depending on the exercise, students are offered immediate individual feedback on their performance or receive a general overview of frequently made oral and written mistakes. We also introduced guest speakers, to train not only the students’ ear to real-world spoken French, but also their notetaking skills.

4. Preliminary results

The implementation of learning paths and the transition from a classical teaching method to a student-centred and interactive style took place in the academic year 2017-2018. Because of this recent paradigm shift, data collection is still ongoing, which means that a profound study using statistical analyses of the success rate is not yet possible. However, the teachers team noticed a considerably increasing attendance of well-prepared students, who were looking forward to improving their language skills during class. Also, the lecturers experienced more prepared and motivated students during their course. Furthermore, a strong correlation was discovered between the prepared learning paths, the more in-depth interactive exercises during class and the students' score on these topics at the final exam.

In the next couple of years, considerable attention will be devoted to learning analytics. This will allow us to draw specific conclusions about findings collected within a three- to-five-year period. Not only will we focus on confirming preliminary results mentioned above, but also in finding correlations between thorough preparations of the digital paths, class attendance and success rate for the final exam. During this analysis, we will also evaluate the relation between productive (speaking and writing) and receptive (reading and listening) competences. In order to confirm the effectiveness of this innovative teaching approach, success rates of previous years will also have to be compared with that of the following years.

Further research is also needed to determine how students and lecturers perceive this type of educational innovation. In the first place, we will need to question the students on how they feel about the introduction of the learning paths and novel teaching methods. Additionally, we will have to explore how we can improve the mentoring towards self-directed education. Furthermore, we will have to survey how we can create autonomous and agile students who are not only ready for the second-year courses, but also for the 21st century job market. Secondly, it is essential to make an inventory of the lecturers' needs and hurdles. Indeed, the transition from classical teaching methods to a blended and flipping the classroom approach also has repercussions for the lecturers in question. To meet their specific needs, train-the-trainer workshops could be organized. Finally, it is our goal to receive valuable input and feedback from other programmes and international partners.

It has become clear that the French lecturers team felt the need to address three important issues, namely the heterogeneity, the high level of absenteeism and the low scores. The introduction of adequate teaching and learning paradigms does not happen overnight. On the contrary, it is a part of a continuous process of quantitative and qualitative research involving students, lecturers and the international community.

Innovative Language Learning through Thematic Learning Modules and the Incorporation of ICT

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Abstract

The demand for innovative language learning and teaching across the globe is at the forefront of trends in education and dominates academic discussions. The application and impact of Information Communication Technology (ICT) significantly contributes to curriculum development changes at public schools and universities as they reassess their goals and reinvigorate the curriculum related to content knowledge and language learning. The development of thematic learning modules encourages students to acquire knowledge and make connections through a common theme drawing from real world experiences. By integrating content and engaging students simultaneously in literacy and language learning, students are able to explore and expand their knowledge through creative resources. This presentation/publication focuses on constructing a framework for thematic learning modules that addresses course redesign incorporating essential content and ICT. Language learning is achieved along with conceptual understanding as students engage in the instruction and activities. Unit and lesson design as well as pedagogical input accompanying the learning activities is strengthened through meaningful student and teacher engagement as well as integrated language learning. Comprehensible input is expanded and students acquire discipline specific language and interaction skills as they collaborate with peers. Creative examples of thematic learning modules are provided specifically related to science and the environment. A wide variety of web-based resources are available that include valuable information for educators and students. Integrated language learning and ICT accompanies numerous thematic frameworks, and the curriculum and instructional materials are available in multiple languages. Among the examples provided is a collection of integrated lessons and resources in the sciences. By engaging a community of learners in a thematic curriculum of teaching and learning that integrates ICT and language learning, students are motivated and challenged to high ideals and positive outcomes.

Keywords: Thematic, modules, integrated learning, ICT

1. Introduction

English language learners are confronting an increasingly challenging environment as they strive to develop knowledge to meet the competing demands of language acquisition on one hand and gain essential content on the other. Curriculum development to address these demands and focus on engaging students dominates instructional conversations and the pursuit of pedagogical input.

Moreover, communication and discipline specific language skills are simultaneously confronted with the increasing need to acquire skills in academic and occupational arenas in order to be a competitive member of the global economy. Learning mechanisms are further supported yet also challenged by diverging pathways between language acquisition, content knowledge and the impact of technology, and it is crucial to recognize the interrelatedness of language, culture and content. ICT tools are increasingly incorporated in the field of education and particularly in language learning to strengthen teaching and incorporate a wide range of curriculum materials and methods resulting in effective instruction and transformative action.

Thematic learning modules organize the curriculum around macro themes and integrate basic disciplines such as math and science with the exploration of a broad subject [1]. Among the key reasons supporting the use of thematic units are demonstrating the interdisciplinary nature of learning, making use of collaborative and cooperative learning, encouraging the learner to focus on the mastery of objectives, model the resources used in research, making the learner focus on the mastery of objectives, and encouraging the effective use of technology [2].

2. A framework for thematic learning modules

Thematic learning modules focus on the instructional method of selecting a theme and focusing on a variety of concepts incorporating interdisciplinary and integrative teaching. Doda and Springer [3] emphasize the importance of “conversations in ever-widening circles that continue to substantiate the need for interdisciplinary approaches.” They support the need for curricula that move beyond familiarity with information to the levels of application and analysis of knowledge [4]. Professors at the University of Washington and the University of New Mexico received funding to develop an Integrated Environmental Health Middle School Project to train educators to plan, implement, and assess projects [5] and provides a number of examples integrated learning modules [6].

When developing a framework for thematic learning modules the key steps include [7]:

1) Determining a theme;
2) Integrating the theme with the existing curriculum;
3) Designing instruction and co-curricular plans;
4) Group activities and discussion.

The themes for units can be developed by educators or students but should be integrated across the curriculum and serve as a lens to understand and examine content while generating provocative questions presented from a multi-discipline perspective [8]. Themes for the integrated learning modules should ideally be selected for relevance and interest to the students, by addressing a topic that is either of global interest to all learners or focused on a topic of local or regional environmental interest that the students can identify and self-relate to their own circumstances, for example local environmental issues impacting the students’ own health [6]. This strategy also lends itself well to the opportunity to analyze relevant research and its implications at the students’ appropriate level of understanding while exploring and expanding knowledge. This concept also blends well with the curriculum presented with the interdisciplinary approaches of Problem-based and Project-based learning. Students who are multilingual and English language learners are also able to successfully engage in thematic learning modules that incorporate reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.

ICT has a strong impact on engaging these students as they endeavor to succeed in both content and language learning. What follows are examples from the science field on successful thematic learning projects.

3. Examples of learning activities and examples of thematic learning modules containing integrated resources and lessons in math, language arts, social sciences and STEM:

The University of Washington and University of New Mexico developed a structured ‘how to teachers manual’ for K-12 teachers to develop their own integrated learning projects, and offers Tools for teaches which provide a step-by-step program ‘HEART Manual’ for developing their own environmental health related research projects relevant to the local students, accompanied by structured hands on student activities, sample lesson plans and worksheets to guide students as they develop research projects as well as many resources for teachers to assist them in developing locally relevant integrated learning modules [5, 6]. Three integrated learning modules employing Asthma, Diabetes or Lead as health-related and student relevant topics combine coherent leaning modules in social studies, language arts, math and environmental sciences, as well as other similar teacher resources are available for download by teachers [6].

Georgia Gwinnett College has developed thematic learning modules for introductory biology courses in a wide range of topics including the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Sustainable Agriculture, the Exploration of the Human Brain, Biodiversity, Nutrition, and the Study of Sexually Transmitted Diseases in order to enhance the tractability of content and share general biology topic themes in a way that is relative and interesting, particularly for our general curriculum students that are not anticipating a career in the STEM fields. The Science Education Alliance in partnership with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) has also introduced a Phage Hunters Advancing Genomics and Evolutionary Sciences (PHAGES) Project that has been incredibly valuable as a theme for students to learn about introductory immunology and microbiology in introductory biology classes [9].

These themes allow instructors to play to their strengths and passions in content areas while providing students with exposure to specialized areas within different science disciplines in order to promote lifelong learning and interest. Thematic learning modules have also been used to integrate and unify content across the disciplines of science and chemistry.

Thematic modules are also used broadly in relation to study abroad and domestic field study opportunities. These modules include the use of conservation biology and natural history to integrate courses in botany, biology, and calculus or conservation biology and Spanish to deepen the richness of the field experience and increase retention of knowledge. Students who participate in these experiences report that this holistic approach to the educational experience is challenging, fun, and rewarding.

At the upper elementary and middle grade level, educators focused on Eco-Inquiry addressing ecological learning experiences for students. This type of "whole science" curriculum embedded hands-on science within thematic multi-dimensional learning experiences. The three modules that were utilized for this age group focused on food webs, decomposition, and nutrient cycling. These four to seven-week modules featured student research teams that conducted investigations, peer reviews, and sharing of ideas and findings [10].

Any relevant area of study can be expanded to cover a broad range of comprehensive information based on thematic instruction and creativity. Innovative opportunities abound in numerous subject areas that will engage and actively involve students in pursuit of higher-level thinking skills. Creative educators are capable of incorporating various learning styles and teaching practices for effective educational accomplishments and the acquisition of language and content knowledge simultaneously.

These learning opportunities when well developed will achieve positive outcomes and meet expected standards and enhance expectations.

4. Conclusions

There are significant advantages to the incorporation of thematic learning modules for both ICT and content-based instruction. The examples described above represent a limited sample of the numerous opportunities for integrated learning realizing these activities and well-designed modules. Integration of thematic modules supports language learning, crucial STEM engagement, as well as the acquisition of knowledge across the curriculum. As educators redesign their curriculum to focus on web based and thematic modules designed to strengthen student engagement and learning, knowledge is acquired resulting in positive learning outcomes that confront current macro level ideas. Meaningful and purposeful thematic learning modules will lead to additional learning experiences in a variety of modalities that will connect both language and content knowledge. These include opportunity to denote the need to integrate subjects learned, particularly STEM, across broad questions, issues or topics, as well as offering students the implicit answers to the "why?" and "what for?" questions frequently encountered in STEM and social studies instruction. Further research is recommended to explore the effectiveness of thematic learning modules and their benefits to both educators and students. As connections are made between these modules and curriculum development designed to focus on crucial pedagogical strategies, knowledge will be gained to meet the competing demands on education within our increasingly complex global society.

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The Effect of Tablets on the Acquisition of Semantic Relationships within the Community of Lexical Inquiry

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Abstract

This study introduces a multimodal approach of teaching and learning semantic relationships at the elementary level. This approach is called the Community for Lexical Inquiry (CLI). The paper compares results of an experiment in which the CLI approach was tested in a classroom setting using two groups: one that used paper as their medium for creating the heuristic lexical cards which are part of this approach, and another that used an interactive whiteboard application on a tablet for the same purpose. The question asked is: does the medium used (tablet or paper) influence the acquisition of semantic relationships? Quantitative results indicate that using an interactive whiteboard application on a tablet to create heuristic lexical cards does not have an effect on semantic relationship acquisition. However, qualitative results mention that the tablet's interactive whiteboard encourages students to verbalize their strategies while completing their heuristic lexical cards, and that this facilitates their acquisition of thematic words. After four cycles of the CLI approach, the average of both groups improved.

Keywords: vocabulary teaching, lexical learning, multimodality, tablets

1. Introduction

The Community of Lexical Inquiry (CLI) is a dialogic, multimodal approach for teaching and learning semantic relationships (synonyms, antonyms, word families and thematic words). One aspect of the CLI approach involves the creation of heuristic lexical cards, either on paper or on tablet using an interactive whiteboard application. The objective of this study is to compare the impact of the medium (paper or tablet) used to create these heuristic lexical cards on the acquisition of semantic relationships.

2. Theoretical Framework

The CLI's name and didactic approach are inspired by the Community of Philosophical Inquiry pedagogic model (CPI) [1]. The term "community of inquiry" refers to the fostering of curiosity towards words, to the shared discovery of new words, and to an investigative approach for finding the meanings of words by and for the students.

2.1 Discursive approaches to vocabulary teaching

The CLI's discursive approach was developed with consideration to, among others, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of interactions [2] and Plane and Lafourcade's focus on semantic development [3].

2.2 Cognitive science research into multimodality

Multimodal teaching methods (visual, tactile, and oral) has been shown within cognitive science to be a positive reinforcement for language learning as compared to monomodal methods [4], [5] and was thus chosen to be integrated into the CLI's approach.

3. The Community of Lexical Inquiry (CLI) approach

The complete CLI material is available and exemplified with videos at http://www.uqac.ca/crl.
In summary, the Community of Lexical Inquiry comprises five steps:

3.1 Philosophical discussion about the meaning of a word and active listening to words

A word is introduced by the teacher in an engaging way, for example by showing a video about a scientific experiment and asking about the meaning of the word "research". A discussion begins about this word naturally and the concept of relationships between words is introduced, for example, "Does anyone know a word that is the opposite of research?". Sharing ideas and listening to other students is encouraged.

3.2 Collaborative analysis of the definition of a word

After the discussion on the meanings of the word, students develop their own definitions by themselves, in pairs, and in groups before looking up the definition in a dictionary. If relevant, there can be a critical analysis of the difference between the dictionary definition of the word and the definitions that the students developed.

3.3 Modelling lexical strategies

In this step, explicit lexical strategies are introduced to establish the semantic relationships between the words used during the discussion. The teacher models these strategies using a lexical decision tree (see http://www.uqac.ca/crl/index.php/etape-3/).

3.4 Completing the heuristic lexical card

In the fourth step, students complete a heuristic lexical card using the words discussed (see http://www.uqac.ca/crl/index.php/etape-4/). This can be done either on paper or by using an interactive whiteboard application on a tablet. This application consists of a blank whiteboard where students can add images, text and can record their voice to explain their process. Students refer to the lexical decision tree document during this phase to help guide their reasoning.

3.5 Collaborative dialogue about semantic relationships

The final step of the method is the collaborative dialogue. Here, students share their investigations into semantic relationships, justify their approach, explain their reasoning, and modify and/or complete their heuristic lexical cards.

The question asked by this study relates to step 3.4 of the CRI approaches: does the medium used (paper or tablet) when completing the heuristic lexical card have an effect on the acquisition of semantic relationships?

4. Methodology

4.1 Context and participants in the research project

The research took place in an elementary school in Montreal, in the province of Québec, in Canada. Though the school is located in a context of a French-speaking majority, the student population consists of multi-ethnic and multilingual families. Two classes were selected with the help of teachers who responded to the invitation to participate. Two sub-groups were created, separated by the medium used during the study: 31 students (paper group) and 32 students (tablet group).

4.2 Data collection

Before and after the CLI approach, the "Word Families 2" subtest, which is part of the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals program (CELF), was used to evaluate students' skill at understanding and explaining the logical relationships between semantically associated words. Two mixed analysis models of distinct variance were used to compare the medium used (IV) and semantic relationships acquisition (DV) at pretest and posttest.

A score was assigned to each of the lexical heuristic cards completed at the end of the second, the fourth and the sixth CLI. An independent correlation structure was used to model the correlation between the semantic relationship scores at three analysis times ("CLI2", "CLI4" and "CLI6") in order to compare the effect of VI when completing the heuristic lexical cards on VD.

Qualitative data were also collected during partially-guided interviews with each of the students and two teachers to discuss their learning-teaching experiences. Data analysis was done via emergent categorization.

5. Results

5.2 Quantitative results

Table 1: Estimate of the averages of the least squares for semantic relationships to the CELF

	Pretest			Posttest		
Medium	Equivalence score for semantic relationships	Standard error	Percentile rank	Equivalence score for semantic relationships	Standard error	Percentile rank
Paper (n=31)	10.294	0.475	53	10.833 (n=30)	0.453	61
Tablet (n=32)	10.906	0.471	61	11.313 (n=29)	0.460	67

On average, the capacity to establish semantic relationships of both groups who participated in the CLI project improved regardless of the medium used (paper or tablet) to complete the heuristic lexical cards [F (1; 2,03) =0,07; p=0,8152].

Table 2: Averages of the least squares of the semantic relationships on students' lexical cards

	CLI2		CLI4		CLI6	
Medium	Ratio of the semantic relationship scores	Standard error	Ratio of the semantic relationship scores	Standard error	Ratio of the semantic relationship scores	Standard error
Paper (n=12)	0.292	0.103	0.532	0.100	0.629	0.099
Tablet	0.533 (n=27)	0.0951	0.726 (n=29)	0.091	0.676 (n=25)	0.095

For both groups (students who used either paper or tablet to create their lexical cards), the time of measurement had a significant influence on the ratio of the scores for semantic relationships [F (2; 59)=9,21; p=0,0003]. In fact, the ratio of the scores at Time 2 is significantly inferior to the ratio of the scores at Time 4 [t (57,3)=-3,56; p=0,0022] and at Time 6 [t(59,8)=-3,84; p=0,0009]. The ratio between Times 4 and 6 (CLI4 and CLI6) is not significantly different [t (60,3)=-0,37; p=1,00001]. There is no significant relationship between the type of medium used and the times of measurement with regards to the semantic relationship scores [F (2; 60,6)=1,27; p=2877]. It would thus seem that the observed differences between the times of measurement are the same for each group.

In summary, all of the students who followed the CLI method showed progress in their capacity to establish semantic relationships regardless of the medium used to complete their heuristic lexical cards.

5.2 Qualitative results

During the interviews, the two teachers expressed that they were impressed with the multimodal possibilities of using the tablet application for creating lexical heuristic cards, and both said that they intend to use the interactive whiteboard application again. Both teachers also mentioned that this approach offers a strong metacognitive potential for helping students with their lexical learning:

Teacher 1: "With three students who rarely spoke, really almost never, I could finally hear these students talking aloud for the first time. So yes, audio mixed with the touchscreen features (erasing or moving words around in real time), that really does help them."

Teacher 2: "When they listen back to themselves, they are able to understand the processes they are using, and they can reflect on them ... I find the verbalisation aspect of ShowMe (interactive whiteboard) to be brilliant and I will use it again. The oral part is the most interesting, because it shows me how my students are thinking and how I can help them. The fact that I have access to a student's strategies as spoken aloud by them allows me to work with that student."

Students said that the fact that they can look back on their digital work at any time is very useful.

Twenty students (twelve girls and eight boys) mentioned that this metacognitive reflection helped them to self-correct. The video screen capture feature of the interactive whiteboard created the sense of having an audience that helped students to verbalize their lexical strategies: M12: "It's like I enter into a world where I'm showing people how to do it, and showing myself too, and that's much better than talking to yourself."

6. Discussion

The results do not show that the use of a tablet yields a higher success rate in the semantic relationships established on students' heuristic lexical cards. However, both students and teachers who participated in the project indicate that using the tablet while making the lexical cards does provide several advantages: using the tablet gives the student the sense of having an audience, which encourages them to speak aloud and verbalize their strategies, and the tablet facilitates verbal expression among shy speakers. Furthermore, the video recording feature of the interactive whiteboard application has proven particularly helpful for students for whom communication with adults is a source of stress. For the teachers, the tablet's recording feature allows later access to the student's thoughts and lexical reasoning which facilitates personal scaffolding for students who need further help. Therefore, the use of the video capture application on the tablet helps teachers or special needs teachers to understand certain lexical difficulties.

By examining Table 2, we note that repetition of the CLI method is necessary in order to see significant progress in the students. More precisely, for the students in this study, the results suggest the recommendation of a minimum of 4 CLI cycles in a class to allow the students the time to develop semantic relationships. Furthermore, we understand from Table 2 that the first four repetitions of the CLI method produces significant progress in students regardless of the medium used for the lexical card (paper or tablet).

7. Conclusions

The Community of Lexical Inquiry is an approach that relies on communication and multimodal learning to teach semantic relationships. The results indicate that the CLI as a whole helps student make significant progress in their capacity to establish semantic relationships using either medium.

The most significant progress was seen after four repetitions of the CLI method. Through interviews and testimonials, it was learned that students who are typically sky speakers benefitted from the sense of having an audience that the tablet provided: this encouraged them to more openly verbalize their process.

The results are limited by the number of participants (n=63). Additional studies with larger sample sizes should look at the effect of using the CLI method with and without the philosophical discussion on the meaning of words because some teachers hesitate to invest time in oral communication; this comparison could help to quantify the importance of oral communication on the acquisition of semantic relationships.

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Learning Novel Names Extension by Comparison: What Research Tells us?

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Abstract

Most picture books targeted at children (young or in primary school) tend to be based on single picture presentations. One picture illustrates an entity or an action or a property and a word is associated to this picture. This mode of teaching novel words reduces word learning to an association learning task in which the word underlying concept would come up automatically. As we know, this is far from being the case: children produce numerous extension errors (e.g., under- or over-generalizations). There is now ample evidence that the opportunity to compare several exemplars to the same target category name (e.g., several apples rather than one apple) gives better results in terms of word extension (e.g., Augier & Thibaut, 2013). Comparisons promote extensions that are based on deep semantic commonalities rather than on superficial features. The central idea is that comparisons are invitations to align objects on many properties, starting on easily accessible ones and, later, with deeper conceptually based regularities. In this paper, we will review the evidence regarding the role of comparisons in novel word learning. We will also review several conceptions of comparison effects such as progressive alignment or concreteness fading. We will suggest in which learning situations these different comparison modes might be most effective. We will suggest how picture books devoted to word learning might be improved and implemented in e-learning.

Keywords: Word learning, children, vocabulary, meaning, comparison, extension

The Power of Comparison

One key aspect of language learning by young children is the ability to correctly generalize novel names to a set of objects. This means naming novel instances of a category according to adults' standards. Correct generalization means that one should undergeneralize (do not include all the entities included by adults) or overgeneralize the novel name (going beyond referents included by adults). In most learning situations, the child is presented with a limited number of exemplars, most often one, (or at least objects are introduced one by one on successive situations). Later, generalization is tested with stimuli that differ from the initial ones(s). One underlying difficulty is that novel name generalization involves in many occasions ignoring obvious and easily accessible dimensions in favor of less obvious properties (e.g., texture which is less salient than shape, or taxonomically related items, e.g., a banana for an apple, rather than items that are perceptually similar, e.g., a red Christmas ball).

In this chapter, we review and illustrate a hypothesis that has proved to be a powerful explanatory concept regarding conceptually-based generalization of novel names, the concept of comparison.

There is now large evidence that the opportunity to compare several exemplars of a novel category that have associated with a common name promotes deep, conceptually-based generalization. These comparison situations would stand in sharp contrast to generalizations that would be grounded on salient perceptual properties such as their shape. According to this hypothesis, comparisons would help children to find deep commonalities between stimuli that are usually unnoticed when the objects are studied in isolation (Augier & Thibaut, 2013; Gentner & Namy, 1999; Namy & Clepper, 2010; Namy & Gentner, 2002; Son, Smith, & Goldstone, 2011; Thibaut & Witt, 2015).

What do we mean by comparisons? What are the ingredients of such a learning situation? In their seminal paper, Gentner & Namy (1999) opposed a taxonomic match and a perceptual match in a name extension procedure. In this kind of procedure, children are presented with either a single object (e.g. a bicycle, the single condition) or two objects from a familiar category (e.g. a bicycle and a tricycle, the comparison condition). Training objects received a novel label, a non-word (e.g., "this is a dax" in the single object condition or "this is a dax and this is also a dax" in the comparison condition).

