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Common European Framework of Reference

Readiness of Education Students in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET)

Ethel Reyes-Chua¹, Frederick A. Andal², John Philip M. Alexander³
Emilio Aguinaldo College-Cavite, Philippines^{1,2,3}

Abstract

One of the most in demand professions in the Philippines is Teacher Education. However, becoming a professional teacher takes a lot of efforts to pass the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). This study assessed the readiness of Education students in taking up Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) at EAC-Cavite. This study was a pretest-post-test design utilizing the researcher's self-made questionnaires to assess the readiness of the participants in taking the Licensure Examination for Teachers. The paired t-test was used to assess the participants' readiness in taking up LET at the beginning and at the end of the study. Results indicated that the post-test mean ($\mu = 53.042$) is higher than the pretest mean ($\mu = 51.153$) which means that the review program is somehow successful at the end of the study. The significant difference ($p < 0.05$ was observed with the p-value of 0.027 between the mean scores of the pretest ($\mu = 51.53$) and post-test ($\mu = 53.042$). Based on the result, the participants are ready to take the LET. The study recommends to pursue the mentoring and coaching program for the next batches of 4th year students; however, there is a need to modify some procedures and strategies in the program for further improvement and to meet the specific needs of the reviewees.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Licensure Examination for Teachers, Intensive Review Mentoring, Coaching

Introduction

One of the most in demand professions in the Philippines is Teacher Education.

However, becoming a professional teacher takes a lot of efforts to pass the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). Every graduating student dreams of becoming a full-fledged teacher. However, they can be fully recognized as one if they graduated with competencies required of them as professional teachers and passed the licensure examination for teachers which is conducted by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). Teacher educators including all policy makers have called for many preparations and they deeply linked this into practice [1].

This research focused on the readiness of education students in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). If teachers are familiar with students' conceptions and perceptions of teaching and learning, supported and targeted teaching is achieved [2].

However, there is a need to motivate and encourage students to learn to achieve a better understanding of the lesson through feedback. In this study, the researchers documented the process of the coaching and mentoring program as part to analyse the results using Pre-Test and Post-Test. This was the first time of the School of Education has conducted a review session for the 4th year students who are taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) and Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED).

Research Aims

This research study aimed to assess the readiness of Education students in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). Specifically, this research study aimed to find the strengths and weaknesses of the participants in the LET Review sessions; and to find if there is a significant difference between the Pre-test and Post-test of the participants.

Significance of the Study

This study was very significant in the light of 4th year students who will be taking the LET after graduation. The 8-day intensive coaching and mentoring program was their avenue to find out their strengths and weaknesses in their fields of specialization. In addition, this was also significant to faculty members because it helped them identify the areas to be focused on during the review sessions.

Method

Research Design

This research study was a quantitative research using Pretest and Post-test design.

The SOE expected that after the review, the participants are expected to excel in their Post-test scores. Using quantitative design, this study can determine if there is a significant difference between the Pretest and Post-test scores.

Research Instrument

The main instrument used to acquire the necessary data was the use of a self-made questionnaire prepared by the School of Education. This questionnaire was validated by the Research Development Office. Reliability of the tests was tested for seven (7) graduates and its result was 0.91 which means that it has a very high reliability.

Research Participants

The participants of this study are all 4th year Education students who are aspiring to be licensed professional teachers.

Procedures of the Study

This study involved various steps such as: planning, discussion in the Academic Council, meeting with the School of Education faculty members, reliability testing, and actual conduct of the program. The program was inclusive of eight (8) days with coaching and mentoring among the students' professors and reviewers. The first day was a Pretest and the last day was the Post-test. Immediately, all papers were corrected and an interview with the reviewees was conducted as to whether they learned something or not.

Results and Discussions

Student participants found the 8-day coaching and mentoring program useful and beneficial. The lessons given to them enlighten them to a deeper understanding of their General Education courses and most especially the professional courses in the Teacher Education curriculum.

Pre-Test Results

Table 1. 4th year Education Students Courses Percentage in Pretest

RANKS	COURSES	No. of Items	MEAN	PERCENTAGE
1	Filipino	30	20.37	67.91
2	ICT	20	13.29	66.45
3	Professional Education	50	25.34	50.67
4	Reading Comprehension	30	14.53	48.43
5	Social Studies	50	23.97	47.94
6	Mathematics	50	22.66	45.32
6	Speech and Oral Communication	20	8.89	44.44
7	Science	30	12.31	41.04
8	Current Events	20	7.81	39.05

As gleaned on the table, 4th year students excelled in Filipino with 20.37 mean average or 67.91%, ICT with mean average of 13.29 or 66.45%, and Professional Education with mean average of 25.3 or 50.67%. These were considered as the reviewees' strengths while the rest are their weaknesses. As you can see in the table, Filipino subject was on the top of their pretest. It means that the participants answered it easily than the other subject areas because of the language. According to Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education, MTB-MLE [3] refers to "first-language-first" education that is, schooling which begins in the mother tongue and transitions to additional languages particularly Filipino and English.