Young children had then to extend this label to one of two target objects, either a perceptually similar match (e.g., eyeglasses) or a perceptually different taxonomic match (e.g., a skateboard). A majority of the participants chose the perceptual target significantly more than chance in the single object condition whereas a majority of them selected the taxonomic option significantly more than chance in the comparison condition. According to Gentner and colleagues, comparisons of objects would start an alignment of the stimuli, using salient perceptual similarities. These early detected similarities would lead children to further explore the stimuli which would progressively reveal underlying structural similarities unifying the compared stimuli (see also Thibaut, 1991; 1995).

Recently, Graham *et al*., (2010) extended these studies to novel, unfamiliar categories, based on unknown shapes and textures. In this particular case, children could compare two objects that had the same non-word name. In this case, a majority of 4-year-olds generalized the name on the basis of texture which is a less salient property, thus less easily noticed, than shape when texture had to fight against the much more salient shape dimension. In the "single" object condition, by contrast, there was a majority of shape-based generalizations.

Comparison and contrast

For the vast majority of studies, "comparison" refers to comparison of stimuli belonging to the same category (e.g., both stimuli are "daxes"). However, contrasting stimuli might uncover previously unnoticed unifying dimensions. For example, Clark (1992) hypothesized that children use contrastive dimensions to shape the meaning of novel words When said "X is a *dax* and Y is a *blicket*" children can compare them in order to find featural differences between categories that define each category, the underlying reasoning being that "if X and Y belong to different categories, common salient features do not ground their category membership". In a similar way, Waxman, Lynch, Casey, & Baer (1997) preschool children successfully used contrasting information about different subordinate categories to correctly restrict their inferences to the relevant subordinate category (see also Hammer, Diesendruck, Weinshall, & Hochstein, 2009).

Recently, within the Gentner & Namy (1999) comparison framework, Namy & Clepper (2010) compared "contrast" and "no contrast" conditions in "single" and "comparison" conditions. For example, the comparison-contrast condition featured a pair of stimuli ("blickets") and a contrast object (a "non blicket"). The contrast object and the two standards had the same shape (e.g., a bicycle and a tricycle; the contrast was barbells). The main analysis showed no effect of contrast in the single (i.e., one dax and one non dax item) and the compare conditions (except in a consistency analysis which revealed more taxonomically consistent profiles in the compare/contrast condition than in the compare/no contrast condition).

Comparisons and executive functions

Augier and Thibaut (2013), Thibaut and Witt (2015) followed another explanatory alley and linked the effectiveness comparisons with executive functions. By executive controls, we refer to control processes which have been located in the prefrontal cortex (see Zelazo *et al*., 2014). According to Miyake and colleagues, there are three fundamental executive functions (inhibition, cognitive flexibility, and updating information in working memory) They hypothesized that young children's less developed executive functions might influence the integration of the stimuli into a consistent conceptual representation, in the sense that younger children, with less developed executive functions might have difficulties integrating all the available information when the number of stimuli to compare increased.

They studied children's use of within (comparisons) or between categories comparisons (contrast categories) in a novel name generalization task based on the non-salient texture dimension rather than shape. They manipulated three factors: number of standards (one, two, four), the presence of a contrast item and age (Three-to-four and five-to-six). Their results revealed an interaction between the number of standards and age, in the sense that younger children did not benefit from an increased number of stimuli (4 versus 2), whereas older children did (see Figure 2). All the results converged on the idea that more evidence in favor of texture (i.e., more stimuli with the same texture) did not linearly increase texture-based evidence in the same way for younger and older children. According to the authors, this meant that adding more stimuli also increase the load of comparisons. Following the same reasoning, Thibaut and Witt (2015) studied relational words such as "the knife is the dax of the apple". Typically, the relation was illustrated with two stimuli, such as a knife and an apple. They varied the number of pairs illustrating the relation. Results showed that there was an optimal number of pairs beyond which performance decreased. This suggests again that the best might be the enemy of the good.

Thus, this executive function approach focused on the processing load of comparisons. Indeed, comparing and integrating several items gives more converging evidence regarding the relevant properties for generalization but they also generate cognitive costs. Thibaut, French, & Vezneva (2010) showed, with analogy tasks, that adding salient distractors had a detrimental effect on analogy making for younger children. Younger children fail to integrate all the activated information because of less developed executive functions, that is when distractors had to be inhibited.

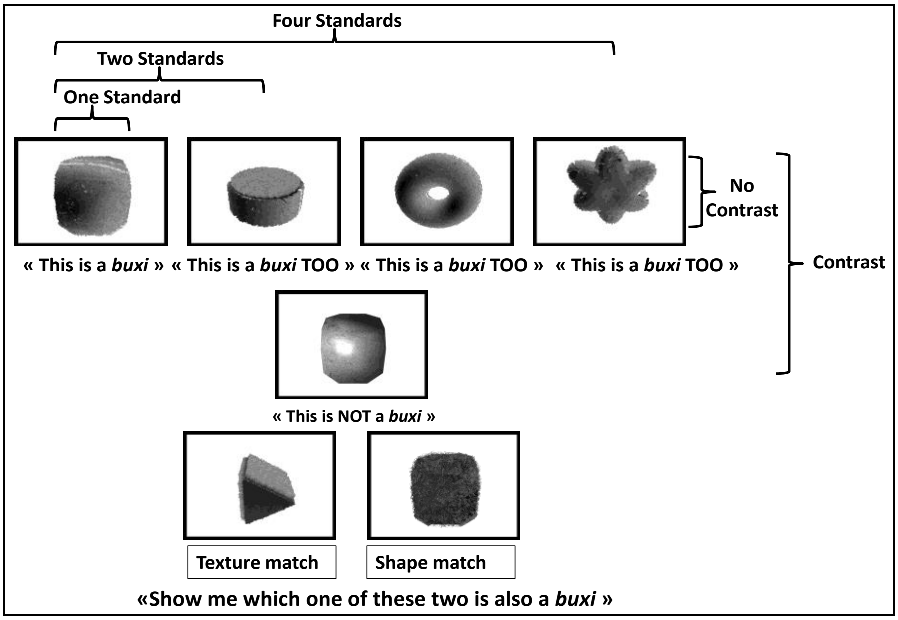

Fig. 1: A stimulus set and instructions. The six experimental conditions crossed two factors: Number of standards (1, 2 or 4 standards) and Contrast (0 or 1 contrast), resulting in: 1 Standard-No Contrast (1-0), 1 Standard -Contrast (1-1), 2 Standards-No Contrast (2-0), 2 Standards-Contrast (2-1), 4 Standards-No Contrast (4-0), 4 Standards-Contrast (4-1).

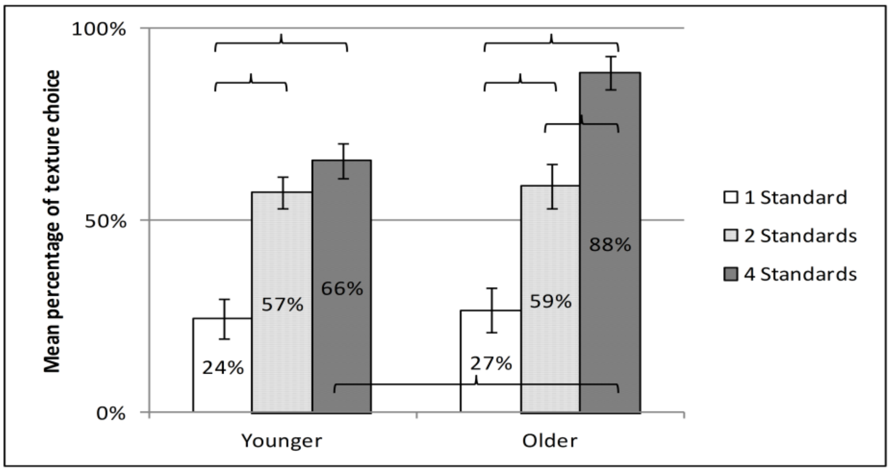

Fig. 2: Mean percentage of texture-based responding as a function of Number of standards and Age. Braces show significant differences between columns (Tukey HSD, p<.05).

Conclusions

This positive role of comparisons has been documented for a wide variety of stimuli and situations in both adults and children. In the case of children, this has been shown for object names, names for parts, action verbs, adjectives, or perceptual categories (e.g., Thibaut, 1991, see Augier & Thibaut, for references). Most studies show that the most usual types of presentations (single presentation, such as the ones used in picture books) are not the most efficient to convey optimal information regarding word extension. This has deep consequences for book designs, which should take these recent studies into account.

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Multiple Intelligences – Addressing Diverse Learners in an ESL Classroom

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Abstract

Language learners show diverse learning capabilities making it imperative for instructors to incorporate strategies that help bring out student potential. Each one of them perceives content based on their unique learning style. This paper explores approaches for maximizing multiple intelligences to ensure improved learning in classrooms. Multiple Intelligences theory by Harvard Professor Howard Gardner in 1983 contradicted the standard approach of measuring intelligence with a single perspective. He explained that learners possess different forms of intelligences and apply them in more than one way to interpret information, solve problems and create things (Gardner, 1993). This paper emphasizes on the implementation of multiple intelligences theory in the context of teaching English as a second language. It focuses on the need to consider learners as having individual differences and learning styles. It further emphasizes on the use of methods and approaches that pay attention to learning with varied intelligences and learning preferences. It also lays stress on the importance of student-centered approach, in teaching strategies, the most to ensure student guided learning environment in classrooms. With multiple intelligences theory-based approach, educators need to create activities that encompass all types of intelligences and to suit all learners. Moreover, activities appropriate for learners will be suggested with varied intelligences and preferred styles of learning. Finally, the paper will also highlight potential issues faced by educators, recommendations and conclusions about the implementation of the multiple intelligences approach.

Keywords: Multiple intelligences, second language, learning styles, language learning

1. Literature Review

Language learners are unique and different in their learning styles and intelligences and bring their own experiences to the classroom. Educators have to harness that potential and organize their teaching strategies based on those differences. They should not only focus on the differences in their styles but also on the differences in their intelligences (Dunn, 2000). It is also crucial that the approaches are student-centered to promote learning independence in them and make them self-reliant learners (Bas, 2008).

Howard Gardner first introduced the new concept of multiple intelligences in the year 1983. He established that there's no one or general intelligence rather, each person is endowed with multiple or eight different types of intelligence some of which or all of which develop throughout his lifetime (Gardner, 1983, 1993). Initially, Gardner propounded that there are seven types of intelligence. He described these intelligences as logical or mathematical thinking, verbal or linguistic intelligence, visual-spatial, musical and kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. Gardner also emphasized that all these types of intelligences are not present in any one individual in the same strength but vary in levels. He further added that individuals make use of these bits of intelligence in a combination of all or some of these to access information and complete various tasks (Currie, 2003) (Gardner, The Unschooled Mind, 1991). Later in the year 1997, Gardner added two more types of intelligences namely 'Naturalistic' and 'Existential.' We will discuss each of these intelligence in brief to be able to get an insight into the theory:

1.1 Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence

Linguistic intelligence denotes a person's ability to use language effectively, both oral and written.

Learners with strong linguistic intelligence can easily take on tasks like writing an essay or a paragraph, comprehend reading text or using synonyms in spoken word (Christison, 1995, 1996).

1.2 Logical-Mathematical Intelligence

Logical intelligence implies that a person is good at using numbers, solving problems and enjoys facing new challenges in life (Kim, 2009). Second language learners having logical knowledge are capable of sequencing events in a chronological order and classifying language items successfully.

1.3 Visual-Spatial Intelligence

Gardner described spatial intelligence as the ability to imagine and form pictures and transform those forms into visual ideas and expressions (Gardner, 1983, 1993). Visual-spatial intelligence helps language learners in describing images, pictures or in tasks like concept mapping, representing graphic analyzers and flowcharts.

1.4 Bodily Kinesthetic Intelligence

According to Gardner, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence involves using a body part or the entire body in solving a problem or performing a task (Gardner, 1983, 1993). Second language learners possessing this intelligence to perform well at role plays, drama and enjoy miming and games.

1.5 Musical Intelligence

Musical intelligence involves singing a song or chanting to a melodious tune. It shows how sensitive we are to music, rhythm, and tone. Educators can make use of songs, music or rhymes to address learners with musical intelligence in their classes.

1.6 Interpersonal Intelligence

Interpersonal intelligence means empathizing with others and feeling their emotions and mental state (Gardner, 1983, 1993). Second language teachers or foreign language teachers use interpersonal intelligence the most in their classes when they try to understand and care for their learners.

1.7 Intrapersonal Intelligence

Intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to self-introspect about our abilities, emotions, and feelings, and appreciate ourselves (Lazaer, 1999). Language learners with this type of advanced knowledge are good at journal keeping and self-analytical skills and tasks.

1.8 Naturalistic Intelligence and Existential Intelligence

Naturalistic intelligence represents explicitly our abilities and skills to observe, recognize, and analyze the natural world that includes, flora and fauna along with rocks and minerals that exist around us (Bas, 2008) [1]. Existential intelligence relates to our sensitivity to our existence in asking questions about our life as to who we are, where have we originated from and where do we go?

2. Multiple Intelligences Theory and Second Language Learning

We can use a wide range of activities to suit our learners' needs and their multiple intelligences' profiles. Some of them have been suggested as follows:

2.1 Linguistic Intelligence

Storytelling, writing a short poem, debates, Group discussions, gap fills, conducting interviews, word games.

2.2 Logical-Mathematical Intelligence

Concept mapping, flow charts, sequencing events in chronological order, word-order activities, pattern games, and jigsaw puzzles.

2.3 Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

Planning and attending a field trip, role plays, miming, dancing, building models and grammar games.

2.4 Visual-Spatial Intelligence

Describing pictures, using visual images for teaching vocabulary, video exercises, multimedia projects, using charts, maps, graphics analyzers and concept maps.

2.5 Musical Intelligence
Playing songs, musical cloze activities, singing a song or rap to explain something, making presentations using sound or music and tongue twisters.

2.6 Interpersonal Intelligence
Conducting a meeting to address a subject, group work, practice giving and receiving feedback from teachers and peers, surveys and polls and group brainstorming.

2.7 Intrapersonal Intelligence
Writing journal entries, activities involving self-reflection, and sharing personal experiences, assessing one's work and setting and pursuing a goal.

2.8 Naturalistic Intelligence
Taking field trips and service projects, caring for pets and wildlife and gardens, drawing or painting a natural object.

3. Integration of Multiple Intelligence in ESL Classes – Learning Styles

The concept of multiple intelligences implies that though a person may have all the intelligences mentioned above, they may not be all developed at the same level. Therefore, a teacher would have to plan her lesson in such a way that utilizes the different types of intelligence to their full potential but also to attend to the diverse needs and nature of the learners in her class. Kagan & Kagan stated that, if we provide our learners with different styles of learning, it will not only expose them to varied forms of education but also prepare them for a diverse world that awaits them out there and is ever changing (Kagan, 1998). Some of such diverse learning styles have been suggested in detail here.

3.1 Language in Action
Young learners love to sing and dance. We could also give them helpful words and let them create their rhymes with those words. With adult learners, rhymes could be replaced by songs to suit their age and needs.

3.2 Drawing and Coloring Alternatives to Music
As an alternative to music, students could be asked to draw characters from stories. They could also be asked to make interesting, picturesque folders, bookmarks, and posters for their classes.

3.3 Drama in Action
Young learners love action in classrooms. Drama can motivate them, as it involves enacting the characters they are studying. Drama involves all four skills of language namely listening, speaking, reading and writing as students create their characters after reading the story, write their lines and speak them while enacting the play.

3.4 Games for Fun
Students can make their games on stories or characters they have studied in their classes. They can create card games and play in pairs or groups. Digital games like 'Kahoot' can be effectively used for teaching skills, language, vocabulary, and grammar.

3.5 Handicrafts for creativity and learning
Students both young and old can be asked to follow instructions both oral or written to create interesting artwork or craftwork based on characters in their plays. Young learners can create small objects like hats, masks, and bookmarks, etc.

3.6 Storybooks for inspiration
Stories can be the best way to introduce a foreign language to young learners. Students can also be asked to enact, draw or sing to these fairytales as discussed earlier.

3.7 Jokes for fun and laughter
Young learners specifically love to laugh. Jokes can be adapted to language learning by asking learners to enact them, compose songs or create puppets or characters that narrate the jokes to class.

3.8 Vocabulary building exercises

Learners can be asked to build picture dictionaries or 'Pictionary.' They could also be asked to write entire poems or stories in their notebooks in a colorful manner, highlighting new words in the story or the poem they learned.

4. Issues and Recommendations

There are some limitations to applying the MI theory full-fledged in ESL classrooms despite its positive results. Firstly, there are few tests available to test the learners' intelligences based on different intelligence levels. Also, it has been observed that some cultures believe in relying more on a certain kind of intelligence than other. Moreover, planning and adding more activities to already existing lesson plans can be quite overwhelming for some teachers. Besides, teachers would need some training workshops to be able to apply these approaches in classes. Also, they may need some prior experience with these approaches. Furthermore, teachers need to evaluate students on a wide variety of criteria corresponding and appropriate to their diverse profiles. Despite its limitations, MI theory has shown great achievements when it comes to raising performance levels in ESL classes. Careful planning and analyzing the classroom profile of their students can help teachers prepare well in advance and structure their lesson plans to suit their students' requirements. Training and workshops that focus on teaching how to adapt lessons to specific tasks which stem from MI theory would guide teachers in effectively implementing the approach in their classes. Teachers would also need to use various forms of assessments to do justice to the distinct profiles in their classes. They could include debates, role plays, projects and presentations to provide incentive to such learners.

5. Conclusions

Multiple Intelligences theory has more benefits than limitations. It has the potential to reform not only students' learning process, but it also provides educators with an opportunity to introspect and analyze on their capabilities as teachers to deliver content in diverse forms which further enhances their efficacy as educators. They discover a paradigm shift in their experiences as teachers and they can create more learner-centered classes rather than teacher-led courses. Through MI approach, educators can raise the level of linguistic skills of their learners. It makes them better learners and develops their communicative skills. In other words, they contribute to all-round development of their learners by applying the principles of multiple intelligences theory (Christison & Kennedy, 1999). It can be therefore concluded, that multiple intelligences theory has great potential to bring out the best in both the educators as well as learners when it comes to language learning in ESL classes.

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Realization of Project – Based Language Learning at the Context of Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences

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Abstract

As an instructional approach Project-based learning contextualizes teaching by presenting learners with problems to solve or products to develop.
Project based learning functions as a connecting bridge between using communicative English in class and using English in real life situations outside of class. It does this by placing learners in situations that require authentic use of language in order to communicate. When learners work in pairs or in teams, they find they need some definite skills to plan, organize, negotiate, make their points, and arrive at a consensus about issues such as what tasks to perform, how to distribute tasks among partners, who will be responsible for each task, and how information will be researched and presented. Students' ***Research Projects*** *have been practised at the Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences, replacing traditional diploma papers. Thanks to the learners' great organizational efforts, mutual understanding and responsibility, pedagogical and social skills, these projects became real implementations of interactive cooperation among students in different teams. Learners develop research products introducing their inner motivation, individual interest and responsibility to solve problems and work together.*

Keywords: Research, authentic situation, inner motivation, innovation, interaction

Projects are usually problem-focused, task-oriented and meaningful activities rather than language-oriented; in other words, the learners focus on doing something practical rather than directly on studying the language. Projects bring together learners with their ideas and principles within different subject areas or disciplines [6].

Teaching through projects is not a new idea. Project-based approaches to education have been tried before, but they have often been thought of as too difficult to implement in most schools and as ineffective for teaching basic skills. Many-year experience has shown that projects are manageable and educationally effective. Projects are especially good teaching tools in different levels of language instructions (at schools, colleges, universities) for the following reasons:

- **Projects enhance learners' motivation to learn about and use a wide variety of literacy and thinking skills**.

For example, publishing a newspaper gives students opportunities to plan, write, reflect on, revise articles, and provides a way in which students can share their work with others.

- **Projects encourage students to become self-directed thinkers and learners**.

Unlike many classroom activities, projects enable students to take the lead in their own learning. As Scrivener states, most projects will be successful if undertaken by small groups of three or four learners. In the process, they develop the skills and dispositions they need to initiate, pursue, and complete work without explicit directions or supervision by their teachers [6].

- **Projects give teachers opportunities to use innovative teaching techniques**.

Because projects encourage students to be self-directed, teachers are able to act as coaches and can vary their level of support to suit the needs of individual students. Projects also provide students with incentives to work together, cooperate and share their experience. **Projects can be used both in classrooms and in out-school environment**.

By providing opportunities for students to develop literacy and thinking skills, projects can satisfy students to become involved in numerous afterschool programs [2].

Five Characteristics of the Successful Project

Projects are of genuine interest

A genuine project must be **motivating** and **authentic** to the teacher as well as to the students.

Without these elements, neither students nor teachers are likely to have the sustained attention needed to accomplish the goals of the project and learn from what they are doing. Motivation, of course, comes from choosing topics, tasks, and goals that everyone truly cares about.

Authenticity, on the other hand, comes from involving students in "real" work toward "real" products.

Projects have clear goals and steps

There are at least two ways to make a project's goals clear to students. One is to have the students decide the goals of the project themselves. Another is to begin by telling students what the goals are and then to discuss the goals to make sure they understand what the teacher means.

Having clear goals or products is not enough however. It is also important to clarify complex steps involved in achieving these goals. Again, there are several ways to accomplish this. One approach is to use a problem-solving framework or strategy.

Projects are flexible

It is out of question, that the goal of a project must be clear. As for the teacher – they must be flexible about where the project will go and how students will get it there. This kind of flexibility allows students to work according to their own styles and intelligences [1].

Projects encourage self-direction

Project encourages and requires student self-direction when it is genuine to the teacher and students, has clear goals and steps, is flexible in terms of tasks and approaches to them.

Great/successful projects begin with the end in students' mind. Students naturally have an interest/inner motivation to learn, do important work, and be taken seriously. Project based learning is a method of instruction that involves a question and a problem to be solved by the student. [2]

Project planning

Before students gather to tackle a project, teacher planning is necessary. Teachers usually work cooperatively across content areas to develop a project that addresses standards in several content areas.

Begin with the end in mind: Identify desired results

While developing project ideas, teachers may work backwards and ask questions such as:

- What understandings are desired at the end of the experience?
- What does it look like?
- What key knowledge and experiences do students need to get out of it?

A good place to start gathering ideas for projects is to look at the State Standards for each subject area, identify those standards that can best be addressed through authentic project-based instruction; there is a danger to incorporating too many standards in a project. The teacher acts as a guide in planning and developing the project with the focus given to student participation throughout the planning stage.

To encourage project-based instructions at schools and other educational institutions, teachers must be competent in ICT concepts and skills. Schools and classrooms, both real and virtual, must have teachers who can effectively establish modern learning environment in class, incorporating new strategies [6].

The new learning environment that generates projects and different types of cooperative teaching/learning, should prepare learners to:

- communicate using variety of media and formats
- access and exchange information in a variety of ways
- compile, organize, analyze, and synthesize information
- interact with others in ethical and appropriate ways.

Projects motivate learners in different subject areas and at different levels. They are more real, authentic, meaningful and enjoyable than any other artificial speaking or writing activity. The strong point is – topic selected and plan coming from the topic must be adequate to the students' needs and interests, their intelligence. The following 2 tables show students' role in project design and in project activities.

Project Design and the Student's Role		
Limited Student Input <-----------------> Maximum Student Input		
Teacher selects topic	Teacher solicits student input	Student select topic
Teacher defines learning outcomes	Teacher and students negotiate learning outcomes	Student define learning outcomes

Project Activities and the Student's Role		
Limited Student Autonomy <-------------> Maximum Student Autonomy		
Teacher defines products and activities	Teacher solicits student input	Students define products and activities
Teacher controls timeline and pace of project		Students determine timeline and pace of project

Once teachers and/or students have selected desired outcomes, they can determine appropriate assessment methods.

Once teachers and/or students have identified a topic for a project they will want to capture that in the form of a question. The question should be thought provoking, open ended and go to the heart of the problem being addressed. The goal of the project must be real-world oriented and needs to be of interest to students, allowing them to work on big issues. Students will engage in active learning within selected small/big/open groups, pairs.

We can turn our class project assignment into an activity which will be more meaningful and enjoyable than any other boring tasks.

Things needed: Notebook, paper, pencil or pen, notes.

Instructions:

Step 1

Choose the project topic.

Step 2

Research the topic thoroughly.

Step 3

Start writing the paper as soon as the research has been completed.

Step 4

Work from the notes to ensure that the important information has been collected. Start by stating what the project is, then use the main body of the paper to describe how the project has been accomplished. Write in such a way that the audience could recreate the project by following the paper.

Step 5

At this (final) stage the teacher invites learners to collect their ideas about the work they did. Students start to speak about advantages and disadvantages of their activity, things that they wanted to do in another way, expected outcomes and real outcome, etc.

Finally, the teacher provides the learners with papers, asking to evaluate their cooperative project, describe their contribution to this activity, things that they wanted to do, but didn't manage etc.

Project-based learning is a real platform for the learners' self – assessment/evaluation. Project-based work involves careful planning and flexibility on the part of the teacher. Because of the dynamic nature of this type of learning, not all problems can be anticipated. Moreover, sometimes a project will move forward in a different direction than originally planned [4].

So, the success of learning through projects is very much dependent on how students relate to each other, what the classroom environment is, how effectively they cooperate and communicate with each other, and of course what roles the teacher play and what level of pedagogical and professional competences they possess.

Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences offers bachelor's program in "Teacher of Foreign Languages" specialization. Students' research projects are practised at the University, replacing their traditional diploma papers. As a new initiative, project papers have already enjoyed great popularity. Learners show inner motivation, creativity, cooperation enthusiasm to develop successful products.

Projects make learners sociable, respectful, responsible and tolerant. At the beginning stage they form groups with 3-4 students. They are introduced the Package of project work standards. Students select/elaborate topics. All learners get a clear idea about the goals and objectives of their work, expected outcomes, research methods and strategies to specify complex steps towards achieving their final goals. E.g. in **English teaching methodology course** learners accomplished the following projects:

1. **Development of learner's grammatical skills on the basis of English texts at basic schools of the RA**;
2. **Test as a modern and effective tool for checking learners communicative language competence at school**;
3. **Developing learners English pronunciation skills in basic schools of the Republic of Armenia**;
4. **Strategies and ways to overcome the barriers in communication, etc**.

Students clarify their research plan. They expose equal participation and equal responsibility.

Teachers regularly observe the learners. They encourage them with appropriate instructions and constructive feedback. Students continue their research at different schools, trying to put practise their theoretical ideas. Students pass through the monitoring and approbation stages and get their scores, which must be considered while grading the learners at their final graduation presentation (60-100).

One thing is more than apparent:

- **All students must solve problems**.
- **They must produce/develop product – A PROJECT**.

After final presentation learners complete survey. They try to evaluate their cooperation, describe their individual contribution, things that they wanted to do, but didn't manage etc.

Students' answers state that absolute majority of them appreciate projects as the most effective type of graduation paper. They did their work with great interest, enjoyed enthusiasm and learnt a lot.

A Survey for Students to Evaluate their Projects

1. What kind of final paper is preferable to you?
   ……………………………………………………………………………………
2. What difficulties did you meet?
   ……………………………………………………………………………………
3. Did you use the Package of Standards for your project?
   ……………………………………………………………………………………
4. How do you evaluate your project?
   ……………………………………………………………………………………
5. What kind of skills does the final project tend to develop?
   ……………………………………………………………………………………
6. If you were to do this project again, what would you do differently to improve your work?
   ……………………………………………………………………………………..
7. How could your team work together more effectively next time?
   ……………………………………………………………………………………

95% of the Brusov University students evaluate projects as an effective type of graduation paper.

In a nutshell – Project-based instructions are organic and unique to each learner. They are exciting, challenging and meaningful to all learners even with different levels of language communicative proficiency.

We suppose that projects will have their further developments in different educational institutions as well, as they raise learners' motivation, individual interest and responsibility to solve problems and work together along with different language learning performance.

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Speed-Marking: A Case Study

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Abstract

This case study investigates the use of speed-marking [1] with Japanese students in the school of computer science at a public university in Japan. One of the most time-consuming tasks for a teacher of English is responding to writing. The novelty of speed-marking is that teachers respond immediately to the work written in class while students identify, correct and explain errors that the teacher displays to the whole class. Three classes of sophomore students (n=82) with a mean TOEIC score of 381 participated in this study. All the students were enrolled in a compulsory integrated skills intermediate English course comprising two 100-minute sessions per week for seven weeks. According to the pre-course survey, almost all the students had no affinity for, interest in or motivation to learn English. Seven speed-marking activities on different topics were completed. Mid-course formative and end-of-course summative feedback from students regarding speed-marking was extremely positive. Students particularly appreciated receiving prompt feedback, noting that with delayed feedback they had often forgotten both the original task and the problems they had faced when writing. For the teacher, speed-marking is challenging as it is necessary to respond to each text rapidly. The benefits, however, are that class time passes quickly, students receive prompt feedback and possibly the most important benefit: there is no need to respond to writing out-of-class.

Keywords: Teaching writing, Response to writing, Corrective feedback

1. Background

1.1 Problem

Teachers of academic writing with large classes draw the short straw on marking load. Teachers preparing students for written examinations may be faced with an onerous marking load. This is particularly true for teachers who want to provide their students the best possible written corrective feedback; and it can, without careful planning, snowball into a huge volume of marking far outstripping the time spent in class. For example, a university teacher with three classes of 25 students who sets a 500-word writing task once a week for a 15-week semester needs to respond to half a million words.

1.2 Cause

Although the validity of empirical evidence supporting the use of corrective feedback is contested [2, 3, 4], many teachers feel the need to respond to writing, often using written corrective feedback [5, 6, 7]. The underlying cause is the perceived necessity for the teacher to read and provide corrective feedback on all the writing tasks. There are cogent arguments for the use of self reflective, peer feedback and automated feedback using either computer programmes or online tools [8, 9]. Students, however, when surveyed tend to state a preference to receive feedback from the teacher [10, 11].

Most students expect their teacher to correct surface-level errors and believe that such feedback is beneficial [12, 13]. In fact, not giving that feedback may negatively affect students' evaluation of teaching.

1.3 Proposed solution

Many teachers would prefer not to have to respond to writing outside of class, the ideal solution would appear to be responding during class, giving them immediate rather than delayed feedback.

Timely feedback is not only preferred by many students, but has been shown to be effective [14].

One way to free up time during class is to get students actively engaged on a different task, giving the teacher the opportunity to read and respond to their written work. In the original version of Speed-marking [1], the alternative tasks suggested involved the creation and use worksheets based on model answers to the writing task. However, in this revised version of Speed-marking no prior preparation of alternative materials is needed. The alternative task is error correction. The errors used are ideally those made by the students, but it is also possible to recycle errors made by a previous cohort of students or use a list of anticipated errors.

2. Speed-marking

The preparation for speed-marking is straight forward. The classroom procedure can be divided into three phases: writing, pair work and lockstep. In the writing phase, the teacher aims to collect errors that students can discuss in the pair work phase. During the pair work phase, students discuss displayed errors together while the teacher aims to deal with each of the students' responses. In the lockstep phase, the teacher enables the students to identify and be able to correct the errors. The specific steps within each phase are described in Table 1.

Table 1: Preparation and procedure for Speed-marking

Phase	Step	Activity
Preparation	1	Teacher prepares written instructions for a suitable directed writing task.
	2	Teacher lists anticipated errors and considers possible corrections.
Writing	3	Teacher distributes the writing task.
	4	Teacher checks students are on task, and then unobtrusively collects as many errors as possible.
	5	Teacher displays a list of expected and/or actual errors using a projector or whiteboard.
Pair work	6	Teacher collects students' responses to the writing task.
	7	Students form pairs or small groups. Meanwhile, the teacher highlights two or three errors as quickly as possible in each of the student`s responses.
	8	Students work in pairs to identify, correct and/or explain the displayed errors. The teacher continues highlighting errors.
	9	Teacher adds highlighted errors to the displayed list as necessary to gain time to complete the marking.
Lockstep	10	Teacher elicits and/or explains the corrections for all the errors displayed.
	11	Teacher returns the highlighted students' responses and encourages students to correct the highlighted errors. Teacher deals with any questions.

3. Case study

This case study was conducted at the University of Aizu in the school of computer science at a public university in Japan by a university teacher. Details on the participants and the method of data collection are given below.

3.1 Participants

All participating students were enrolled in a mandatory credit-bearing integrated skills English language course comprising two 100-minute sessions per week delivered over seven weeks. Three classes of sophomore students (82 students in total) participated in this study. The mean TOEIC score of participants was 381, which according to the test creators, Educational Testing Service, categorizes the students as independent users of English (approximately equivalent to B1 in the CEFR framework). According to a pre-course survey, almost all the students had no affinity for, interest in or motivation to learn English which is in line with most research on motivation levels to learn English in the Japanese context [15]. The participating teacher was an experienced teacher of writing who had previously used speed-marking.

3.2 Data collection

Seven speed-marking activities on different topics were completed. The writing phase lasted 15 minutes and while the two feedback phases (pairwork and lockstep) took between 20 and 30 minutes.

Evaluations of perception of speed-marking from both the teacher and the students were compiled.

Student evaluations were collected via two feedback questionnaires housed on the learning management system.

Formative mid-course feedback was received from one class. The rubric for the mid-course formative feedback questionnaire was: "Should I continue to use speed-marking? Is it useful for you for? Please share any ideas you have in English if possible."

Summative feedback was received from all three classes. The four-question survey is reproduced in Figure 1.

1. *Select one or more options.*
   - ☐ Speed-marking did not help me at all
   - ☐ Speed-marking helped me to improve my writing skill
   - ☐ Speed-marking helped me to understand mistakes I make
   - ☐ Speed-marking helped me to learn from mistakes made by other students

2. *Show your agreement or disagreement to this statement:*
   Speed-marking motivated me to learn
   ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

3. *Select your suggestion for next semester.*
   - ☐ Speed-marking should NOT be used anymore.
   - ☐ Speed-marking should be used.

4. Share your view on speed-marking in English or Japanese.
   ____

Fig. 1: Summative end-of-course feedback questionnaire

Teacher evaluation was collected using a reflective log and comments on each speed-marking activity.

4. Results

The results of the formative and summative student evaluations are summarized in subsection 4.1 and the results of the teacher reflection are given in subsection 4.2.

4.1 Student evaluation

Overall, both the mid-course formative and end-of-course summative feedback from students regarding speed-marking was extremely positive.

In the mid-course formative feedback, all twelve respondents agreed speed-marking was useful and worth continuing with future classes. Student comments included:

[student 1] “*Useful but I don’t like [sic]*”
[student 2] “*Honesty troublesome, useful! [sic]”*

These comments can be interpreted as agreement that the activity is useful but that students are required to make more effort than they anticipated. Students also commented that they were able to learn from the mistakes made by other students.

Although 82 students were initially enrolled on the course, ten students dropped the course and three students did not complete the questionnaire. Sixty-nine respondents completed the summative feedback questionnaire.

In the end-of-course summative feedback students particularly appreciated receiving prompt feedback, noting that with delayed feedback they had often forgotten both the original task and the problems they had faced when writing.

Almost all students (97.1%, 67 people) noted that speed-marking helped them with 63.8% (44 people) stating it helped them improve their writing skill, nearly three-quarters (72.5%, 50 people) noting that it helped them understand their own mistakes and just under half (47.8%, 33 people) stating that they learned from the mistakes of other people. However, two respondents (2.9%) stated that speed-marking did not help them *et al*.

Just over four out of five students (82.6%, 57 people) agreed or strongly agreed that speed-marking motivated them to learn. Ten students neither agreed nor disagreed, while two (2.9%) disagreed.

Student views on speed-marking varied from “not bad” to “fabulous”. Many comments did not take the form of full sentences and could be interpreted in different ways. One of the clearer comments is given below:

[student 3] “*英文を書くにあたって注意すべきところを自分のミスや他の生徒のミスから学ぶことができた” [I was able to learn from my own and other student’s mistakes to identify where to be careful when writing in English*.]

Numerous comments made positive comments about learning, enjoying and improving from speed-marking. One such comment is:

[student 4] *“I was fun. I learned. I improved my skill [sic.]”*

Approximately 15% of the comments related to the timing of the class rather than speed-marking, e.g.

[student 5] *“It is hard to wake up early morning”*.
[student 6] *“it is very interested class [sic], but I was so sleep [sic] every day because it is 1st class (of the day)”.*

The lack of enthusiasm for early morning classes comes as no surprise, but given that the questionnaire was focused on speed-marking, it is clear that student agenda differs from the teacher agenda. There were no negative comments at all about speed-marking.

4.2 Teacher evaluation

For the teacher, speed-marking was challenging as it is necessary to respond to each text rapidly.

The benefit, however, outweighed the drawback as class time passed quickly, students were able to receive prompt feedback and possibly the most important benefit: there is no need to respond to writing out-of-class.

5. Conclusions

Although this case study could be characterized as a popularity survey of speed-marking, the results are extremely positive. The next step in the investigation of the usage of speed-marking is to determine the efficacy of speed-marking with a large-scale experimental study.

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Teaching Adults a Foreign Language with Language Resources for Babies

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Abstract

My paper discusses the challenges of teaching Turkish to adult European students, the lack of innovative teaching resources together with a creative solution for motivating learners acquiring new vocabulary. Turkish is highly alien to the speakers of Germanic or Romance languages, partly due to the complex grammar and the different word order. However, the essential building block for learning any language is the vocabulary. Without words it is impossible to make conversation and so acquiring new vocabulary is a key to confidence and motivation. Existing Turkish language resources such as the Hitit course which is used as the standard teaching material at the Complutense University in Madrid tend to offer a highly traditional approach. Each unit covers a theme, introducing new grammar and vocabulary through basic dialogues which need to be set to memory. Furthermore, the descriptions used often include a level of vocabulary that is too advanced for the students concerned. The considerable time I spent seeking alternatives only confirmed that there really was a dearth of inspiring materials for Turkish teaching. Finally, I chanced upon the available resources for teaching vocabulary to babies and started to consider how natural language learning might assist European learners of Turkish. Flash cards are published for Turkish babies and infants. Each card displays a word together with a picture illustrating the vocabulary through everyday objects, pet names, images representing the different genders, etc. The paper describes how I applied these resources to adult students, the methodology used to engage them in group activities and the results achieved in terms of motivating students and making the learning of Turkish more enjoyable. I also explore more general conclusions of this experiment in terms of how natural language learning can be applied to the study of such an uncommon second language.

Keywords: Turkish, new vocabulary, baby methods

In this paper I illustrate the new methods that I have adopted in my Turkish classes at the Philology Faculty of Madrid’s Complutense University. My research is based on the specific requirements of the students as observed during my classes. Adult European students have considerable difficulty acquiring new Turkish vocabulary. As a professor I need to assist my students in attaining sufficient working knowledge of Turkish over the space of just two years; a considerable challenge given that the subject is taught only as a second language within a 4-year degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies.

In Spain the Turkish language is not widely studied and is a relatively new component of academic syllabuses, partly due to the geographical distance separating the two countries and also due to scarce interest among students.

Over 10 years’ experience teaching Turkish at the Complutense University’s Foreign Languages Center (CSIM) and Faculty of Philology, where the language course, Hitit, published by the University of Ankara, is the standard teaching resource, led me to realise just how difficult it was to perform basic activities with the students. One of the reasons for this was that the vocabulary used in level A.1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Teaching (CEFR) was often more appropriate for a level B.1 since at Ankara University they use the Hitit book mostly for students from Uzbekistan, Kirguistan, Kazajistan and Tayikistan, who already have a basic knowledge of Turkish before they start their university degree in Turkey.

Ostensibly, given the complexity of Turkish for students familiar with Indo-European languages, it was going to be necessary to seek out creative solutions that would make the study of the language enjoyable. Nevertheless, the existing alternatives were not very promising, adopting a traditional systematic approach based on technical descriptions of grammar rules interspersed with dialogues in different everyday situations and lists for memorising basic vocabulary.

As I continued my exploration of different bookshops in Turkey, I finally chanced across resources for teaching vocabulary to babies. These new flash cards are published for Turkish infants and young children. Each card displays a word together with a picture illustrating the vocabulary through everyday objects, pet names, images or symbols representing the different genders, etc. The pictures quickly aid babies in acquiring basic vocabulary.

It can be a considerable challenge for a professor to create new exercises for oral interaction especially for students with a very basic knowledge of the foreign language. Thanks to this method I have managed to speed up the process of learning new vocabulary at the same time as making it more interesting for the students.

The flash cards used in this experiment are principally designed for teaching Turkish as a mother tongue for infants. As I will describe here, I have found these cards also to be effective in teaching the initial classes of level A1 of the CEFR.

The following are examples illustrating how the cards are applied to Turkish classes at the Philology Faculty of Madrid’s Complutense University.

When using these materials for adults, the cards are shuffled and then the students are invited to select their favourite drawings. It consists of a light-hearted activity that runs for about 20-25 minutes and is an effective way of completing a 2-hour language class. This is a difficult moment for teachers since at this stage students’ attention starts to diminish however the experiment proved to be a success as students visibly engaged with the activity in the last minutes of the class.

The students are divided into two equal numbered groups: A and B. All the students from group A stand side by side in a line. The students in group B then form a similar parallel line, facing the students in group A. Each student is given a selection of cards from a pack, each card displaying on one side a Turkish word corresponding to an everyday object and on the other side an image depicting the same object. The students then take it in turns to show the word on one of their cards to the student facing them in the opposing group. When group A are showing the cards, it is the task of the corresponding pairs from group B to ask them questions about the word in order to try to identify its meaning. In the case of beginner students, these could be simple set phrases such as “What is it?” or “Who is it?”

Once the first part of the exercise has been completed, the members of each group shuffle places so that they can then continue to role play with a different student. In order to make for a more dynamic exercise, each time the students switch places in the group, the teacher can suggest new questions relating to the pictures.

For a level A1 student after a couple of months the questions posed can be made more challenging. For example, the teacher can ask them to use the present continuous. In this case, the students will need to conjugate the verbs correctly when posing the question as well as to put the question words in the correct order.

The questions can be used in the following way:

- What is this cat doing?
- What is that kid eating?
- Is the woman running?

Eventually the teacher can ask the students to refer to the size or the colour of the objects. The objective of this part of the exercise is to check if the students have learned the new vocabulary for the colours and other adjectives that have been covered in previous lessons.

These exercises provide the opportunity for students to acquire new vocabulary in a practical way in which each and every one of them is directly engaged in the language learning process.

It is essential that during the dialogues, the teacher does not directly intervene to correct the students but simply makes a written note of the errors that he or she hears.

Once the activity has been completed the teacher dedicates some time to discussing with the students if they felt comfortable using the new vocabulary or what they think they need to do in order to be able to express themselves more effectively in Turkish. He or she can also ask the class to try to identify by themselves the mistakes that have been made during the class, thus emphasizing the interactive nature of the activity. At this stage, the teacher can assist in helping the students to identify their errors however the focus should be on the students themselves engaging and thinking for themselves as much as possible.

Following completion of the exercise, the teacher gives a sheet of paper to each student and asks them to write the ten names of the objects that they have learned from the flash cards. Once they have written their lists, they can swap the pieces of paper with the other students. The teacher then asks the students to write or draw the meanings of the words that have been written down by their classmates.

They showed themselves to be capable of recalling more than 10 words with very correct spelling and of writing down each of the words’ meaning in Spanish. Once they had set them down on paper they would then switch papers with their classmates who would in turn correct each other’s papers.

Once this task was completed they would then be asked to compare the result with the original cards. The exercise proved to be highly effective in setting vocabulary to students' long-term memory.

A second box of flash cards called, 'Objects around us', includes vocabulary relating to the home and allows children to match similar objects and separate them into different subgroups such as names of different rooms in the home. These cards are also used in Turkey for young native speakers and in Turkish classes for European adult students' class have also proved effective in teaching new vocabulary through playing. In these exercises, students practice using prepositions and conjugating verbs.

This time we ask questions such as, "where in the home does this object belong?"

Other variations include one student showing another student a picture of a saucepan and asking him or her to describe what the object is used for.

Learning a very different language such as Turkish for European adult students can be a real challenge however these conversational activities for beginners are highly effective in making students feel confident that they are progressing in the language learning activity right from the start. This is vital for their self esteem and for their finding the strength to continue developing their knowledge of Turkish.

By using different types of baby flash cards in my teaching work, I could observe that my students managed to significantly speed up the acquisition of Turkish and to more clearly distinguish similar looking but differently sounding words, which can often be confusing due to the very different phonetics. For example, the words *çocuk*/t͡ʃod͡ʒuk/(kid), *sucuk*/sud͡ʒuk/ (spicy sausage), *soğuk*/soɣuk/ (cold) and *sokak*/sokak (street), which all look similar but are not pronounced as most European students would suspect.

Vocabulary is always the key building block when learning a new language and even more so in the case of Turkish, given its different logic as compared to Germanic or romance languages, and the lack of a common etymology in the majority of the words used. In these circumstances, given the difficulty of transmitting the language to new learners in a logical way, resorting to more natural forms of language learning provides an apparent alternative. In this paper I have shown through the examples of my own teaching experience how such a simple tool as baby flashcards in oral exercises can speed up the acquisition of new language skills while making language teaching classes more social and interactive.

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Teaching Communicative Strategies to ESP Students

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Abstract

The article suggests a method of applying authentic political dialogues and other samples of political speeches for practical purposes. The dialogues are classified according to their status and referred to political discourse through the opposition of marked/unmarked types. The author bases his findings on a practical analysis of recordings of different types of dialogues, conducted by ESP students of MGIMO University (Moscow, Russia) in terms of a project work. The author pays special attention to the type of turn transitions as in a politically marked dialogue smooth/non-smooth transition of a speaker can be viewed as an example of the participants' communicative strategies. Special attention is also paid to the communicative strategies of the participants, changes in the dialogue status as well as the benefits of conducting this type of project work with students.

Keywords: political dialogue, TV debates, communicative strategy, turn-taking, smooth/non-smooth transition

1. Introduction

The terms *a political dialogue* and *political discourse* have long since become a cliché in the speech of experts and journalists. They appear in the media every time there is news on a compromise or a deadlock. Although speakers of English often understand the meaning of these phrases in a general way, the exact linguistic properties of a political dialogue are still undefined.