In this study, students have varied scores in the pretest. The successful learner can link new information with existing knowledge in meaningful ways [4]. According to this author, knowledge widens and deepens as students need to build links with new information and experiences to their existing knowledge. Indeed, he justified this theory by giving some suggestions to educators that they need to be sensitive to individual differences. Those students who got the highest marks may have shown interest and motivation to study. Factors such as intrinsic and extrinsic, personal goals to learn, and enjoyment of learning asks to have a crucial role in the learning process. In the social influences in learning theory, learning is influenced by social interactions, interpersonal relations, and communication with others. According to this theory, some of the factors of learning are realized like the enhancement to interact and to collaborate, encouragement of flexible thinking and social competence, and positive learning climates for healthier levels of thinking, feeling, and behaving [5].

On the other hand, this was in contrast with one author [6] who states that people need to understand its psychological needs. In his conclusion, he emphasizes that: "Self-determination allows us not only better understand human processes in a number of areas (education, work, leisure activities, parenting, etc.) but also to guide applications and interventions to ameliorate the human condition" (p. 260). Optimal outcomes are attained when all three needs three balanced i.e., equally satisfied [6]. Other researchers [7] believe that study habits and achievement motivation are positively related.

Post-Test Results

Table 2. 4th year Education Students Courses Percentage in Post-test

RANKS	COURSES	No. of Items	MEAN	PERCENTAGE
1	ICT	20	13.71	68.55
2	Filipino	30	19.34	64.46
3	Mathematics	50	26.98	53.96
4	Professional Education	50	26.03	52.06
5	Reading Comprehension	30	14.46	48.20
6	Social Studies	50	23.44	46.87
6	Speech and Oral Communication	20	8.74	43.69
7	Current Events	20	8.61	43.04
8	Science	30	12.14	40.46

There was a sudden increase of each category. The researchers assumed that the 8-day coaching and mentoring as an intervention lead to improved performance of student participants. The value of group study had an impact on collaborative pedagogy on student learning. The post-test showed improvement in understanding the course content.

Interpretation of Results

The table shows if there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the pretest and post-test of the participants. It shows that the participants have a pretest mean of 51.153 and the post-test mean of 53.042. The means of both pretest and post-test give a p-value of 0.027 which means that there is a significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores of the participants. And there is a progress between the pretest and post-test. With the mean difference of 1.889, since that the mean difference is positive the progress is in favour to the post-test result. Therefore, the participants excelled after the review.

Part of teachers' qualities in providing review is compassion and innovativeness.

Compassion is a natural quality to emphasize, to feel what others feel, to be tolerant of others while innovativeness is a natural tendency to create new things, modify existing ones, imaginative, finds solutions to problems quickly, and makes use of available materials [8]. In the review sessions, teachers showed their compassion by understanding students' schedule, curricular and extra-curricular activities, and their behaviour in the review hall.

There was a group study method conducted [9] Collaborative test reviews: student performance and they found out that a group study method proved helpful in improving senior-level students' performance on unit tests through collaborative learning.

According to them, "mean scores of the students who attended the collaborative review sessions were significantly higher than those who did not attend." Similarly, in this study, those who kept on coming the review sessions have higher scores than those who had one or two absences, and they had just attended the post-test. It is also noticed by other researchers [10] that future teachers' education should include an examination that tests their personal and professional values including the educational and cultural

values. One of the core values inculcated in the hearts of EAC graduates is excellence which means, doing the right thing in all undertakings [11].

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study highlights the key findings that 4th year Education students at EAC-Cavite are ready to take the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). It is therefore recommended that the coaching and mentoring program should be pushed through and continuously be done. Students should find time to review their courses taken from the past focusing more on their fields of specialization. Secondly, there is significant difference after taking the post-test, thus, students are prepared to take the LET in September; however, there is a need to modify some procedures in conducting the review sessions to meet the specific needs of reviewees. Aside from this, other recommendations also include: (a) to help students to be prepared academically; (b) to encourage them to explore all relevant options to learn on their own way; (c) to make all the information and resources available to all fourth-year students and prepare them for these processes.