The analysis of the content of various dialogues with ESP students of English majoring in diplomacy and international relations based on the concept of the semantic structure of the word “politics”, as well as the communicative-pragmatic perspective on a dialogue can establish a broad approach in teaching and understanding political discourse.

In modern applied linguistics and political science political discourse is often understood as a set of discursive practices, identifying participants and forming a specific subject of political communication.

T.A. van Dijk uses this definition of a political discourse in his work “Discourse and Context” [3].

According to this work, a political discourse can only be conducted by professional politicians. It is frequently realized in the form of governmental documents, parliamentary debates, party programmes and speeches of politicians. Restricting political discourse to a political activity, that is to a professional framework, the scientist emphasizes its status and its role in the creation of official documents and speeches.

The Russian scientist E. Sheygal, on the other hand, offers a broader approach to defining a political discourse. In her research “Semiotics of Political Discourse” [1] she considers a dialogue to be political in character, if at least one of the three components are connected with politics: the speaker, the listener, or the content of the speech. Taking this broad definition as a basis, we can conclude that a dialogue within the framework of a political discourse may generally include the following varieties: *status* and *non-status* dialogues.

The *status political dialogue* is the one in which the text is produced directly by politicians and used in political communication (parliamentary debates, answers to questions of colleagues at the public hearings, interviews of political leaders). Speech acts that are performed by politicians in circumstances alike almost always have the status of official statements and are equal in importance to the official documents. This type of communication may also include the so-called “direct phone-in lines” performed by top politicians in Russia, Vladimir Putin for instance. This is a kind of specific interaction of political leaders with rank-and-file citizens, who seldom participate in political communication of status character. We tend to attribute dialogues of such type to the status category because answers to citizens’ questions are often interpreted by media as a kind of political statements [2]. These responses are subsequently quoted and often acquire a character of programme political statements. It is necessary to admit though that this is not a dialogue in its pure form, since such contacts are in fact asymmetrical.

The non-status political dialogue is the one with a very general reference to politics, such as discussions of political issues. In fact, this category includes texts of various reactions to a political stimulus. This may be a household dispute about politics, discussion of various political events, and others. The scope of this category also includes semi-spontaneous dialogues, reenacted in the productions of political detective series, “The House of Cards” being a good example here.

2. Material and methods

ESP course books for students majoring in politics and international relations often include just texts of speeches of famous politicians and reviews of certain political phenomena, while the tasks developing skills of professional oral communication are often overlooked. To deal with this challenge it is advisable to include into the curriculum a number of projects that are to bridge this gap, the following example being just a case in point.

The purpose of a small-scale linguistic experiment that was carried out with the help of fourth-year MGIMO University students was to compare the politically marked and unmarked dialogues. The project was scheduled for December 2017 (3 weeks, 6 academic hours) as a course paper in ESP Classes.

At the first stage of the project we had a task for students to collect a number of various samples of politically marked and unmarked texts from the media materials with the total duration of 30 minutes.

The aim of this stage was to promote teamwork in eliciting reliable criteria for dialogue classification as well as subjecting students to an unlimited number of recorded materials on political issues. The students were asked to find dialogues (no older then 5 years) on political issues that included (in their opinion) overt examples of strategic behavior.

Guided by the aim, the students chose to analyze a number of extracts from the US presidential political debates and UK parliamentary debates. It was considered the best option as the debates provided a range of pressing topics for discussion as well as well-considered ways of sending the message to the listeners.

The difficulty lay in the fact that students failed to find unmarked political dialogue as almost all the material for the experiment available on the Internet, radio and television perfectly fitted the framework of a political discourse. A dialogue on everyday topics, however, is rarely recorded. It never gets in the field of public attention because of its purely personal situational values. The exceptions are the quasi-spontaneous dialogues, imitating personal communication in popular TV series and talk shows. As a result, we believe that a bigger share of dialogues available in the media can be referred to a political discourse category [2].

The second stage of the linguistic experiment was the analysis of the dialogues collected. A smooth transition of speakers was recorded after 85% of turns. The smooth transition excluded interruption of a speaker or long pauses between the end of one and the beginning of another turn.

Non-smooth transitions included overlaps, interruptions and simultaneous starts. All these phenomena were seen by students as strategies of communicative behaviour, when a speaker used such methods to impose his ideas on the listener.

3. Conclusions

An important conclusion made was the fact that the dialogues in which one or both parties were involved in politics, namely the dialogues of political scientists, experts in politics or social sciences as well as talks of ordinary people on political topics were the examples of political discourse. Against this background, it turned out quite difficult to find an unmarked dialogical speech, which is in fact quite understandable, because the primary aim of any communication act is to impose or refute a certain point of view. As a result, if the media channel does not aim at entertaining the audience, the broadcast such as an interview, debate or a discussion usually has a political background, where each participant in his speech uses structures and language forms typical of a political discourse. For this reason, political communication and political discourse in particular require in-depth studying and practicing.

Secondly, the students also learned that speech behavior of communicants, though infinitely varied, can in general be reduced to an opposition of smooth (cooperative) and non-smooth (conflict) turn-taking. Not claiming the exclusive use of this typology, the proposed classification proved to be convenient and practical in use, because it reflects the basic parameters of different points relevant to this study: changing/keeping the communicative initiative, expressing the intention of choosing a strategy of turn taking by a particular speaker.

Thirdly, a huge role in choosing a technique of turn taking is played by the status of speakers, which is especially noticeable in interviews of politicians. The higher the status of the participants is, the higher the incidence of smooth transitions. Participants of formal political dialogues strictly observe the etiquette of speech (even the most heated debates are always strictly regulated). Pauses in this debate do not become a place of seizing the initiative. Communicants always wait until the statement of a previous speaker is completed. Non-institutional political discourse, in contrast, is closer in terms of turn-taking to unmarked dialogues. It is characterized by a larger number of interruptions and overlapping. Speakers in dialogues of this type use simultaneous starts as a strategy to overtake communicative initiatives.

Finally, talking about the particular highlight of the project, US presidential debate 2016, a conclusion was made that in contrast to parliamentary debates in most legislative bodies where the whole procedure is strictly regulated and, in fact, participants rarely come into direct impromptu conversation without the mediation of a chairman or the Speaker of the House, whose responsibility is to give the floor to the participants or provide the audience with an opportunity to ask questions, the Trump – Clinton debate overlooked the traditional rules. The number of interruptions and non-smooth transitions was about 10% higher than average, which at times seemed to have reduced the particular occasion to a mere scandal. Thus, if the debate moves into an active stage, this communication can scarcely be called cooperative. It loses its high status, the formality of discourse sometimes disappearing altogether.

All in all, it should be noted that students should be aware of the distinctive patterns of a political dialogue and possible communicative strategies acceptable in the language and culture they study as certain types of non-verbal behaviour or some ways of interrupting a partner may be unacceptable and even rude. Ignorance in such issues may hinder mutual understanding or even ruin effective communication process. The best way of instilling such knowledge and skills seems to be by projects and case studies. The experiment mentioned above conducted in terms of a case study or a project work may form good understanding of a foreign political culture and provide classes with vivid examples of up-to-date political discourse.

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The Challenges Encountered by Iraqi Students in Learning Italian Language and Creating New Methodology in their Learning

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Abstract

Through my experience in teaching, I usually make an investigation to know whether the students face any difficulties in comprehending the Italian language, and especially in grammar. This is mainly because the sentence structure in the Italian language differs from the sentence structure in the Arabic language, since it is a totally different language that contains different roots, like cultural roots. Therefore, the student faces some difficulties with the verbs, and the use of the auxiliary verbs, prepositions, and so on.
Among the main difficulties related to the pronunciation are: sometimes, the Arabic speaking student whose mother tongue is the Arabic language is not able to distinguish between the vowels (p, b) or between the letters (o and u).
This difficulty is a result of not using new methodologies in learning the Italian language in addition to the absence of the student and his wrong way of learning the language.
One of the basic solutions that motivates the students to learn and understand the Italian language proposes to apply new and modern teaching methods and among the most important ways are: the use of modern sources related to modern technology, for example, the use of textbooks approved by Italian universities to teach Italian language to foreigners, in addition to allocating great time to practice the language in a class of intensive exercises and dialogues between students, creating plays and other activities. Moreover, I also find it useful to organize intensive summer classes courses to Italy in schools or institutions to teach Italian for the purpose of motivating students and learning and mixing with Italians and foreign students who speak the Italian language as a result of the practice of many various activities across the Internet and mobile phones and by this the student will feel self-confident in expressing himself.

Keywords: language learning, grammar, teaching methods

The history of the Italian language in Iraq

The Department of Italian Language was founded in 2002 at the University of Baghdad-College of Languages, and is considered as the first department to learn the Italian language all over Iraq. It was founded by a professor and an Iraqi painter who had lived many years in Italy and studied the Italian art and culture, in cooperation with the Italian Embassy in Baghdad.

The report includes learning the Italian language and the difficulties faced by the Iraqi students, in addition to establishing modern and sophisticated methods in learning it. The Department of Italian Language was founded in 2002 at the University of Baghdad-College of Languages, and is considered as the first department to learn the Italian language all over Iraq. It was founded by a professor and an Iraqi painter who had lived many years in Italy and studied the Italian art and culture, in cooperation with the Italian Embassy in Baghdad, equipped with books, laboratory equipment and furniture for the department, which led to the success of the department as well as it graduated a lot of Iraqi students with superiority from this department. The Italian Embassy has also provided scholarships for outstanding students to Italy to complete postgraduate studies and to take intensive courses in Italian universities to teach Italian language to foreigners. After the war in Iraq in 2003 the building was destroyed in Baghdad, and the Italian department suffered from the destruction of teaching staff, where they burned the library and stole and vandalized laboratory equipment. In addition to that, the Italian language teachers were threatened by terrorists, who prompted them to leave the country and travel abroad. It was also difficult to practice the language or meet the Italians or provide Internet, however, despite the sabotage, the Italian Embassy re-equipped the Department with equipment, books and scholarships for outstanding students to Italy to complete their postgraduate studies, and took intensive courses in the language in Italian universities to teach Italian language to foreigners.

In 2012, the department was suspended by the University of Baghdad because of the lack of cadres of its professors specialized in Italian linguistics and literature.

In May of this year, the Ministry of Higher Education and the University of Baghdad approved the reopening of the department, after the return of Iraqi professors specialized in the Italian linguistics and literature of the Italian students graduated from the former Italian department, who received a doctorate from Italian solid universities. The laboratory was re-established by Iraqi efforts and financial and moral support from the Italian side.

Through my own experience in teaching the Italian language, I realized that the Iraqi student faces many difficulties in learning the Italian language than learning English or any other foreign language for some reasons, including: it is a new different language that has never been looked at or taught in schools like the English language, the Italian syntax and rules differ radically from the rules of the Arabic language, so it results from encountering difficulties, especially in the conduct of verbs, the use of auxiliary verbs, pronouns and prepositions. One of the other fundamental problems faced by the Iraqi student in learning the Italian language is the voices and the pronunciation of letters: we can note that a lot of students, for example, cannot distinguish between the vowels or between the letters (b, p o, u), like the word *(repubblica)* which means *(republic)* or the word *(perché)* which means *(why)*, in addition to the pronunciation of the letter “C” that somtimes utters “*chi”* and sometimes utters “*k”*.

Some of the important reasons behind these difficulties are the lack of new methods and equipment in the teaching of the language, especially after the suspension of the section and the neglection of the equipment and educational books available in the library of the department. It is also because of the absence of the student’s role and his wrong way of studying the language, which is based on memorizing sentences and texts without understanding them, resulting from the aim in success or transit phase only, because the curriculum previously was not in the required level, most of it was a text to memorize and written only.

Solutions needed to overcome these difficulties

One of the basic solutions that motivates the student to learn and understand the Italian language proposes to apply new and modern teaching methods and among the most important ways are: the use of modern sources related to modern technology, for example, the use of textbooks approved by Italian universities to teach Italian language to foreigners. For example, a book entitled “*Perugia University accredited to foreigners*”, allocates great time to practice the language in a class of intensive exercises and dialogues between students, creating plays and other activities.

I find it necessary to organize intensive summer courses to Italy in schools or institutions to teach Italian for the purpose of motivating students and learning and mixing with Italians and foreign students who speak the Italian language as a result of the practice of many various activities across the Internet and mobile phones:

assigning lectures to make quizzes and games on the display in the grammar and composition of sentences where students are shared by phones. In addition to courses for professors in order to strengthen their scientific skills and develop their competencies. Those methods work to encourage students to easily comprehend the composition of the sentence as well as they make the students interested in the language and enjoy it without feeling bored and tired. Among the modern technology methods currently used in teaching language are: creating a video conference with any Italian university to teach the Italian language to foreigners and to make an online lecture, through communication programs, that makes students listening to the lecture especially in subjects related to the Italian culture and civilization.

Using the image to learn Italian

The image usage is a very important educational tool, as it is a major means of communication and it helps in reflection especially at the present time, images are considered very important in self-presentation, for example in social networking sites as well as it is considered as a tool for knowledge and entertainment, where it allows the student to express a particular thing and thus enrich his meaning. It is possible to perform simple exercises around a particular image, for example a picture of a child’s room and create a variety of questions for the students about the description of the picture and then ask each of the students to write a word or a sentence related to the image and give the synonyms, for example, book, bed, table, etc. Moreover, it is possible to do another exercise related to comprehension, for example creating a short story and describing the situation of people with the creation of a title and suggesting some hypotheses in addition to the establishment of exercises related to grammar and so on.

The use of Italian radio as a means to learn the language

The Italian professor Nicolita Santiosiano of the University of Perugia for foreigners confirmed that the use of radio is an essential part of the teaching of Italian language to foreigners, especially for advanced stages. It helps to tame the student’s mind to understand and comprehend the dialogue and learn basic linguistic terms, namely the language of journalism and media. It is possible to prepare dialogues on various topics and listen to them by the students and then prepare exercises related to the comprehension and grammar of the language, which allows to enhance the student’s ability to comprehend and the ability to express and write. After that, it is possible to do a simple oral or editorial examination.

Finally, I can point out the importance of literature in learning Italian language, of what it owns of thought and knowledge of Italian civilization and history. Moreover, it constitutes an important means of cultural, political and social exchange between the West and East, and is a bridge between different cultures, through the great literary works of many Italian writers whose works have been translated into Arabic and vice versa. Therefore, their literary production is considered a major means of identifying the history of language for the student as well as his important role in translation. There is hope that the department will return and rise to the best and becoming a main reference for all students studying the Italian language in Iraq.

The Realization of Metrical Phonology in Blake's The Lamb

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Abstract

Metrical Phonology is one of the main approaches devoted mainly to the study of phonological analysis of the structure and the acoustic limits of stress. This present study aims at proving and discovering the language of poetry is scientifically built and used. It is based on the hypothesis that language of poetry is analyzed hierarchically in the mind of the poet unconsciously and not merely an intelligent job. For this purpose, William Blake's', The Lamb' is analysed in terms of metrical phonology. Each line in the poem represents a simple tone unit. This tone unit may contain four kinds of syllables: a) a syllable which is accented, [+ accent] (and also[+stress] and[+strong]); b) one or more syllables which are[+stress] (and also[+strong) but[-accent]; c) one or more syllables which are [+strong] but [-stress] (and therefore [-accent]); c) one or more syllables which are weak, [-strong] (and therefore[-stress]and [-accent]) (kriedler's1989).The inner and outer rhythmical structure of 'The Lamb' reflect a fact that rhythm is everywhere in the poem. It is neither limit itself to weight, utterance, sound, image or symbol nor it is an independent component of the poem, but it is within all its components. The importance of rhythm consists in that there is a vertical line hierarchically built stemming from the beginning of the poem to its end coming through the horizontal lines including themes, pronunciation, sounds, images, symbols and weight in an indefinite central point that represent the root of the rhythmical interactivity to convey it from its meaningless accumulated images to its constructional formation. The underlying level of representations in 'the Lamb' and its phonetic representation exist in the mind of the poet in all stages of forming the poem.

Keywords: Metrical Phonology, poetry, sounds, images, symbols

Metrical & Non-Linear Phonology

Farrokhpey (1999:21) states that Non-linear phonology covers a number of models avoid the representation of the structure as a set of parts occurring in a strict horizontal sequence where each part is being analysed (horizontally), for example, being (-syllabic), (-voice), (nasal), (coronal+), …etc. and limits itself to hierarchical representation. Metrical phonology is one of the main approaches that is devoted mainly to study the phonological analysis of stress as it exists in the study of strings of phonological units through using a segment, a syllable and tone unit in a hierarchical way. It is developed to cover the entire area of the structure and the acoustic limits of stress. Stress patterns are at least a part of importance between grammatical and grammatical components on one hand and Rhythm and Metre of William Blake 'The Lamb' on the other hand. (Crystal, 2008: 330)

Metrical Phonology & Stress

All sound units in 'The Lamb' are organized and analysed in terms of acoustic features. The goal of phonology is to show how sound units are patterned in the language and make rules as much as possible about the nature of the sound systems in the languages of the world. (Crystal, 2008: 365). In this theory the strings of *sound units* are represented hierarchically, using concepts such as strong and weak syllables, foot and word. They all introduced as a hierarchical theory of stress, approaches developed for covering the full range of section structure and acoustical limits. Stress of the patterns are considered to reflect at least in part, the relationships of Prominence as far as the Morphological aspects of the utterance. And the metrical structure of words and phrases can be represented in metric form Tree in which nodes that reflect relative, relative strength between both (w=weak, s=strong) are existed. (*ibid*).

(Aitchison,1999,47) deals with Metrical Phonology as a word or group of words that has its own rhythm through the interaction of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Examples:

/leit∂/ — S W

/∂bΛv/ — W S

Moreover, organizing segments into groups of relative prominence; organizing segments into syllables; syllables into metrical feet; feet into phonological words; and words into larger units are the main concerned of this study. The organization of 'The Lamb' can be represented formally by metrical trees showing both under representation and phonetic one. (London school www.ling.fju.edu.tw).

Katamba (1989: 225) adds that metrical phonology is developed within generative phonology framework in recent years to handle stress phenomena. It complements auto-segmental phonology which was primarily designed for the description of tone although it was used later to account for other aspects of phonology. A stressed syllable is more prominent than an unstressed one. This fact is regarded as crucial in metrical phonology. Relative prominence is expressed using binary branching trees which are labeled strong (S) and weak (w). The more prominent syllable is dominated by (S) and the less prominent one is dominated by (W).

Little/litl/

/\

s w

/lit/ /l/

Strong and Weak syllables are paired together by a procedure called foot formation. What is proposed is that stress in Blake's poem is assigned to strings which have constituent structure consisting of two elements, one of which is strong (dominant) and the other is weak (subordinate). The dominant one is the head and governs its immediate neighbour to the left or right. (Carr, 1993: 93)

Acoustically, the poet uses stress to indicate the degree of force on the production foot. The usual distinction can be shown between assertion and unsettled syllables, the first are more prominent than the latter and marked in copying with vertical line lifting. This is usually the reason behind increasing the loudness of the stressed section, but increasing in length and often the pitch may contribute to the inclusive impression of prominence. In popularity use, stress is usually associated with an undifferentiated idea of emphasis or Energy from the point of view of phonology, the main function of stress is to be responsible for distinguishing between concentration or variation in sentences(stress), as in "**The big man looks angry**". Many pairs of words and word sequences can also be distinguishable-Guided by stress (lexical stress or word stress), as in contrast between **the need for an increase in wages & I am going to increase this wage**. Stress is assigned to syllables of words by repeated application of the rules (such as lexical, compound, and nuclear rules) (Waengler: 2009).

The most prominent portion in the foot is called stress president. Foot, in this context, refers to the underlying unity whose analysis differs according to the theoretical approach. When two syllables are stressed immediately adjacent, the situation is described as a stress struggle. Speakers tend to avoid stress the clash. (Crystal, 2008, 454,455).

Strong and Weak Syllables

One of the most noticeable features of English pronunciation of 'The Lamb' is that all lines of the poem can be analysed between strong and weak syllables, and how these weak syllables are pronounced and where they occur in English through the analysis of the poem as a whole. Elision of some syllables in connected speech is a closely related subject, and in considering intonation the difference between strong and weak syllables is also important. Finally, sentences with strong and weak forms are clearly related matter. The researcher looks at how we use these terms to refer to phonetic characteristics of syllables. When we compare weak syllables with strong syllables, we find the vowel in a weak syllable tends to be shorter, of lower intensity (loudness) and different in quality.

For example, in the word data/deit∂ the second syllable, which is weak is shorter than the first, is less loud and has a vowel that cannot occur in strong syllables. In a word like **bottle**/b**ɒ**tl the second weak syllable contains no vowel at all, but consists entirely of the consonant syllabic sound [1]. We call this a syllabic consonant. There are other ways of characterising strong and weak syllables. We could describe them partly in terms of stress (by saying, for example, that strong syllables are stressed and weak syllables unstressed). (Roach, 2009, 64).

Metrical Feet

Generally speaking, human speech reflects different rhythmical patterns with regular placement of beats. One pattern contains a perceptually salient syllable followed by a less salient syllable, as in the English word **better**/bet∂. Such a structure is known as a trochee, and is referred to as a **trochaic** structure. Another pattern contains a less salient syllable followed by a more salient one as in the English word **ahead/**∂'hed. This is known as an **iambic** structure. The structures in question are often referred to as **metrical feet**. (Carr, 2008:150)

Rhythm and Metre

Rhythm is an essential quality of poetry in general and 'The Lamb' in specific. It represents the pulse of life which is similar to the beats of hearts. In the poem, rhythm is marked by accents or stresses placed on certain syllables which need to be emphasized. The terms 'rhythm' and 'metre' are often used interchangeably. Metre is prearranged rhythm. That is, when rhythm follows a definite pattern so that the number of syllables between accents is regular, we have metre. In other words, rhythm is the larger term while metre, is the smaller and more particular. (HAARY, VANDER HULSTON,1995) Metre means 'measure' and applies mainly to poetry. In English poetry, metre is made up of recurring patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables. In English poetry, the symbols that are used to mark the unstressed (v or x); and (ˈ) for stressed syllables. This process of sorting out the metrical pattern of a poem is called Scansion which refers to marking stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of verse. In poetry, these feet are usually grouped in certain definite patterns to form the lines which are named according to the number of feet in each line. A line of poetry in the Lamb may consist of either trimeter, tetrameter or Pentameter. The most common meters in English verse are tetrameter and pentameter. There are many different patterns of syllables which make up the various feet used in English poetry. The most common is the iambic foot. (1996, 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 14)

Tools of Metrical Phonology

Tree and Grids are two forms to study Metrical Phonology. The form of tree is used in this study.

The most visible element in a tree called a designated station. It is that the node dominates only by (S) and root labels. It consists of basic stress and secondary stress. It is also referred to by labelling, because any knots are relatively more prominent than the other. The result encoded is typical of acoustic phonetics. (Haary 1995). The analysis is easily distributed into nuclear English stress, and importance (neutral or non-elliptical) stress in the actual classes, the unclear pressure is always prominent right that is the right node is labelled(S). Formally, the inherent characteristics of the measurement theory are as follows complementary labels (S) and (W) relative relationship, where it can be prominent. (DHIA A.H. ALJUBOURI M.A., 1982).

Phonological Metrical Analysis of William Blake's' 'The lamb'

Blake's poem 'The Lamb' consists of 20 lines, each line represents one tone unit within the poem construction as a whole. This poem has been built according to metrical tree into seven groups. As in table No.1 below, lines number (1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 12) have the form (strong+weak) in three feet. Line number (3, 6, 7, 8) have the form (strong+weak) in three feet plus strong syllable in isolation. Line number (4 and 5) have the form (strong+weak) in three feet plus one foot with a weak and a strong syllable. Line number (13 and 18) have the form (weak+strong+weak) in two feet plus two weak syllables. Line number (14 and 17) have the form (weak+strong) in three feet plus a weak syllable in isolation. Line number (19 and 20) have the form (strong +weak) in two feet plus two strong syllables in successive. Line number (15 and 16) have the form (weak+strong) in two feet plus three weak syllables among them.

Group No.	Lines No.	Metrical Form
1	1, 2, 9, 10, 11 and 12	SW, SW, SW
2	3, 6, 7 and 8	SW, SW, SW+S
3	4 and 5	SW, SW, SW & WS
4	13 and 18	W+WS, W+WS
5	14 and17	W+WS, WS, WS
6	19 and 20	SW+S+S+SW
7	15 and 16	W,W+WS+WW+WS

Conclusions

Poets in general and William Blake in specific are comprehensively aware of the concept of metrical phonology. This has been reflected in the romantic poetry of Blake's 'The Lamb'. The present study has shown that this approach is the most suitable one to analyze the poem through dividing each line into strong and weak syllable in each foot. It also states that the phonological building of the poem exists in the form of strata in the mind of the poet whether he studies it in academic establishment or not. This poem is a good example of application such a modal to study stress specially in the field of poetry. In this poem we can see that we have 62 strong syllables, and 69 weak syllables this means that the ratio is almost equal.

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The Role of Employing Robin's Strategy (SQ3R) on EFL Iraqi University Students' Performance in Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

Reading Comprehension as the process of simultaneously and constructing meaning. Reading is a skill should be mastered by learners beside writing, listening, speaking in order to be able to use English in global to communicate and to get information. SQ3R reading strategy designed to help students to improve, and efficiency in reading. This strategy consists of five steps that deepen learners' thinking as they read: Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review.

Keywords: Robin's Strategy (SQ3R), EFL Students, Performance, Reading Comprehension

Introduction

There is a positive relationship between learners' reading and their reading comprehension skill, reading strategy has a significant impact on the readers; reading comprehension skill. Akbarnejadb [1] states that learners can comprehend the basic notions of a paragraph, comprehend unfamiliar vocabularies or sentences and bridge the gap resulted from different culture to use. Adopting Robinson's strategy in reading is to aid leaner to improve word awareness and become independent word-solvers and learners are able to put their ideas into sentences using the new vocabularies, sentences and structures because they have read, memorized, recited and reviewed them, therefore, these new learned elements get unconsciously used [2].

This research aims at: 1- Investigating empirically the role of using Robin's strategy SQ3R in teaching reading comprehension to university students. 2- Finding out whether there is a significant difference between the mean sources of the experimental group and the mean source of the control group.

It is hypothesized that: 1- There is a positive effect on using Robin's strategy on the students' achievement in reading comprehension. 2- There is a significant difference between the pre- test and post-test scores of the experimental group and pre- test and post-test scores of the control group.

The Problem and its Significance

Language is a complex cognitive skill that can be described within a context of cognitive theory. As long as it is complex, learning a new language requires a great effort to master it. As it is assumed, any language to be learned needs four major skills to focus on; reading is one of these skills. The target outcome should be the development of a strong ability and a desire to absorb the concepts written in the materials in front of EFL learners. A basic objective of reading comprehension is to help learners promote skills. The problem here comes up due to the deviation from this target. It goes without saying that reading comprehension is a significant skill that helps learners decode a text, analyze and construct their own ideas. To achieve the ultimate goal from reading, certain strategies should be followed. This research addresses a certain strategy which is Robin's and its influence on reading comprehension on EFL learning process.

Theoretical Background: Robin's Strategy SQ3R: The Model of the Study

Robin's strategy presents a student-centered, text-based discussion method and paves the way for further investigations on this subject. It suggests a new practical and active strategy for teaching reading comprehension. Robin's strategy is concerned mainly with language acquisition in EFL learning in terms of reading comprehension. As it is known, acquiring language needs four major skills to be focused on; reading is one of them. Therefore, SQ3R are derived basically from the cognitive theories. 'Congitivism' is the theory which assumes that learner's minds develop through stages and learners construct language structures in different stages. On the other hand, 'Behaviorism' is the method which believes that learners have a blank slate and they learn from imitation and primitive feedback [3]. On the contrary, 'Interactionism' supports that social environment can enhance learner's natural language development. Simply SQ3R strategy is used when the text is fairly structured and has some textbook aids for reading such as headings, italics or study question, the amount at reading is extensive and the information must be retained over long periods of time with required information from a detailed of understanding the strategy has basic steps as:

Step 1: (S) is for Survey: The learner examines the title of the chapter to read. It is good clues as to the general content of the chapter, then read the introduction.

Step 2: Q is for Question: The learner turns the title, headings and subheading into questions (focus attention what information to look for in that section). Write down any question that the learner asks himself / herself How does this relate to the unit and what he/she already know? Then the learner has as he/she reading through the content.

Step 3: R is for Read: The learner finds answer to the question raised. He/She tries to answer the questions and pay attention to any underlined, italicized, bold words or phrases and graphic aids, the learner slows down when he/she is reading difficult passages. And the learner breads the reading into manageable size, read small sections at a time and recite after each.

Step 4: R is for Recite: After the learner has read section, try to ask himself/herself questions about what the learner has just read, and answer the question by his/her own language, then takes notes using own words in this way the learner uses all the senses to take in the information (see, say, hear, and write).

Step 5: R is for Review: This is an ongoing process regularly review, the notes and summaries what the learner has read at the end of each section and he/she uses concept, maps and flash cards to help, remember what the learner has read [5].

Section Three: Methodology

The participants of this research include all the second-year male and female students of the department of English/college of education for Humanities/University of Tikrit from which the sample is selected. A number of students male and female is randomly chosen from the second-year students.

Thirty students have been chosen for the experimental group and other thirty for the control group.

The experimental group has been taught with SQ3R technique, while the control group has been taught without SQ3R technique by using the traditional method of teaching reading comprehension. In order to ensure that the two groups are equivalent. Both the experimental and the control group have had the pre-test. All the students of the both groups have to answer the questions of the test and to write the answers down. The researcher has scored and analyzed the answers of the two groups. The mean of the experimental group is 36.167 and that of the control group is 35.800. The (t) test value has been computed and it is 0.101 compared with (t) tabulated value 2.00 at 0.5 level of significance indicates that there ie no significant difference between the two groups. The data of pre-test are used to equalize the experimental and control group.

Quantitative data

The achievement test is used in the research as a means to measure the achievement of the experimental group students in Reading Comprehension who has been taught by using Robin's strategy SQ3R and the control group students who has been taught by the traditional method of teaching reading comprehension which is used at the university of Tikrit. The test has been divided in to fifth stages with thirty learners, the thirty learners have also been divided into three groups 10 visuals, 10 for auditory and 10 are kinesthetic since there fifth stage of Robin's strategy SQ3R that means the students asked to survey the topic, ask question about the topic and the three stages of reading comprehension i.e. recall, recite, and review.

As a result, students survey the reading text from 10 to 20 minutes to grasp the gist or the general idea. This is applicable for all types of learners, yet it works more effectively with the first type (visual persons). The purpose of surveying is to know what the author wants to say, what kind of information, the author gives, how many sub-topics into which the information is broken on reading.

After surveying, students are expected to question by doing so, each group member turn each tittle and heading into questions. The experimental group clarifies that learners at this stage are able to create purpose of reading; therefore, their critical and analytical minds are promoted when students have questions in mind they read attentively. Regarding the types of the students, this effective for three types (visual, auditory and kinesthetic).

Students accordingly answer the questions they created beforehand, yet researcher has put certain objectives at this stage as:

1- Interpret the question and infer an answer;

2- Summarize the key word in each paragraph.

This happen smoothly by reading the text, which is the third stage (3R) of Robin's strategy SQ3R, 3R *i.e*., recall, recite and review. To answer the question created above a certain paragraph, students should read more carefully to make up the main notion in the paragraph. By applying that, all students recognize that speed differs from one paragraph to another and from one student to another, as resulted from the test. Fourthly, after applying the previous stages students should paraphrase the question and answer again. Moreover, they should put what they learn into their own words. They are not only calling the answer but also recognizing and retaining the information in mind.

This is fourth stage which reciting. They objective that the researcher had created at this stage, is: Design new structures similar to what they have learned using the main vocabularies and ideas to prove understanding for visual students, underlining or highlighting the important points are very useful to recite. By reciting, 83% of visual get benefit through reading, on other hand 8% of auditory students gain a proactive goal by reciting and recalling. And 100% of the kinesthetic one gets involved by rewriting, rephrasing. By visualizing this image, we can find that the kinesthetic ones are the stimuli factors that help others cooperatively. Accordingly, and as a result student easily can use the new vocabularies they are exposed to because they have gone through them during the previous stage.

Thus, the first useful objective is achieved. EFL learners get used to new words and start using them unconsciously. By paraphrasing what they have learned, they enable their brain to storm and accordingly increase the analytical level which is not the focus of reading comprehension but it is very important during learning process as Bloom Taxonomy pyramid says.

Students cover the previous stage by recalling and reviewing. This stage is called review. Here the researcher depends on Bloom's Taxonomy, the researcher has checked grasing the new information by asking each group to report back to the whole class in case of not having the ability to recall again, the students are asked to return back to recall again, then students are asked to return back to previous stage. The researcher adopts using mind maps to review and brainstorm and realized that those methods are very useful to consolidate all the information students read. Therefore, Robin's strategy can be effectively applied through cooperative approach to achieve the quadruple strength learning (i.e. seeing, saying, hearing and writing). Consequently, SQ3R virtually encloses all different types and styles of students.

Section Four: Discussion of the Results

The statistical analysis of the obtained results indicates that the achievement of the students in the experimental group is significantly better and higher in average than the achievement of the students in the control group. This means that this experiment lead to administrate significantly higher learning effects for using Robin's strategy. Teaching Reading Compression promotes interactions with the text, work corporative me, thinking creatively, generating and sharing ideas with aptitude but also with motivation. The mean of experimental group is 68.767 while the mean of control group is for 5.900.

Learners get benefit from this strategy which is based on student – centered discussion. The aim of this research specified as reading a decision on the role and effectiveness of the use SQ3R on the achievement of second year college students in Reading comprehension. The obtained findings as well as their interpretation, be summarized as:

1. The mean score of the experimental group is higher than mean score of the control group. This means that teaching reading comprehension with SQ3R it's not easy is more effective than teaching reading comprehension through using the traditional method.

2. There is a clear and significant difference in the students' scores of experimental groups between the pre-test and the post test. this indicates that obviously that the students in experimental group have got benefit from applying SQ3R strategy.

3. The difference in means between the pre-test scores and post test scores in control group is 10.1 and the difference in means of the two tests in the experimental group is 32.6. it does not mean that the traditional way of teaching reading comprehension has a totally negative effect but the students in the experimental group of got observable benefit from applying a SQ3R strategy. The mean of the experimental group is 68.767 and the mean of the control group is 45.900. The "T-test" formula for independent samples has been used so as to find out whether there is a significant different between the mean scores of both groups or not. The calculated "t" value, which is 5.859, has been compared with the tabulated value which is 2.00 and the degree of freedom is 58. This comparison indicates that there is a significant difference between experimental and the control group.

This obviously indicates that the experimental group is better than the control group. As a result, the first alternative of the hypothesis which indicates the Robin's strategy has a significant degree of positive effect on the students' achievement in compared to their achievement in situation where traditional method of teaching reading comprehension is used, is accepted. Vazalwar (2011) suggests that anxiety affects the development of reading comprehension negatively. Anxiety is related negatively but significantly with reading comprehension in EFL learners. Apart from the necessity of further investigation in this area, the other factor that is very important in the development of reading comprehension is pertinent to the background knowledge. That is proved by the experiment in Tikrit University. Persons who have enough vocabularies can clarify the meaning or reading passages faster than those who should guess the meaning of unfamiliar words according to the clues of context.

Accordingly, to Robin's 'Question' stage is valid where learners can relate a passage to an experience, another book, or other facts about the world, they are 'making connection' and creating their own worded questions. Also, visualization while reading a text brings words to life and helps learners, specially the visual ones, improve their reading comprehension skills. Partner reading is a strategy that is created for pairs; this sheds light on the importance of cooperative learning. For more exposition, practically, the researcher has asked learners to read their own book applying 'Survey', and 'Read' stages. Once they finish reading, they are given the chance to write down their own general questions following 'Question' stage, according to Robinson strategy. Afterwards, in pairs, learners 'Recite' and 'Review' collaboratively. Therefore, SQ3R is a model of fluent reading and helps learners learn decoding skills.

SQ3R provides a unified approach for fulfilling the needs of different styles of learners and the outcome.

Section Five: Conclusion

According to the results obtained the following conclusions have been observed:

1. From a theoretical point of view the results uphold the view that language teaching his communication and interaction between the students and the text. It is so important to use their prior knowledge and their own experience to learn new things and interaction with each other's.
2. The class atmosphere in experimental group is obviously different from control group.
3. From practical point of view SQ3R strategy is an effective strategy at reading comprehension.

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Studies in Second Language Acquisition

Conjunctions in the English Essay Writing of Spanish EFL Learners

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Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to contribute to clarify the question of the relationship between frequency of use of conjunctions in EFL students' compositions and writing quality. The current research was thus carried out to study conjunction and conjunction errors in argumentative essays written by third-year and fourth-year secondary education Spanish learners and to examine the correlation between their frequency of use and writing quality. Participants were 350 secondary education students enrolled in seven different Spanish state schools all of whom had started learning English at the age of five. Analysis of the compositions for cohesion was performed by counting conjunctions in accordance with the taxonomy of cohesive devices provided in Halliday and Hasan (1976), consisting of four categories of conjunctions, in terms of semantic function: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. Results showed a positive significant relationship between conjunction density and writing quality. The qualitative analysis of the students´ compositions revealed that additive and casual conjunctions formed the largest occurrence of use, followed by adversative and temporal conjunctions. In addition, there was an extremely limited variety of conjunctions from each category in students' writings. The majority of conjunctions were either underused or not used at all. Participants experienced difficulty in using conjunctions especiall adversative and additive ones. Some pedagogical implications are drawn from the study.

Keywords: conjunctions, secondary education, L2 writing quality, conjunction errors

1. Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to contribute to clarify the question of the relationship between frequency of use of conjunctions in EFL students' compositions and writing quality. The current research was thus carried out to study conjunction and conjunction errors in argumentative essays written by third-year and fourth-year secondary education Spanish learners and to examine the correlation between their frequency of use and writing quality. Conjunction is a cohesive relation that refers to "a specification of the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before" (Halliday and Hasan, 1976:227). We can say that conjunctions are aids for the reader to connect sentences and paragraphs in order to make sense of the text.

The use of conjunctions has been found to be problematic for second and foreign language learners from different educational contexts. To the best of our knowledge, few studies have investigated the use of conjunctions in secondary education EFL learners' writing. In order to bridge this gap, the present study targets secondary education Spanish students' expository essay writing.

2. Literature review

One of the most significant works that have contributed to our explicit understanding of cohesion is Halliday and Hasan (1976). Cohesion refers to the range of grammatical and lexical possibilities that exist for linking an element of language with what has gone before or what follows in a text. This linking is achieved through relations in meaning that exist within and across sentences (Halliday & Hasan, 1976: 10). Cohesion is divided into lexical cohesion and grammatical cohesion; the latter is subdivided into four types, that is, reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Halliday and Hasan (1976: 226) refer to the cohesive relation of conjunction in the following terms: "Conjunctive elements are cohesive not in themselves but indirectly, by virtue of their specific meanings; they are not primarily devices for reaching out into the preceding (or following) text, but they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse".

Halliday and Hasan (1976:237) categorise conjunctions into four subcategories: additive, adversative, causal and temporal. This categorisation of conjunctions which will be used for the present study.

Over the past 30 years a number of studies have analysed the association between the employment of cohesive items and writing quality. However, no agreement has been reached so far. Some studies find no connection between cohesion and writing quality (e.g., Bae, 2001; Castro, 2004; Meisuo, 2000; Zhang, 2017). On the other hand, a series of studies discovered some evidence of a significant relationship between cohesive ties and writing quality (e.g., Crossley, Kyle and Macnamara, 2016; Lahuerta, 2004, 2016; Liu and Braine, 2005; Yang and Sun, 2012; Zhang, 2010; Zhao, 2017). In addition to the study of the correlation between cohesion and the quality of compositions, researchers have also identified some problems concerning cohesion in the writings of ESL/EFL learners. Some corpus-based studies have shown the underuse, overuse and misuse of conjunctions by ESL and EFL students (e.g., Hamed 2014; Narita, Sato, and Sugiura, 2004; Ong, 2011; Wei-yu Chen, 2006; Yin, 2015).

3. Aims of the study

The aim of this paper is to contribute to clarify the issue of the relationship between the number of conjunctions used and quality of EFL writing as it remains an open one in the literature.

As our second aim, we intend to examine to which extent the use of conjunctions might associate with distinct grade EFL writers. The comparison between third and fourth graders' writings allows us to identify how the use of conjunctions develops within a school setting and may deepen our understanding of the deployment of cohesive items in EFL writing.

Furthermore, we carry out an analysis of conjunction use in secondary education students´ argumentative essays in order to identify frequency of use of different conjunction categories and likely difficulties in conjunction usage.

4. Method

4.1 Participants

Participants were 350 secondary education students enrolled in seven different Spanish state schools all of whom had started learning English at the age of five. The sample was divided into two groups: One group made up of 161 students in the third year of compulsory education and a second group composed of 189 students in the fourth year of compulsory education. The students in the third year of compulsory education had a lower intermediate level (A2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR) and those in the fourth year of compulsory education had an intermediate level (B1 level according to the CEFR).

4.2 Procedure

For the present study, the data come from a written composition activity, which was administered to participants in their own classroom. All the participants were given 30 minutes for the writing activity.

In this way, both time and topic constraints were controlled in order to make results comparable (Wolfe-Quintero *et al*., 1998).

This study mainly concerned the quality of student compositions and thus every sample composition was marked to get a score that could represent its quality. The compositions were rated according to such factors as content, explicitness of ideas, coherence, syntax and vocabulary of each composition.

Analysis of the compositions for cohesion was performed by counting conjunctions in accordance with the taxonomy of cohesive devices provided in Halliday and Hasan (1976), consisting of four categories of conjunctions, in terms of semantic function: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal.

5. Results

A statistical analysis was carried out with the program R Development Core Team 2012, version 2.15.

Regarding the relationship between frequency of use of conjunctions and writing quality, conjunction density was significantly associated with the composition global score (p=0.69, p-Value=<0.001).

The comparison between third- and fourth-year graders in terms of the frequency of use of conjunctions in their compositions showed a significant difference between both grades. Fourth graders outperformed third graders in the total number of conjunctions (M (fourth graders)=4.41, M (third graders)=3.28, Student's t-test, $p<0.001$).

With respect to conjunction usage in participants' written texts, a total of 879 conjunctions were used in participants' essays, of which 188 (21.3%) were used inappropriately. Additive and casual conjunctions formed the largest occurrence of use, followed by adversative and temporal conjunctions.

The highest percentage of inappropriate use of conjunctions committed by the learners was in the use of adversative conjunctions (17.1%) and additive conjunctions (16.7%). There was an extremely limited variety of conjunctions from each category in students' writings. In addition, the majority of conjunctions were either underused or not used at all.

The highest percentage of inappropriate use of additive conjunctions was *in addition* in fourth and third graders' writings. *And* was the most frequently used conjunction by all participants.

The highest percentage of inappropriate use of causal conjunctions was *therefore* among fourth and third grader writers. *Because* was the most frequently used conjunction in both groups.

The highest percentage of inappropriate use of adversative conjunctions was *however* in third graders' writings and *but* in fourth graders' writings. *But* was the most frequently used conjunction by all participants.

The highest percentage of inappropriate use of temporal conjunctions was *first* in third and fourth graders' writings. *Finally*, was the most frequently used conjunction in third graders' writings and *first* in fourth graders' writings.

6. Conclusions

From the results obtained in the present study, we can conclude that conjunction density and writing quality are positively related. This study also showed that higher proficiency EFL learners outperform lower proficiency EFL learners in the ability to use conjunctions. Furthermore, for the secondary level learners of the study, the use of conjunctions still remains at a basic stage, which inevitably affects the quality of their writings.

The application of conjunctions to use in writing may constitute persistent challenges to EFL learners across different grade levels; therefore, from a pedagogical perspective, secondary education ELF teachers should place more emphasis on the use of conjunctions, teaching students a large quantity of these cohesive ties and making them aware of the semantic distinction between conjunctions that belong to the same grammatical category.

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Factors Affecting Learner's Task Engagement in a Task-Based Course

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Abstract

Research interest on Task-based language learning and teaching (TBLT) has moved from theoretical rational to practice, to task properties and to contexts and the learners as reflected in the themes of international conferences for TBLT. This study investigated factors that affected freshman students' task engagement in a task-based course in a Chinese university. Five surveys of task engagement were carried out over 11 weeks and retrospective structured interviews were done at the end. It was found that the task generating the highest levels of engagement was one that was both fun and most relevant from the learners' perspective. Apart from the features of the tasks, students' knowledge of communication strategies, rapport and their motivation and self-efficacy were also found to influence students' task engagement. In addition to the choice and design of tasks, in a task-based approach the learners also play a big role in shaping their own learning experience. Future studies should explore the dynamics of how learner factors interact with task features in the language classrooms and how learning experience is co-constructed.

Keywords: TBLT, tasks, learner factors, task engagement, task-based course

1. Introduction

This paper reports on an investigation into the factors that influenced first year university students' task engagement in a task-based course at Shantou University in China over a period of 11 weeks.

The study follows the recent trend in the literature to move from theoretical issues to analysis of task-based learning practice, and from consideration of task properties to contexts and the learners. In particular, it tests the claim of Ellis [1] that learner's task performance is co-constructed by task design features, methodological procedures and learner factors.

Very few studies have investigated TBLT from the perspective of learner factors, especial those that influence the learners' performance in task-based lessons. Ellis [2] synthesized different definitions of tasks and concluded that a task should involve some kind of a gap (information gap or opinion gap), a primary focus on meaning, an opportunity for learners to use their own linguistic and non-linguistic resources and a specific communicative outcome. This is on the basis of the definitions proposed from different theoretical fronts: Long's interaction Hypothesis [3], Ellis's developmental problem of L2 acquisition [4], Swain's [5] output hypothesis and social-cultural theory (e.g. see Lantolf [6]; Skehan, [7], etc.). However, the definition of tasks synthesized by Ellis [2] could be well explained from that of the perspective of learner's motivation. Noels, Pelletier, Clement and Vallerand [8] distinguished 3 types of intrinsic motivation: 1) exploring new ideas and knowledge, 2) accomplishment and 3) stimulation. Besides, self-direction is also one of the main elements of motivation [9]. Explained from the perspective of learner's motivation, an information or opinion gap embedded in a task serves as the "hook" to engage the learners, a primary focus on meaning provides a break from dull classroom learning on grammar and vocabulary and possible stimulation of fun experience, an opportunity for learners to use their own linguistic and non-linguistic resources gives a sense of self-direction, while a specific communicative outcome makes the sense of accomplishment easier to achieve.

While the task properties that are most conducive to learning have been investigated intensively, learners' motivation on tasks that shape the actual learning experience has been largely ignored.

Dörnyei's [10] process model of learning motivation (pre-actional stage; actional stage and post-actional stage) captures the fluctuating nature of learner's motivation in learning: Learner's orientation towards language learning sets the basis for their motivation, the quality of the learning experience in class further influences the learners' willingness and preparedness to invest their efforts in learning, while how learners evaluate and attribute their learning process further influences their future motivation level. The actional stage corresponds to task-in-process in a task-based approach. Dörnye [10] identified several factors that influence learner's motivation in this stage: the perceived quality of the learning activities, sense of autonomy, teachers' and parents' influence, classroom rewards, the influence of others in the classroom and the learner's ability to maintain their motivation level and keep focused. Some of these factors could be manipulated by task design while others are in the wider context of the classroom that influence the learner's decision to invest effort and attention in the task.

The task-based approach in this study was based on the sociocultural theory of language. Lantolf [6] suggests that there are three types of mediation for acquisition: 1) through interaction 2) through private speech 3) through artefacts like tasks and learning apps. Drawing on this, a task-based lesson should provide the students plentiful opportunities for private speech (i.e. Planning time for students to think and organize their language; activities where the students were required to rehearse or record their own speech), pair work and group work. Besides, as Vygotsky [11] put it, interaction yields best mediation effects when it helps to co-construct learners' zones of proximal development (ZPD). Since teachers would be more sensitive than students to notice their interlocutor's gaps of knowledge in speech and more experienced in scaffolding, contrary to the commonly belief that teachers' role should be minimized in a task-based approach, a task-based classroom should instead feature a bigger role of the teacher in tasks in forms of 1) pre-task scaffolding to activate the students' schematic knowledge on certain forms as preparation for tasks and 2) post-task feedback to address students ZPD that the teacher has noticed from the students' task performance. Though this form of teacher-class interaction is not that of the expert-novice one-on-one interaction that research has found to be conductive to acquisition [12], it still has the mediating features of co-construction of meaning and responsiveness in speech.

The research question is:
What factors affect learner's task engagement in a task-based course?

2. Research method

Tasks used in the lessons were designed according to Ellis' [2] definition of tasks. The design of the lessons was based on sociocultural theory. The participants were 25 female and 59 male students from 3 level 1 classes aged between 17 to 19 from Shantou University, China. Each student's task engagement was measured five times-shortly after a task over 11 weeks. Follow-up retrospective structured interviews were carried out in the end. All the surveys and interviews were carried out in Chinese to make sure that students were able to understand what was being asked and that they were able to express their opinions well. Task engagement was measured by a 5-point (from 2 to -2) agree or disagree Likert Scale. And the survey statements were designed based on Philp and Duchesne's multidimensional engagement construct. [13]

The statements in the survey were:

1) This activity was able to keep students thinking and focused.
2) I tried my best to achieve the task outcome.
3) This activity was fun.
4) I felt at ease cooperating with others to achieve the task outcome.
5) I could use English vocabulary and expressions that I had learned to interact with others in the activity.
6) If I practice speaking and listening more, I will do better in class activities.

Out of the 84 students in the 3 classes, 43 students did all the 5 surveys of task engagement and the other 39 students' data were not used due to missing values for some task engagement surveys.

Out of the 43 students who took part in all the surveys, 12 were interviewed. Students were selected according to their mean task engagement score to form a representative sample of the full spectrum. And interview questions were designed based on the results of the surveys.

The interview questions were:

1) What are the factors that influence your engagement level?
2) How do you find task 4 differs from other tasks?

3. Results and discussion

Students' task engagement generally improved over time. Task 4 was found to prompt the highest level of engagement and the second interview question was designed to provide context for this result.

In terms of engagement, most students interviewed mentioned that it is important for task topics to be relevant and meaningful to them, for task steps to be practical and reasonable and the form of tasks to be interesting, especially when competition or socialization is involved. Most students interviewed commented on how their engagement level was affected by the teacher, the atmosphere and the perceived friendliness of their partner and their own motivation level and confidence. They also mentioned that communication skills taught in class helped them to improve their task performance and as a result they engaged better. Most of them agreed that task 4 was most interesting because they could share "real things in their life". They liked it that it was something that they "had ideas about" and "was interested to listen to".

Table 1: Descriptive data for the 5 engagement surveys n=43

Task	1	2	3	4	5
Mean	6.4	7.28	6.88	8.19	7.77
Std. Deviation	2.451	2.027	2.745	2.491	2.635

The overall increase in task engagement could result from learning during the course. Factors that the students listed as important to their task engagement confirm those that Dörnyei [10] identified as influencing learner's actional motivation: 1) self-regulation; 2) the influence of others in the classroom; 3) the quality of the experience and the student's sense of autonomy. Learners' task engagement could be manipulated not only by the design of the task but also by the utilization of the classroom environment and intervention strategies. The effect of the task occurs in the broader context of the language classroom supporting Ellis' [1] claim that the learner factor is as important as task properties and the teacher's choice of instructional approach in shaping learning experience. Future study of TBLT should investigate the dynamic nature of tasks in the language classroom on how to influence the variables of the learner to bring about better learning results.

Most students interviewed found task 4 the most relevant. Task 4 was a competition for the best advice on how to make us more likable. Students mentioned in their interviews that in task 4, they wanted to know what others thought would make them more likable and they wanted to be chosen to represent their group in the class competition. It seems the relevance of the task to the learner's life is an important element of task design, helping to prompt higher levels of engagement. More future studies in TBLT should explore the variable of relevance in task design and how it contributes to the overall effect's tasks have on the learners.

The findings of this study are suggestive, but drawn from a small sample, making further study of the links between engagement, tasks, and the acquisition of knowledge valuable. In particular, future studies should explore the dynamics of how learner factors interact with task features in the language classrooms and how learning experience is co-constructed.

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L1 Interference Related Errors in Advanced Czech Students of English

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to assess how the accuracy of advanced learners' language can be influenced by a focused intervention. Even advanced learners of English frequently manifest rather high occurrence of errors which are believed to be caused by mother tongue (L1) interference and fossilization. These two concepts have recently seen renewed interest of researchers; studies of second language acquisition in advanced learners are, however, lacking.
In this research project, three groups, pilot, experimental and control, of advanced Czech university students majoring in English were tested for accuracy. All students took a grammaticality judgement test (GJ), which has been proved to be a reliable measure of L2 knowledge, in order to assess their ability to identify errors, and they were also asked to express their certainty in answering (Certainty-based marking – CBM). The pilot and experimental groups then participated in a 13-week blended course focused on the most problematic areas caused by L1 interference. All groups were then tested again, the results were compared and analysed, and the efficiency of the intervention evaluated. Despite a number of limitations, the low number of participants in particular, (26 students in the pilot group, 24 students in the intervention group, and 14 students in the control group), the preliminary results show an increase in accuracy in all groups. This paper presents an analysis of GJ and CBM testing.

Keywords: accuracy, learner language, L1 interference related errors, fossilization, grammaticality judgement test, certainty-based marking

1. Introduction

Students' proficiency in second or foreign language (in this paper, the two terms will be used interchangeably and referred to as L2) can be characterised by three categories: complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF). This three-dimensional model has been successfully adopted since the 1990s when it was introduced by Skehan, building upon Brumfit's original accuracy and fluency model from 1979 [1]. Advanced students of English as a foreign language tend to be fluent, and their language is often complex; accuracy of their performance is, however, frequently problematic. The construct of accuracy is usually perceived as "the ability to produce target-like and error-free language" [1].

The study of errors in learner language has traditionally been an important part of research into SLA. While the original error analysis (EA) has been largely disproved, computer-aided error analysis (CEA) of learner language, especially building large corpora of learner language which has enabled analysing large amounts of texts has triggered renewed interest in EA [2]. A number of studies applying CEA have been conducted recently producing impressive results [3]. They have reported that many of these errors seem to be related to the influence of learners' mother tongue on the acquisition of a second or foreign language, *L1 transfer*, and to the fact that learner language often reaches a 'plateau' and tends to cease to develop, a feature called *fossilization* [4]. Despite the controversy of the latter construct, coined by Selinker in *the Fossilization Hypothesis* in 1972, it has recently received significant attention of researchers, and a new hypothesis was formulated by Han in 2009 as *the Selective Fossilization Hypothesis* [6]. Unlike Selinker's original belief, according to Han "fossilization is local, not global" [5], affecting only certain features of learner language.

This research study seeks to explore to what extent L1 induced errors can be minimized by a focused intervention. This paper provides an overview of one part of a broader research project, in which aspects of oral and written production, and the ability to detect and correct errors in advanced Czech students of English are investigated.

2. Theoretical frame

The two typical features of learner language, L1 interference and fossilization, appear to be closely related: "native language influence is the major shaping force in fossilizable speech behaviour" [5]. In order to investigate the two features and their mutual influence, samples of learner language, ideally both written and spoken, should be collected and analysed, and contrasted with students' intuitions about language, which could be measured by the *grammaticality judgement test* (GJ) [6]. Although studies into the reliability of GJ tests have often produced conflicting results, they enable "a focused scrutiny on specific linguistic features", e.g. fossilization, as they can test features which are impossible to test in learners' production due to the fact that "naturalistic production often involves limited use of a given grammatical structure", and therefore "GJ methodology is a viable alternative for studying fossilization" [7].

Certainty-based marking (CBM), in which participants express their levels of certainty about their answers on a 3-point scale, is adopted to ensure that they would neither take unnecessary risks in answering, nor guess the answers, and thus helps to produce reliable results [8].

3. Research aim

The principal aim of this research paper is to test whether a focused intervention will produce an improvement in advanced students' ability to distinguish between grammatical and ungrammatical sentences and raise their certainty in assessing this. The intervention is a 13-week course in which accuracy of language and raising awareness of features typically problematic for Czech speakers of English represent the main focus.

4. Methodology

Before the main research was conducted, *a pilot study* was carried out to test the research tools, grammaticality judgement test and certainty-based marking, and to assess the efficiency of the intervention. *The one-group pre-test-post-test design* was adopted in the piloting. To improve chances of a clear outcome, the following changes were suggested for the main study: a control group should be included to enable comparison, more detailed instructions should be provided before the test, namely in CBM, which is a tool largely unknown by students; samples of students´ written and spoken language should be collected and analysed to form a more complex picture of their learner language.

As a result, *a quasi-experimental design* was used in the main research, with one experimental group subjected to intervention, and one non-equivalent control group without intervention [9]. This methodology was chosen because randomization of participants was impossible due to constraints imposed by the rules of the institution in which the research was conducted. *The pre-test-post-test non-equivalent group design* represents "a decided improvement over the one-group pre-test-post-test design" [10], it is frequently adopted in educational research, and believed to produce more accurate results.

4.1 Participants

For reasons described above (Part 4), together with practicality reasons, *non-probability convenience sampling* was adopted in this study. A pilot study was carried out in February 2016 – pre-test taken by 29 students, and in June 2016 – post-test taken by 26 students.

In October 2016 and January 2017, the main study was conducted. Out of the whole population of 112 students in their third term of university studies, 32 students formed the experimental group, and 16 students the control group. Due to the fact that the participants volunteered for either of the groups, it was impossible to have equally numbered groups. Eight students in the experimental group and two in the control group failed to take both tests and, as a result, the scores of 24 students in the experimental, and 14 in the control group were analysed.

In order to strengthen the equivalence of the groups, which would enable comparisons, the participation in the study was limited by a number of criteria: all participants were majoring in English language and literature, studied in the third term of studies, had the same level of language proficiency – passed the same proficiency exam with very similar scores, and spoke the same mother tongue.

4.2 Tasks and Procedure

All students from the three groups, pilot, control and experimental, took the grammaticality judgement test. This was devised by the author of this paper: students were presented with 30 sentences, both correct and incorrect, and asked to express their intuitions about their grammaticality, and in case of incorrect sentences, were also asked to correct them. Those sentences which were ungrammatical contained errors typical of Czech learners of English, e.g. in the use of articles, prepositions, tenses, and false friends. Students were also asked to decide how sure they were about their answers, indicating one of the three levels of certainty, Certainty-based marking (CBM) [8].

5. Results and Discussion

To assess the influence of the intervention, both pre-tests and post-tests taken by all groups were analysed, and changes were compared. Binary distinction, correct-incorrect, was used in the analysis of accuracy in grammaticality judgement test. 21 out of the original 30 questions were considered, as 9 questions did not correlate with the test. Those participants who only took one of the tests were not included in the analysis. As both the pilot and experimental groups underwent the intervention, their results were assessed both separately and as one whole, and contrasted with the control group. Due to the relatively small number of participants and significant differences in scores, mean values were used in the analysis.

Table 1 provides the main results for all groups in the accuracy of answering. The most surprising aspect of the data is the fact that all groups improved, irrespective the intervention. The control group, despite not participating in the intervention, improved the most. This result, however, was in all probability biased by the very low number of participants in the control group (14), as compared to the two groups, pilot and experimental, which took part in the intervention (50). The results obtained from the preliminary analysis together with the differences between pre-test and post-test for each of the groups are illustrated in Figure 1. What stands out in the table is the fact that pilot group was the most accurate in their answering in both pre- and post-tests, and their average improvement (4,5) was very close to the highest average improvement in the control group (5). As the number of participants in the pilot group was 26, these results may be more statistically relevant, and could indicate positive impact of the intervention.

Table 1: Accuracy in grammaticality judgement test for all groups

group	test type	n	mean	median	min	max	sd
pilot	pre-test	26	7,80	8,0	5	14	2,53
	post-test	26	12,76	12,5	5	21	4,54
control	**pre-test**	**14**	**5,21**	**4,0**	**0**	**13**	**3,80**
	post-test	**14**	**8,35**	**9,0**	**0**	**14**	**4,23**
experimental	pre-test	24	6,41	6,0	0	14	3,67
	post-test	24	8,41	9,5	2	13	3,13
experimental and pilot	**pre-test**	**50**	**7,14**	**7,0**	**0**	**14**	**3,17**
	post-test	**50**	**10,68**	**10,0**	**2**	**21**	**4,46**

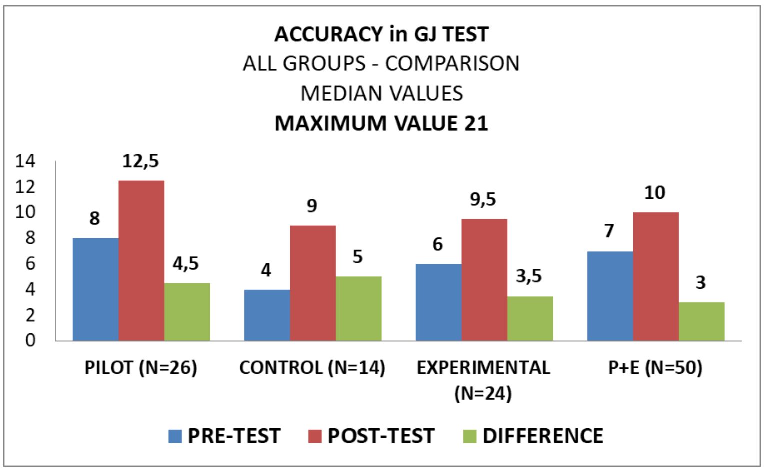

Fig. 1: Comparison of accuracy in grammaticality judgement test for all groups

Apart from accuracy, certainty-based marking was also evaluated. The overall results presented in Table 2 indicate improvement in all groups. Interestingly, the control group again showed a marked improvement in CBM. However, it was the pilot group which yielded the best scores both in the pre- and post-tests. This could have caused the less pronounced improvement in this group. The control group reached the lowest entry score and this might have driven the relatively significant improvement in this group. For details, see Figure 2 below.

Table 2: Certainty-based marking in grammaticality judgement test for all groups

group	test type	n	mean	median	min	max	sd
pilot	pre-test	26	114,00	118,5	70	137	16,37
	post-test	26	140,35	137,5	78	178	22,81
control	**pre-test**	**14**	**98,71**	**95,5**	**67**	**144**	**20,83**
	post-test	**14**	**113,21**	**121,0**	**67**	**150**	**26,71**
experimental	pre-test	24	100,04	105,0	27	146	29,75
	post-test	24	118,66	121,0	72	150	21,41
experimental and pilot	**pre-test**	**50**	**107,30**	**110,0**	**27**	**146**	**24,53**
	post-test	**50**	**129,94**	**131,0**	**72**	**178**	**24,50**

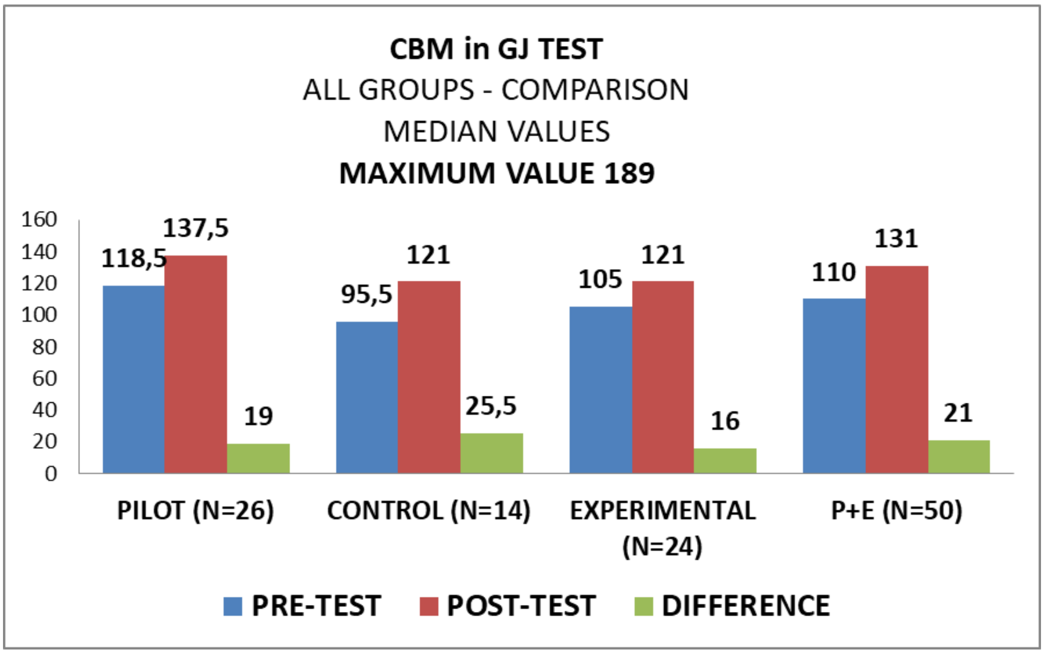

Fig. 2: Comparison of certainty-based marking in grammaticality judgement test for all groups

6. Concluding remarks

The present study was designed to investigate the effects of a focused intervention on the accuracy of L2 and on raising awareness of L1-induced errors in advanced Czech students of English.

The results indicate that all groups under scrutiny, pilot, experimental and control, have improved, and there are no significant differences between them, which is a rather unexpected outcome. This somewhat counterintuitive result might have been caused by the major limitation of the study, a relatively small sample size, especially the control group. For this reason, the results must be interpreted with caution. Further research should be conducted in which more students in a control group would be tested. Samples of free spoken and written production which were collected together with the GJ tests and CBM require a careful analysis as they might provide deeper insights into the efficiency of intervention aimed at reducing L1-induced and fossilized errors in advanced Czech students of English.

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Online Comic Creator for EFL Writing: An Effective Tool for Collaborative Learning

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Abstract

This study introduces a successful example of an L2 writing project that can appeal to unmotivated EFL learners. The author will show how a project-based activity using an online comic creator could stimulate the intellectual curiosity of learners and change their attitudes toward learning English and interacting with other students.
Forty-four Japanese computer science majors participated in the study. Many of them had negative attitudes toward English and collaborative activities. They were asked to work on a group project through the course, and created Japanese/ English comics that contributes to the revitalization of a disaster-hit community. An online comic creator was the key tool in the project, and the participants elaborated unique language for each comic character and created comics as writing activities.
The post-study survey indicated various positive effects of the project. The participants enjoyed using the comic creator and the collaborative activities with other students. It was found that the project with the comic creator was a fascinating experience for computer science majors, and positively changed their perspective toward group work and learning English.

Keywords: Comic creator, L2 writing, unmotivated learners, collaborative learning

1. Introduction

Although they spend years on English education, many Japanese people would say they failed to learn English. Most of them learned English as a tool for entrance examinations, not for real-life purposes. As a result, once entrance examinations are over, students are demotivated. They may eventually forget what they have memorized for entrance exams, and feel they have learned nothing.
Under such circumstances, college-level English instructors often find their students unmotivated.
Additionally, in my experience, computer science students are often unsociable and lack communication skills. Such students tend to enjoy online activities but avoid face-to-face communication or group activities that are essential in L2 learning. When learners are not motivated and reluctant to interact with others, how can instructors make the learning meaningful and effective?
This study will introduce a motivating collaborative project with a digital tool focused on improving English writing skills and fostering positive attitudes toward group work.

2. Literature review

In order to motivate learners, this study adopts three key concepts; 1) computer-assisted project-based learning, 2) role language analysis, and 3) a bilingual approach in L2 writing.

2.1 Computer-assisted project-based learning

Project-based learning (PBL) and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) can provide motivating and productive activities in language classrooms. Many English textbooks contain unrealistic and uninteresting exercises, and students may not see any purposes in such “meaningless” activities. With such unmotivating learning materials, language learning tends to be superficial without a deep understanding. PBL offers real-world activities that can motivate learners. It is ideal because it allows students to engage in authentic activities that are relevant and similar to the activities that adult professionals engage in [4]. PBL allows learners to be assertive, with the learning process centered on themselves, and choosing a project they wish to work on can motivate them and make the learning experience exciting and successful.
The effectiveness of PBL can be enhanced by adapting CALL. Online contents and multimedia applications are fascinating tools for students in the digital age. Many studies have found positive

effects of CALL. Digital tools can enhance the students' learning motivation, problem-solving competence, and learning achievement, and self-confidence in learning [1], [8].

2.2 Role language analysis in EFL

The second key concept for a motivational language learning is role language analysis. Young people in Japan enjoy pop culture contents such as Manga comics and anime. Thus, comic making as an EFL activity can motivate learners [7]. The virtual language that frequently appears in Japanese Manga comics is called role language. Kinsui [3] defines role language as a linguistic stereotype associated with a particular character type. Role language is especially distinctive in Japanese; however, it exists in English as well. For example, men and women are associated with different sets of linguistic features. Women may use polite forms, exaggerated expressions, and a lot of empty adjectives while men prefer to use command forms, rough expressions, and fewer adjectives [5], [6].

Such features could be based on the stereotypes; however, L2 comic activities with role language analysis allow learners to elaborate different expressions and sentence patterns that match the identity of Manga characters and promote learning [7].

2.3 Bilingual approach in L2 learning

The third concept, a bilingual approach in L2 learning allows low-level language learners to use their L1 for a better performance in L2. Studies have shown that the use of L1 in L2 learning may have positive effects, especially for novice learners. Adequate use of L1 may lower the anxiety in learning and encourage learners to interact actively. Ishibashi [2] reported that prewriting activities in L1 helped students to organize their thoughts in L2 writing. She found that using L1 improved L2 writing fluency of her low and intermediate-level students. If the students are not experienced L2 writers, writing in their L1 first may facilitate writing in English.

3. Research design

This project integrated the three concepts described in the previous section, and the goal of the project is the revitalization of a disaster-hit community through activities in English.

A group of Japanese undergraduate students participated in a project in which they created Japanese/English bilingual comics for tourists. The project aimed at 1) revitalization of the disaster-hit community, 2) promoting a local mascot to attract visitors to the prefecture, and 3) improving L2 writing skills and motivating the participants to learn English.

3.1 Background of the project

The project was aimed at the revitalization of Fukushima Prefecture, Japan. Fukushima was struck by a dreadful earthquake and the consequent nuclear accidents in 2011. Even in the areas that were not affected by the nuclear disaster such as Aizuwakamatsu City, the number of tourists decreased.

This project was conducted at a university in Aizuwakamatsu City, a famous tourism destination in Fukushima, to bring tourists back to the city.

3.2 Course

This study was conducted in an elective English course called "Language in Manga". This course aimed at improving writing skills by creating comics. Students analyze personality and the language pattern of comic characters and use different expressions and sentence patterns that match the characters. Students were expected to distinguish the conversational style and the narratives style in their writing.

3.3 Participants

Forty-four Japanese students at a computer science college participated in the project. Most of them were low-intermediate EFL learners. The pre-study survey revealed that about half of them had negative attitudes toward English: They hated English and was not motivated to learn it. Also, 25% of them were unwilling to work with other students. About half of them were worried that their poor English skills might be obstructive to the group activities and lower the group grade.

3.4 Tools

The key tool in this project is an online comic creator called PIXTON (www.pixton.com). It is a drag-and-drop comic creator that can make artistic comics instantly. This is a fascinating tool for computer science majors who love comics and digital gimmicks.

Yuru-kyara or "a laid-back mascot" is another key in this project. The participants used an open content mascot "Akabekochan" (Little Red Cow) in their comics. *Yuru-kyara* mascots are popular in Japan, and play an important role in the local economy. They appear in events for promoting local foods, products, and attractions for tourists. As this is a revitalization project, using Akabekochan was expected to appeal to tourists and helps the economic growth of the city.

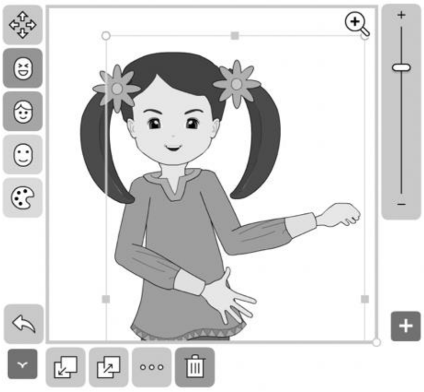

Fig. 1: Comic creator PIXTON

Fig. 2: Akabekochan

3.5 Procedures

The class met 15 times from October to December, 2017. In each class, unique linguistic features in comics (i.e., role language) were explained to the participants with examples. After that, the participants worked in groups and created a comic that introduced their favorite local restaurant using Akabekochan as the main character. First, they analyzed Akabekochan's role language in her official website and then created a comic in Japanese adapting her role language (Fig. 3). Then they elaborated Akabekochan's role language in English and created the English version (Fig. 4). The participants also proofread comics created by other groups and provided feedback for revision. Pre and post-study surveys were conducted to examine how the project had influenced the learner motivation and group work anxiety.

Fig. 3: Akabekochan comic in Japanese

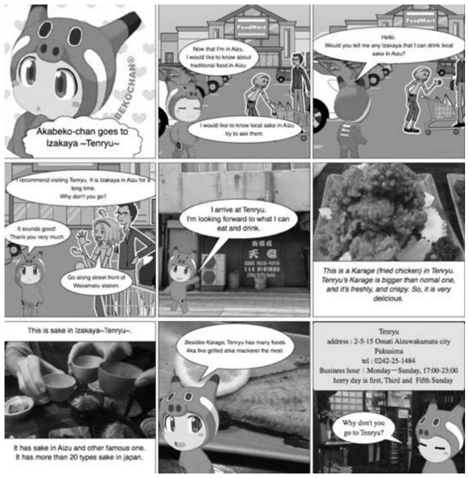

Fig. 4: Akabekochan comic in English

4. Results and discussion

The post-study survey indicated various positive effects of the project using a comic creator. Most of the participants mentioned that they enjoyed using the comic creator and the collaborative project with other students. It was found that the use of the online comic creator was a fascinating experience for computer science majors, and positively changed their perspective toward group work and learning English.

According to the pre-study survey, 11 (25%) of the participants had negative attitudes toward working in a group. Fifteen (34%) answered that they neither like nor dislike group work.

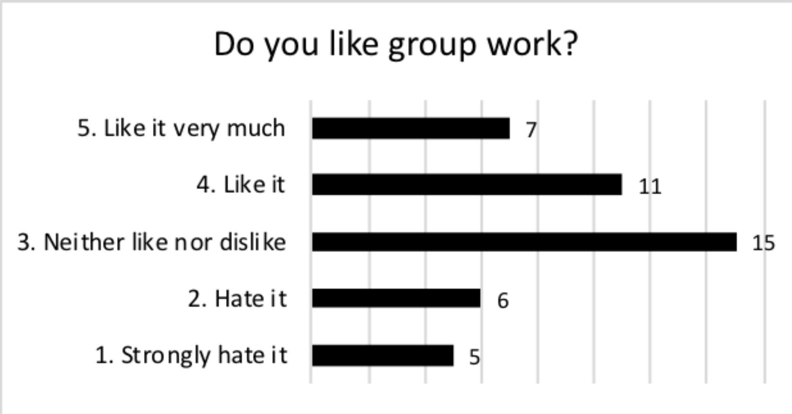

Fig. 5: Pre-study survey: Do you like group work? (N=44)

However, the post-study survey revealed that all participants except one answered that the group work was successful.

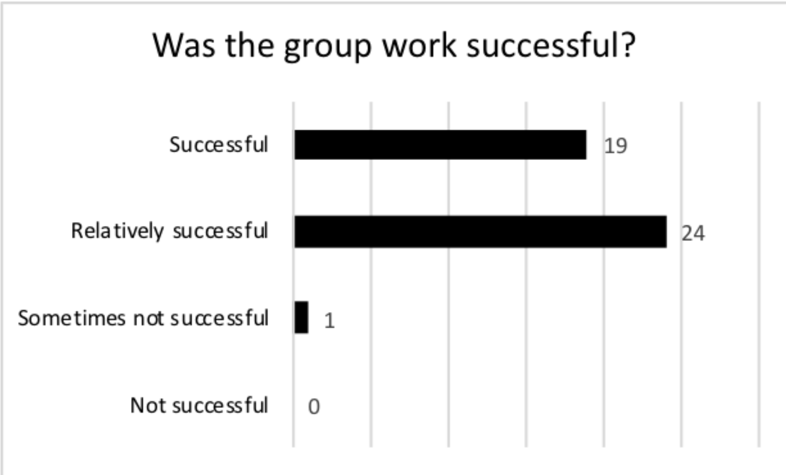

Fig. 6: Post-study survey: Was the group work successful? (N=44)

Fig. 7. shows the changes in learner attitude. Twenty-two (51%) of the participants showed positive changes. This is a considerably encouraging result.

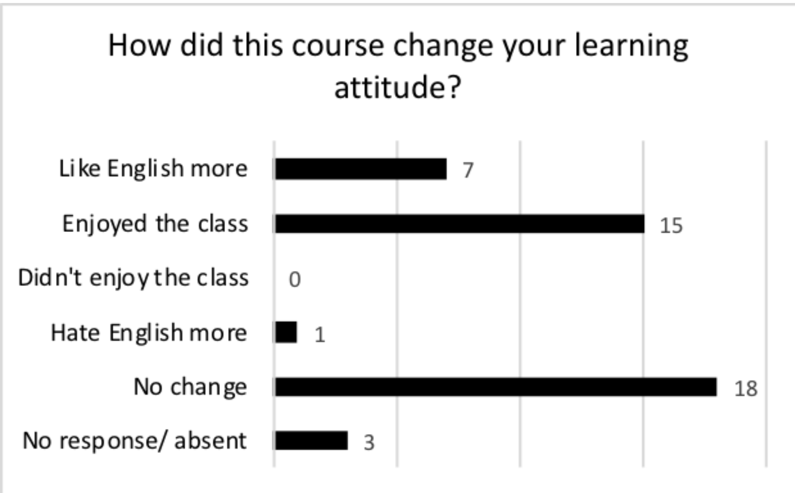

Fig. 7: Post-study survey: How did this course change your learning attitude? (N=44)

The participants provided some comments on the comic creator and the project. Most of them show positive effects of the project.

Positive comments:

- The comic creator was fun.
- The topic of the project was authentic and relevant to our daily lives.
- I enjoyed working with other group members.
- A lot of group work assignments gave us opportunities to exchange different ideas with group members.
- The project with friends was far more interesting than a lecture.
- We made the project a better one by working together.

Negative comments:

- School PCs did not support the comic creator.
- Collaborative work using the comic creator was sometimes difficult due to technical issues.
- It was inconvenient to share one PC with other group members.

All negative comments were on technical issues. The university PCs stopped supporting the comic creator in the middle of the school year, and this strongly affected the project. Students had to bring their laptops to class and share them with other group members. When a digital tool is the main instrument, unexpected technical problems could influence the whole study. Despite the difficulty, the overall positive comments proved that the use of the comic creator in project-based learning resulted in a lot of positive changes in learners. Using the comic creator along with a real-life topic could help learners to engage in the task, intellectually stimulate them, and change learning attitudes and motivation positively.

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The Development of Language Competencies and Research Culture of Students through Research Work

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Abstract

Nowadays the demands and the challenges young people face in order to be competitive participants of the globalized labour market have demonstrated the need for professionals with sound knowledge in their field and good mastery of English as a lingua franca, an international means of communication for non-native speakers of English. For an individual passing through the levels of tertiary higher education in languages, linguistics, and communication, doing a research is one of the most important components of their studies. It is widely spread to evaluate the final results of the research work done by students. But a little research has been done to assess the impact it can have on them as an individual, as a future scientist, as professionals with high research qualities on one hand and as a learner of a second language on the other. In this paper, we have tried to demonstrate the gradual development of research culture, language competences, the topic, learning and cognitive capacities, and personal qualities from an undergraduate study till the doctoral research of language and culture acquisition.

Keywords: research culture, learning and cognitive competencies, language data, language acquisition

"Every language is a vast pattern system, different from others, in which our culturally ordained forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates but also analyses nature, notices or neglects types of relationship and phenomena, channels his reasoning and builds the house of his consciousness"

(Benjamin Lee Whorf).

The matter of identity is one of the central topics for most of the developing countries. On the one hand, globalization gives huge opportunities for young people to receive education abroad, to work in international companies and organizations etc. On the other hand, the demands and the challenges young people face in order to be competitive participants of the globalized labour market have demonstrated the need for professionals with sound knowledge in their field and good mastery of English.

For an individual passing through the levels of tertiary higher education in languages, linguistics, and communication, research works are compulsory. It is widely spread to evaluate the final results of the research work done by students – course papers, presentations, and "diplomas". But a little research has been done to assess the impact it can have on them as an individual, as a future scientist, as professionals with high research qualities on the one hand and as a learner of English as a second language.

Developing research culture and language competences takes time. In the context of research work these two groups of important skills develop simultaneously.

Research competencies or indicators of high-quality research culture fall into the following 3 groups:

1. *Learning or cognitive* – observation, identification, description, comparison, analysis, synthesis, abstraction, hypothesizing, argumentation, reasoning, interpretation.
2. *Communicative* – data collection, writing, academic, business, professional communication, using high-tech., negotiation, presentation.
3. *System*: self-organization, chronotype management, adaptability, goal-setting, prioritizing, decision-making, integrity, creativity (thinking out-of-the-box), loyalty, ethics, emotional self-regulation, sequencing, inhibition, anticipation, flexibility.

For the students the research culture starts from learning the source: from the culture research.

These sources are mainly presented in English. It means that students get acquainted with scientific discourse. Scientific discourse contains several elements such as academic skills, language skills, intercultural sensitivity and understanding, interpersonal skills and audience. All these skills necessary for a good scientific discourse can be helpful in all the spheres of one's life. Thus, SCIENCE WRITING helps to develop an enhanced understanding of English written pattern, and English as a system in general.

In this paper, we have tried to demonstrate the development of research culture, language competences from an undergraduate study till the doctoral research of language and culture acquisition.

Title

BA paper	MA paper	Dissertation
Imitation as the initial stage of linguistic modelling f reality	***Imitation as the initial stage of language acquisition (ontogenetic, phylogenetic and second language acquisition***)	***Imitation as the initial stage of verbal cognition and linguistic categorization***

Scope of activity

Reading academic literature in native language and in English ***Comparing*** these theories ***Summarizing*** what has been read While reading ***vocabulary, grammar was enriched*** ***Translating*** into English the material read in Armenian and Russian. ***Start developing writing skills*** Get acquainted with ***the core features of the academic writing***	***A theoretical review*** of the existing hypothesizes and research. ***Express the author's attitude*** towards those theories. ***A brief structural design of the problem*** we were planning to elaborate in the nearest future – second language acquisition. ***Learn how to review the literature***	***An analysis of all significant theories*** of language origin and language acquisition. From a new perspective, according to which ... ***Elaborate the hypothesis…*** ***Find application to that new knowledge***

As you see, the author of the above-mentioned BP, most of all is reading. Reading is an important part of doing a research, being a student in general. During our studies, we read a lot. But just reading is not enough. Students have to deal with that material, new information they have gained. While reading one enriches his/her vocabulary, grammar, translates a lot. At this stage the student starts to compare the sources, different types of information concerning the matter, to summarize that material.

She starts to develop her writing skills.

By the end of the 5th year, the future researcher has already learned how to review the literature.

She even makes her first steps to analyse what she has already ready. She has learned to structuralize her work, to plan her future work.

As a post-graduate student, the author of the above-mentioned dissertation analyses the existing theories from a new perspective. She has already something new to say about the matter. On the basis of the analysis, she has put forward a new hypothesis and finds application to that new knowledge.

Language data

BH	***babble*** 1. կարկաչել, խոխոջել, 2. Թոթովել,3. Բլբլալ, 1. Балтать, 2. журчать ***buzz*** բզզալ, տզզալ, դզզալ, жужжать ***roar*** 1. մռնչալ, մնչալ 2. գոռալ, ոռնալ 1. реветь 2. шуметь 3. рычать 4. хохотать
MP	OE – *wa* (wail); ON – *væla* (to lament) – root is *væ* “woe”; OS – *væ* (sorrow); OHG – *vei* (sorrow); Goth. – *wai* (sorrow); Lat – *væ* (cry of pain); Lett. – *wai ;*(alas); Arm. – վայնասուն [*vaynasun]* (the root is [*vay]*)
Dissertation	The word ***woe*** nowadays is translated into Armenian as վայնասուն *[vaynasun]*. In Old English (OE) this word was *wa*, in Middle English (ME) period it became *wo* which meant “calamity, sorrow”. The English word ***wail*** come from Old Norfe (ON) *væla* “to lament”. Its root is *væ* “woe”. Thus, the roots of there words sound similar – *wa, væ*. They were also compared with words, which have similar or close meanings in other languages. For example, Old Saxon (OS) – væ (sorrow); Old High German (OHG) – vei (sorrow); Gothic – wai (sorrow); Latin (Lat) – væ (cry of pain); Lettish (Let) – wai (alas); Armenian (Arm) վայնասուն [*vaynasun]* (the root is *vay*). All the words mentioned above have similar or at least close meaning: a sound or exclamation made by human being caused by pain, sorrow. We all know that pain, sorrow are psychological states of a human being. And despite different nationalities and different historical development – the Armenians and the English – express their pain and sorrow with similar combinations of sounds. Arm. *վայ*, Lett. *wai*, OE. *wa*, OHG. *vei*, ON. *Væ*, Lat. *vae.* Human universals find their reflection in linguistic universals-among them emotions and their expressions.

The above chart demonstrates vividly when and what kind of language data is collected and analysed by the author. During the first stage she mainly works with dictionaries – etymological, English-Russian, English-Armenian, Armenian-Russian etc. She has to find English onomatopoeias and their equivalents in Armenian and Russian. For her MP she already has to give, first, the formal – phonetic classification of the 60 onomatopoeic words in three modern languages - English, Armenian, Russian and second, diachronic-etymological ascendance to the phonosemantic origins considering the background data of other languages.

Later she analysis the collected language data from a new perspective. First, she studies imitative language phenomena in various languages – noise words, onomatopoeia, sound symbolism etc. After she illustrates the principle of isomorphic function of imitation in the process of linguistic categorization with examples of onomatopoeic words from Armenian, Russian and English. Third, she gives the classification of English onomatopes into a dozen of classes according to the language-specific sound combinations and classification of Armenian onomatopes according to the phonological system as compared to the one suggested for English, and discusses the phonetic and phonological peculiarities of these units in Armenian and English.

Furthermore, she presents new language data in her dissertation:

a) documented samples of infants’ speech from a psycholinguistic perspective,
b) documented samples of imitation in the early verbal behaviour of monolingual and bilingual infants,
c) documented samples from the speech of students (18-29 years old) studying English as a second language,
d) analysis of the examples of imitative action at different levels of linguistic categorization – phonological, morphological, grammar and word formation.

The results of analysis of the success model presented here demonstrate the gradual development of the topic, learning and cognitive capacities, and personal qualities. During the fist stage of her research work, the student acquires receptive (passive) knowledge and learns to express the acquired knowledge. Later she learns to analyse, systematize that knowledge. Afterward, on the basis of the analysis, she puts forward a new hypothesis, finds application to that new knowledge and successfully defends her dissertation.

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The Effect of Using Question Based Discussion Technique on Students Achievement in English Novel

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Abstract

Teacher questions are the chief verbal tool for shaping and modeling interaction in the classroom as well as the primary source of data for evaluating the substantive knowledge and intellectual skill of his – her student. The study aims at: Investigating the effect of using question-based discussion technique in teaching English novel on student's achievement. Finding out whether there are any significant differences in using question-based discussion technique at recognition and production level, and finding out whether there are any significant differences in using QBD technique between male and female. The population of the study is (141) male and female. The sample is consisted of 60 students in English department. Education college, Kirkuk university. The two these groups were assigned as an experiment group which was taught novel by using Question Based Discussion technique, and on other hand as a control group which was taught novel by using traditional method. The achievement test was carried out by the researcher to measure the students' progress in the dependent variable of the study. The statistical analysis of the results reveals that there is a statistically significant differences between the mean achievement scores of the EG and those of the CG in the novel achievement post-test.

Keywords: effect, question-based discussion, technique, achievement

Introduction

Teaching is the process of which learning is expected to take place. This study tries to investigate the effectiveness of one of the teaching techniques which is entitled question-based discussion (Rams den, (1) "Question based discussion is a method that experienced instructors rely upon and it's the best method to teach a variety of subject material, it most resembles the natural way we communicate". (Dillman, 2). The present study aims at investigating the effect of using question-based discussion technique on university students' achievement in English novel. It Hypothesized that, there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in the novel achievement posttest. Between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pretest and that on the post-test. The study is limited to the Third-year students in the Department of English College of Education/University of Kirkuk for the academic year 2016-2017.The value is feasible method for stimulating students' imagination. The Plan is, teaching the two groups some units from novel (wuthering heights). Subjecting the two groups of students to the post-test.

Effect it is the Treatment or the effect of an experimental factor under controlled condition on the control variable. Achievement. It refers to the mastery of what has been learnt.

The concept of novel

A novel is a factious prose narrative or tale of considerable length representative of the real life of past or present times portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity.

Types of novel

The novel of the action deals with external events, and has not much to do with the mind .it deals with vigorous and violent actions. the action has irresistible appeal. the novelist attaches very little importance to the development of character. The characters are introduced only for throwing the actions into relief, e.g. Walter scotl'. Ivan hoe (Sangupta and Mudra, 3)

Picaresque novel

The word (picaro) is a Spanish which means vague. It is a string of adventures. The hero is constantly on the move in quest of a adventures, the picaresque novel emphasis the character only on the hero. Charles Pickens, Oliver twist. Gothic Novel, it is a novel of horror, the hard core of which is supernaturalism. since it is a reaction to the reign of reason and authority. Gothic novel may be described as the quintessence of romanticism E.G. Emily Bronte's' wuthering Heights.

Purpose of using question-based discussion in classroom

Bender (4) states that there are a lot of purposes for using question-based discussion, to develop interest and motivate students to become actively in lesson. To evaluate student's preparation and check on homework. To develop critical thinking skills. To review and summarize previous lessons. To motivate students to pursue knowledge on their own. To assess achievement of instructional goals and objectives. Teachers ask questions for many purposes. Teachers may ask students to recall, to hypothesize, to synthesize, or to evaluate.

The Importance of the Classroom Questioning

One of the most important weapons in the instructor's teaching store is the good questioning technique. It is the "magic" a good teacher wields in exploiting his or her students' learning. It is not only the province of language teaching but also can be applied to the teaching of all types of courses.

It forms the support of the participative style of teaching and learning. In fact, the ability to ask the right question at the right time to the right student is the guarantee of a good teacher. It is the best single and simple teaching assistance if it is used properly.

Stages of discussion

Before the Discussion

Create a comfortable, non-threatening environment: Introduce yourself and explain your interests in the topic on the first day. Encourage questions from the outset. For example, require each student to submit a question about the course during the first day or week. Students can submit these questions via an online discussion forum, such as that which is available on Blackboard; this assignment can also serve as a way for you to ensure that they have each figured out how to log on to a discussion forum that you are using throughout the course.

Throughout the Discussion

At appropriate points in the session, summarize the major ideas and write them on the board. If you do not do this, students will have a hard time picking out the most important ideas from the discussion and understanding their significance

After the Discussion

Rethink, retool, and revise. Take brief notes on how each discussion went and use these as the basis for reorganizing your plan for the discussion, improving your presentation skills, rethinking the material included, or developing ideas for future teaching and research projects. Leading discussions can be a stimulating, enjoyable way to teach. Keep in mind, however, that many students – especially those who are new to a university environment – will not come into your course with highly developed discussion skills. Moreover, leading an effective discussion does not always come naturally to the instructor. No matter what level of students you are teaching, you must carefully prepare and actively facilitate the discussions to ensure that they are disciplined and inclusive and that they promote learning.

The experimental design

To achieve the aims of this study and its hypotheses, two groups are selected randomly. Both the experimental group and the control group were pretested prior to the treatment to make sure they did not differ on the dependent variable. Hence, before the beginning of the experiment, test was conducted as a pretest and once again as a posttest at the end of the experiment, to see if there were significant differences between the two groups under investigation. The independent variable QBD is administered to the experimental group only whereas the traditional method is given to the control group. In this study, we try to find out the effect of the independent variable, e.i., QBD as a teaching technique, on the dependent variable, this research adopts the “Experimental-Control Group Design:

The Pretest- Post-test Design”. Thepopulation of this research is consists of third – year students in the Department of English, College of Education, University of Kirkuk for the academic year 2016-2017.

The total number of the population was; (24) males and (114) females.

The post test of this study includes six questions. the first three questions are related to the recognition level whereas the last three questions are related to the production level. The first question is the measure of a knowledge. Knowledge is the first category of the cognitive domain. A knowledge question asks the students to recall or recognize information or ideas which have been presented in previous lessons. To answer a question on the knowledge level, the pupil is asked to remember information, facts, observations, procedures, ideas, and definitions that have been learned. The second question is a measure of comprehension.

Discussion of the Results

Comparison between experimental group and that of control group in the Post-test

The mean of the experimental group is 71.5 and the mean of the control group is 63.9 The “t” test is calculated in order to find out whether there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups or not. The t-test was used for the two independent samples. The “t” value is 2.77, it has been compared with tabulated t-value which is 2.60 at the degree of freedom 58. “This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between both groups”, i.e. the achievement of the EG subjects who were taught novel according to QBD is higher than the achievement of the CG Subjects who were taught according to the traditional method. Accordingly, teaching novel by QBD is more effective than the traditional method.

Comparison between students’ performance at the Recognition Level and at the Production Level

The calculated t-value is found to be 6.84whish is considered to be higher than the tabulated t-value which is 1.70 students’ performance at production level is better than their performance at the recognition level, thus the fourth hypothesis is rejected.

Comparison between Males’ performance and that of Females’ Performance on the Pre-test

In order to determine whether there is a significant difference between male and female scores.

The mean scores of males are 46.6 whereas the mean scores of females are 58. The calculated t-value is 2.26 which is considered to be higher than the tabulated t-value which is 1.70, which indicates that there is a significant difference between the two groups, at 0.05the level of significance and 28 degrees of freedom, the obtained difference is for the benefit of females. Which indicates the performance of female students is better than that of male students on the post-test, thus the third hypothesis is rejected.

Comparison between Males’ performance and that of Females’ Performance on the Post-test

In order to determine whether there is a significant difference between male and female scores.

The mean scores of males which are found to be 60.71while the mean scores of females which are found to be 74.83. The calculated t-value is 3.45 which is considered to be higher than the tabulated t-value which is 1.70, which indicates that there is a significant difference between the two groups, at0.05the level of significance and 28 degrees of freedom, the obtained difference is for the benefit of females. Which indicates the performance of female students is better than that of male students on the post- test, thus the third hypothesis is rejected.

Comparison of the Pre-test and Post-test Scores in the Control Group

The “t” test formula for one independent sample is used to find out whether there is a significant difference in the mean scores of the control group in the pre-test and post-test scores. The mean scores of the control group in the pretest is 61.9 while in the post test is 63.9. The computed t-value is found to be 1.74 whereas the tabulated t-value is 1.70 at 0.05 the level of significance and 58 degrees of freedom. Which indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean scores on the pretest and that on the post test. Hence the hypothesis that is presented earlier is accepted.

Discussion of the Result

QBD has opened environment of interaction and created what one can call a free atmosphere of discussion to the students to say what they want and improve their speech conversational English without hesitation. EFL pupils are most successful when they are participating enthusiastically in classroom situations without fear of shyness and embarrassment.

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The Role of EFL Textbooks in Improving Intercultural Competence

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Abstract

Today the concept of competence in foreign language has gone far beyond grammatical and even communicative competence, and what has assumed importance is preparing foreign language learners for intercultural interactions and negotiations. Therefore, in order for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners to be able to communicate with other speakers from around the world and develop empathy and openness to other cultures, they need to become interculturally competent. One of the important ways of providing students with intercultural awareness, especially in a foreign language situation, is choosing the right material because textbooks, as one of the main educational tools, are deemed to address such a task. There are some models that have been proposed to help analyze textbooks from this point of view. Drawing on Byram's model, the present study aimed to analyze Top Notch series, as one of the textbooks employed in Iranian English language schools and some universities, to show whether these series include enough intercultural information to help students develop intercultural competence or not. A content analysis was carried out through Yuen's (2011) content analysis framework. The findings revealed that Top Notch series have the potentiality to help students garner some competence to communicate interculturally.

Keywords: Intercultural Communicative Competence, Textbook, Top Notch series

1. Introduction

Through improving intercultural communicative competence and enhancing their cultural awareness, students are supplied with a means that enables them to communicate with people from diverse cultures on issues like addressing people, expressing regret, making requests, refusing, agreeing or disagreeing, talking with someone on weather, greeting, politics, etiquettes, and other topics.

Byram [1] describes intercultural communicative competence as follows:

- Attitudes: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own (savoir être).
- Knowledge: of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction (savoirs).
- Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own (savoir comprendre).
- Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire).
- Critical cultural awareness/political education: an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries (savoir s'engager).

Textbooks are among the important devices, especially in foreign language context, that can equip students with cultural competence. However, culture seems to be often neglected in EFL and ESL learning processes [2]. Even if it is not neglected, it usually focuses on the culture of the target language and the other cultures are given marginal or no attention. Therefore, this study set out to analyze one of the popular books taught in English schools in Iran in an effort to find out to what extent they enhance language learners' intercultural competence.

Thus, the study attempted to provide the answer to the following question:

Do Top Notch series have enough cultural themes to help EFL students in Iranian language schools improve their intercultural communicative competence?

2. The Study

2.1 Design of the study

A descriptive content analysis method was used to analyze the extent and number of the cultural representations and their distribution in *Top Notch series*.

2.2 Instrument

The data analysis framework that the researcher used to carry out content analysis was the framework of Yuen [3], which was influenced by the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (NSFLEP, 1996, 1999, 2006). In this framework, cultural elements are categorized into four parts namely product, practices, perspectives, and persons.

The first category is titled products which include tangible products such as books or paintings and intangible products such as oral tales or traditional dances. The cultural elements related to food, entertainment, merchandise, print, tools, dwellings, clothing, laws, education, religions, and travel were grouped as products. The second category is practices which are related to the behavioral patterns of a particular society. These practices may encompass customs and information about daily life, form of address, use of personal space, and rituals. The third category which refers to perspectives includes the underlying beliefs and values, inspirations, myths, superstitions, and world views of a particular society. Finally, the fourth category, persons, encompasses famous individuals and fictitious or unknown people from a particular society.

2.3 Data Analysis

Based on Yuen's [3] content analysis framework cultural elements were categorized into four parts. The frequency of each category was counted in each book. Due to word count limitations in this paper, only the analysis of four books of the Top-Notch series is reported (see table 1).

Top Notch	Products	Practices	Perspectives	Persons
Fundamental A	7	27	4	8
1A	27	4	1	12
2A	36	31	14	7
3A	15	40	16	9

The researcher used some guides from previous studies to design some questions that would help analyze *Top Notch* series (see section 4). The questions targeting these four parts product, practices, perspectives, and persons were considered to help the researcher analyze the data gathered from content analysis of the books.

3. Results and Discussion

In order for the researcher to have a concrete tool to analyze the data gathered from the content of the series, the following questions were employed. The questions are grouped in a way to help categorize the data into the four categories as introduced by Yuen [3].

Products

1. Which/how many cultural topics and themes are covered? Are many aspects of life in the target country acknowledged? Are they relevant and interesting for students?

Top Notch series offers a great variety of cultural topics and acknowledges both high culture and daily culture. In the books most of the cultural elements are introduced and focused through a selection of situations representing the relevant cultural concept. All the products are addressed all over the series except for religions. However, when it comes to entertainment, the series offers an array of entertaining activities. Interestingly, the situations chosen to convey the theme are not limited to American culture only since the series gathers different situations from all around the world and tries to communicate the point that even if the characters are from seemingly diverse cultures, they, as citizens of one global village have the same way to become entertained. It seems that this feature of the series helps students build up an ability of intercultural understanding because they gain the feeling that they can be part of this big society.

Other products like merchandise, travel, education, clothing, and etc. are included in all four books.

However, they are not just restricted to the United States or other English-speaking countries as the series collects situations from different countries.

2. Do the tasks with a cultural component trigger the students' active engagement? Do they encourage dialog and interaction?

It should be mentioned again that the series employs a variety of characters from a variety of age groups. Therefore, it seems sensible to expect the books to encourage students from different age groups to get involved in the activities. Additionally, it seems that the publishers of the series understand what issues probably provoke a deeper engagement since they select some characters or situations that are of interest to people these days. Most tasks that focus on culture trigger the students' active involvement. They require the students to use productive skills such as writing or speaking and often involve partner or group work.

3. What products do the tasks emphasize more? Do they help the learners form a special understanding about the target culture?

Entertainment and themes related to it are of the highest frequency in the series. It encompasses a vast array of activities that people all around the world do to amuse themselves. The second theme which is addressed more than others is travel, which introduces different travel sites, accommodation and payment forms.

Thus, it can be claimed that in terms of products the series are rich with different themes and are capable of equipping the learners with intercultural competence. It seems that the series avoid personal themes like religions and rather emphasize the themes that are common all around the world. Therefore, themes like entertainment, food, merchandise and travel are more prevalent than other products.

Practices

The following questions were used to analyze practices in *Top Notch.*

4. Are there any tasks that reflect customs and cultural practices of other cultures? How many tasks address these practices? What aspects of daily life of the target culture are accentuated?

There are a variety of situations where the series address greetings in different cultures to enhance cultural awareness. The way the series approaches the theme related to greetings is not just about the United States or English-speaking countries. Rather, it tries to introduce customs related to different cultures. *Top Notch* 2A addresses even body language and customs in different cultures. Apparently, the books place a paramount importance on interpersonal relationships in this global world. Overall, all aspects of daily life are addressed in the series. There are a number of parts about daily activities from meeting friends to going to the movies to trying to work out solutions to common problems to phone calls to name just a few.

5. Which types of activities are offered to learn about other cultures? Are there any tasks asking the learners to reflect about their own culture and relate it to the target culture?

It seems that personal space, gestures, and customs are accentuated more than other practices in *Top Notch* series. There are a variety of tasks that introduce different gestures and customs in various parts of the world. In *Top Notch* 2A and 3A the whole lesson 1 and 2 are devoted to cultural practices like gestures, customs, etiquette, taboos, greetings, and time to name a few. It is worth mentioning the writers do not look at the culture just statically and stereotypically but dynamically too. For instance, a reading related to etiquette in the United States, in 3A, discusses how it has changed overtime. At the end of these tasks' students are asked to reflect on their own culture and compare and contrast it with the others.

6. Is there a great variety of social status, gender, age, culture, and race practices?

There is a mention or picture of people from different social status and gender, race and culture in almost all books of *Top Notch*. The colorful pages of the series are full of pictures of celebrities, common people and cartoons.

Perspectives

The following questions were asked to address perspectives:

7. Are all areas of intercultural competence, i.e. knowledge, skills, and attitudes, represented in the textbook?

In terms of perspectives, the series includes a variety of activities that address perspectives like beliefs, values, inspirations, and world views. The books most often address topics like attitudes to family, TV programs, punctuality, beauty and so on.

8. Are there any tasks to challenge learners' attitudes or negotiate meaning?

There are several tasks challenging learners' attitudes. For instance, in *Top Notch* 1 A, the writer asks learners' ideas about the time children should leave home. There is a questionnaire and also a writing task asking students to compare and contrast their country with another.

Persons

Finally, the fourth category, persons, encompasses famous individuals and fictitious or unknown people from a particular society.

9. Do the tasks represent people in a stereotypical manner or are they presented as individuals?

Concerning persons, there are numerous tasks that use different persons to help students appreciate themes. The series uses both famous individuals and fictitious characters to communicate themes. Along with these persons, some unknown people are also introduced to help create a situation to practice themes. It can be said that the persons are not introduced as stereotypes rather they are individuals like other people who are different because they developed some individual capabilities.

10. Does the inclusion of famous individuals in the textbook help students learn anything about target culture and help them develop intercultural communicative competence?

The introduction of famous individuals and their life story or the way they managed to succeed in their life help learners learn about some cultural themes that are both universal and specific. For instance, the books show the attitudes of different cultures to family relationships, life style, transportation and so on through the famous individuals.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The findings revealed that *Top Notch* series presents a well-balanced view of diverse cultures, involving elements not only from the home culture, but also from target and international cultures. In addition, the present study demonstrated that the most frequently represented cultural elements comprised products and practices. Besides, incorporating visible facets of culture, such as food, places to travel, and famous people is useful for attracting students' attention because it may serve to create greater motivation for learning. Overall, the fact that the series tend to expose students to various cultural aspects, rather than English culture alone, can be interpreted as the alignment of *Top-Notch* series with the goals of the Common European Framework.

Additionally, the social and technological transformations taking place worldwide have significantly altered the nature of foreign language education, placing great emphasis on the concept of intercultural communicative competence [4; 5; 6; 7]. Thus, education systems should try to train some individuals that have no difficulty communicating themselves to others and comprehending others.

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Toward Computer Evaluation System through English Education at Public Elementary Schools in Japan – Adjective Comprehension and Retention in Semantic Markedness and Unmarkedness through Japanese Early Childhood English Education

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Abstract

*This paper has proved that unmarked English adjectives are more advantageous than marked ones among Japanese pre-school children in their comprehension and retention, before creating questions on the simultaneous evaluation system for Japanese children in public elementary school class. This test is necessary for the system reliability. Six contrastive adjectives are selected for Group A of Japanese 3-to-4-year-old children (n=37) and Group B of 4-to-5-year-old children (n=57) such as "big," "long" and "clean" as unmarked after taking the pretest. Two posttests are held after learning contrastive adjectives in class; one is held right after the class, and the other 24 hours later. According to the exact probability test, the possibility of "big/small" shows "P<.01" for Group A and "P<.08" for Group B: the one of "long/short" does "P<.16" for Group A and "P<.01" for Group B: the other of "clean/dirty" indicates "P<.09" for Group A and "P<.0004" for Group B on the right-after-class posttest. On the 24-hour-later posttest, the possibility of "big/small" shows "P<.14" for Group A and "P<.07" for Group B: the one of "long/short" does "P<.24" for Group A and "P<.02" for Group B: the other of "clean/dirty" indicates "P<.03" for Group A and "P<.0003" for Group B. These results display that learning in class is effective for Group A and B, and the unmarked adjectives are more advantageous for both groups than the marked ones in their comprehension and retention. Moreover, the results of abstract adjective terms such as "clean/dirty" are more significant than the ones of concrete adjective terms. Therefore, these unmarked/marked questions become the ones on our simultaneous evaluation system in class, to calculate English abilities of each young Japanese English learner. *This research has been supported with the "Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research" (KAKENHI) (17K02959) of "Japan Society for the Promotion of Science" (JSPS).*

Keywords: Computer Evaluation, Marked and Unmarked Adjectives, Public Elementary Schools in Japan

1. Introduction

Early language education instructors experience that some words are easy for children to understand and memorize, but some are not. Ellis points out Marked or Unmarked feature as a factor affecting the learnability of grammatical structure [1]. This paper has verified what he stated is true for even younger children. Unmarked English adjectives are more advantageous than marked ones among Japanese pre-school children in their comprehension and retention under the experiments. It is proposed here that the tests should be computerized, because there are some difficulties through the experiments. The accuracy of the experiments will be raised, and younger children will feel more fun through the computerized experiments as a video game.

2. Procedure of "Markedness Vs Unmarkedness" experiments

Unmarked English adjectives are more advantageous and easier to study than marked ones. Fukuchi attempted to verify whether Markedness and Unmarkedness of the meaning of the words influences the difficulty of learning the words [2].

2.1 Target words and sentences

Target contrastive adjectives surveyed in the pretest and two posttests were long/short, big/small, new/old, clean/dirty, and the following sentences were used in a pretest, two posttests and a skit.

"What do you have? I have a long/short stick." "What do you want? I want a big/small cat." "What's Harry/Hermione wearing today? He or She is wearing a dirty hat."

2.2 Teaching procedures

A survey was conducted to see whether unmarked English adjectives are more advantageous than marked ones among Japanese pre-school children in their comprehension and retention.

2.2.1 Participants of a pretest and two posttests

The classes and the paper-based diagnosis tests were conducted under the same condition for each class. Group A, total seventy-two 3-to-4-year-old children in three classes at Tennoji Kindergarten, and Group B, total seventy-four 4-to-5-year-old children in three classes at the same Kindergarten, participated in this investigation. Children were separated into groups, where there are 2 or 3 children. Each facilitator supported 2 or 3 children in the group. The results of 37 of Group A and 57 of Group B, who participated in the pretest and two posttests for three days, were analyzed.

2.2.2 Tests and classes

The pretest was conducted on the first day and was examined for the knowledge of the target words before the pretest. On the second day, children enjoyed a skit and communication using target words at the background of 'Harry Potter' and had a posttest to see how much children understood the meaning of the words on the paper-based diagnosis test just after the class. On the third day, they were examined on the 24-hour-later paper-based posttest to see how much they remembered the target words.

3. Results and discussion

Some children understood six contrastive adjectives immediately after the class, and they remembered them 24 hours later after the class. Analysis by direct probability calculation method was investigated on the differences concerning retention of memory about six contrastive adjectives. Six contrastive adjectives, such as "big," "long" and "clean" as the unmarked, are selected for Group A, 3-to-4-year-old children (n=37), and Group B, 4-to-5-year-old children (n=57). Two posttests are held after learning contrastive adjectives in class; one is held right after the class, and the other is 24 hours later.

3.1 Pretest

Differences are recognized between the unmarked words and the marked words (Table1) before the investigation. Particularly, in Group A, a remarkable difference is recognized in clean/dirty as abstract vocabularies.

3.2 Right-after-class posttest

Table 2 shows it is easier for both Group A and Group B to understand unmarked words than marked words. In particular, a significant difference ($p<.0004$) was observed in Group B for the abstract words "clean/dirty" (Table 2).

According to the exact probability test, the possibility of "big/small" shows "$P<.01$" in Group A and "$P<.08$" in Group B: the one of "long/short" does "$P<.16$" in Group A and "$P<.01$" in Group B: the other of "clean/dirty" indicates "$P<.09$" in Group A and "$P<.0004$" in Group B on the right-after-class posttest (Table 3).

	Group A (n=37) 3-to-4-year-old children		Group B (n=57) 4-to-5-year-old children	
Children who did not know 'Big'	21	56.8%	16	28.1%
Children who did not know 'small'	29	78.4%	40	70.2%
Children who did not know 'Long'	29	78.4%	30	52.6%
Children who did not know 'Short'	28	75.7%	46	80.7%
Children who did not know 'Clean'	20	54.1%	30	52.6%
Children who did not know 'Dirty'	32	86.5%	41	71.9%

(*Table 1: Pretest*)

	Group A 3-to-4-year-old children		Group B 4-to-5-year-old children	
Children who could understand 'Big'	10／14	71%	7／10	70%
Children who could understand 'Small'	3／14	21%	3／10	30%
Children who could understand 'Long'	8／13	62%	12／16	75%
Children who could understand 'Short'	5／13	38%	4／16	25%
Children who could understand 'Clean'	8／12	67%	16／19	84%
Children who could understand 'Dirty'	4／12	33%	5／19	26%

(*Table 2: Posttest Right-after-class*)

	big / small	**long / short**	**clean / dirty**
Group A 3-to-4-year-old children	P<.01	P<.16	P<.09
Group B 4-to-5-year-old children	P<.08	P<.01	P<.0004

(*Table 3: Probability of Posttest Right-after-class*)

3.3 24-hour-later posttest

The results of the 24-hour-later posttest are shown in Table 4. Compared with the result of posttests, the number of Children who remembered the contrasting words of the adjective is decreasing, however, the Table shows unmarked words are more advantageous than marked words to maintenance of the memory. According to the exact probability test, the possibility of “big/small” shows “P<.14” in Group A and “P<.07” in Group B: the one of “long/short” does “P<.24” in Group A and “P<.02” in Group B: the other of “clean/dirty” indicates “P<.03” in Group A and “P<.0003” in Group B on the 24-hour-later posttest (Table 5).

	Group A 3-to-4-year-old children		Group B 4-to-5-year-old children	
Children who remembered 'Big'	4／14	29%	5／10	50%
Children who remembered 'Small'	1／14	7%	1／10	10%
Children who remembered 'Long'	2／13	15%	8／16	50%
Children who remembered 'Short'	4／13	31%	2／16	13%
Children who remembered 'Clean'	6／12	50%	13／19	68%
Children who remembered 'Dirty'	1／12	8%	2／19	11%

(*Table 4: Posttest 24-hour-later*)

These results display that learning in class is effective for Group A and B, and the unmarked adjectives are more advantageous in both groups than the marked ones in their comprehension and retention. Moreover, the results of abstract adjective terms such as "clean/dirty" are more significant than the ones of concrete adjective terms.

	big / small	long / short	clean / dirty
Group A 3-to-4-year-old children	P<.14	P<.24	P<.03
Group B 4-to-5-year-old children	P<.07	P<.02	P<.0003

(*Table 5: Probability of Posttest 24-hour-later*)

4. Difficulties in Paper-Based Test

There are some difficulties among children and facilitators when the paper-based tests are conducted. These difficulties might affect consistency of the test results.

4.1 Different facilitators

It is very difficult for facilitators to keep the consistency of instructions and tests among children. Children are separated into some groups in class. Each group has 2 or 3 children and one facilitator. Although the basic instruction is same, it is very natural for facilitators that some different instructions and supports happen in groups.

4.2 Understanding how to take the tests

It is very difficult for children to understand how to take the tests. Although it is the best way no child be aware of that he/she is taking a test, a paper-based test is too obvious for children. Moreover, it might be the first test in their life. Therefore, it is very difficult for each child to understand how to take the tests, even though a facilitator is next to him/her.

4.3 Children's behavior control

Although one facilitator is next to 2 or 3 children in each group, it is very difficult for facilitators to control children's behaviors. When each correct child finds out the answer, he/she easily speaks out the correct one in Japanese with delight. As soon as one of each group finds out the correct answer, he/she innocently points out the correct one on the answer sheet to the others with joy.

4.4 Making 3 kinds of different answer sheets for each group

Therefore, it takes a long time to prepare for making, print out and sort three kinds of answer sheets in a group, avoiding from cheating among children in the group.

4.5 Time to collect and process data

It takes a long time to sort 3 kinds of the answer sheets, check and count the correct answers before it also takes another long time to collect and process the data.

5. To solve difficulties

A new survey will be conducted soon with power of technology. It is a story-based test, so it is hard for children to aware of taking tests. A program on computer tells children the story of Newton, a main character and an alien. Each child has iPod Touch in class to answer the questions, which Newton asks. As you may know, it is easy for even 2 or 3-year-old children to use smartphones for playing games. Moreover, an example practice is included before taking the real test and learn how to use iPodTouch and answer the questions on it. There are one practice test and 10 unmarked and marked questions on the program.

The classroom circumstances will be very consistent with this computer program. There are few facilitators to control children and his behavior in class. It is clearer and more understandable for children to play the game on iPodTouch with their joy, and they never aware of taking the tests. The test results should be on the main computer, immediately and automatically sorted, collected and checked.

(Graphics 1: Story-based Test with iPod Touch)

6. Conclusions

The experiments are very successful under a lot of consideration with paper-based tests. The test results have shown that unmarked adjectives are easier for even children to remember and recall 24-hour-later than marked adjectives. Although there are some difficulties, the tests are consistently conducted in class circumstances as much as possible. However, after these tests are on computer as a game, it will be easier for facilitators to more smoothly utilize the tests and collect accurate data from children, in order to fascinatedly develop children's abilities effectively in a limited time.

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