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Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Applying CLIL Model in Overseas Language Immersion

Ying Amatya¹

Defense Language Institute, United States of America¹

Abstract

The purpose of launching Culture and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) model in the overseas immersion program offered by Post-basic Chinese Program at Defense Language Institute (DLI) was to provide culturally based foreign language education to language learners via a culture-integrated immersive learning environment. The CLIL model aimed to engage learners in meaningful real-life tasks and to enhance learners' proficiency in the target language as well as cultural knowledge about the target-language-spoken regions and countries. The primary goal of the CLIL-model based overseas immersion program at a host university in Taiwan was to emphasize on social and cultural studies of the target-language countries and regions in order to enhance the learners' linguistic and sociolinguistic competence. Pedagogical strategies employed included implementing content-based immersion curriculum, designing real-life scenario-based learning tasks, and creating a post-immersion cultural research showcase. An online Diagnostic Assessment tool was used to measure participating students' pre- and post-immersion listening and reading proficiency. The results demonstrate that the all 9 students' both listening and reading proficiency was enhanced after completing the 4-week long overseas immersion program. In addition, a post-immersion learning-attitude survey demonstrated the 9 students' accelerated learning motivation, confidence and risk-taking tactics. In conclusion, this program successfully equipped the participating learners with professional language and cross-cultural competence.

Keywords: Overseas immersion, culture and language integration, content-based learning

1. Background

Defense Language Institute (DLI) is the largest language college in the world, which accommodates over 3,500 military students enrolled in over thirty language programs and taught by over 1,800 language instructors. DLI provides high quality language training to future military linguists in order to enhance the national security of the United States. During the past decade, DLI has transformed from a military training institute to a fully accredited college specializing in foreign language education. The transformation of the organization calls for a revolutionary change in classroom instruction, curriculum design and program development. The Chinese Post-basic Program at DLI piloted applying the Culture and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) model in its overseas immersion program.

2. CLIL-Based Overseas Immersion

The CLIL model has refaced the way of language learning since it was proposed in 1990s. According to Marsh (1994), the creator of this term, the concept of CLIL evolved from and integrated “language immersion” and “content-based instruction”, two effective and prevalent methodologies in language education [6]. CLIL develops not only language learners’ language proficiency but also their cultural understanding and motivation (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010) [2]. A content-based overseas language immersion program was launched in the Chinese Post-Basic Program. Unlike conventional language study abroad programs, the CLIL-based immersion curriculum focused not only language proficiency gains but also target-area knowledge and intercultural awareness. The overseas immersion program also aimed to enhance students’ learning self-efficacy so that they would be more motivated and prepared for their future assignments to cope with emerging international and regional issues with both linguistic and sociolinguistic competence.

Students enrolled at the Post-basic Chinese Department were required to participate in a four-week immersion program at National Chengchi University (NCCU) in Taipei, Taiwan. The program consisted of lectures on various cultural and social topics taught by Chinese subject-matter experts as well as a variety of learning tasks requiring higher level language proficiency, such as roundtable discussions, debates and interviews. All lectures were delivered by a subject matter expert at the hosting university instead of by a language teacher. In addition, students participated in field trips and excursions accompanied by Chinese language partners and NCCU staff/tutors to enhance what they learned in the classroom. Driven by the CLIL model, this immersion program aimed to stimulate the participating students’ linguistic and sociolinguistic learning via reflecting on their learning from daily lectures offered at NCCU in Taiwan as well as interaction with the locals. Participating students were required to conduct a mini research on one interested topic during their immersion program in Taiwan and to present their research outcome to military and academic leadership as well as their teachers and peers after completing the immersion trip. The participating students were encouraged to collect information related to their selected topic in Taiwan with the help of local language tutors via survey, interview, roundtable discussion, etc.

It is commonly known that overseas language immersion is pricy. In the current literature, there are very few studies presenting any convincing program evaluation data for content-based overseas language immersion. The question remains: does the CLIL-based overseas immersion program help improve students’ proficiency level and learning motivation?

The two program evaluation questions for this CLIL-based overseas immersion program are:

1. Does the CLIL-based overseas immersion curriculum enhance students’ language proficiency levels?
2. Does the CLIL-based overseas immersion program help improve students’ language learning motivation and attitude?

3. Data Collection

3.1 *Evaluation methods*

The target subjects of this evaluation study were 9 military linguists enrolled at Chinese Post-basic Program at DLI during the second and third quarter of Fiscal Year 2018. All these trainees were required to participate in a 4-week long overseas

immersion program hosted by National Cheng-chi University in Taipei, Taiwan.

Boulmetis and Dutwin (2011) illustrated the diverse circumstances under which each evaluation model can be used and offered practical advice on identifying data sources and collecting the data [1]. A single-factor quasi-experimental quantitative study was designed to explore the above two evaluation questions: proficiency gain and learning attitude change. In this program evaluation, the independent variable was the CLIL-based overseas language immersion program while dependent variables were the subjects' language proficiency levels and language learning beliefs, such as self-efficacy, attitude motivation and confidence.

For the first evaluation question, the Online Diagnostic Assessment (ODA) was adopted as the instrument to conduct the pretest-post-test design. All the subjects were required to take pre-immersion and post-immersion ODA tests which measures examinees' listening and reading proficiency. The post-immersion ODA scores were compared with pre-immersion ODA scores to tell whether or not the subjects' language proficiency was improved after the intervention of total language immersion programs.

As for the second evaluation question, a 10-question survey was conducted to all the subjects to evaluate the enhancement of their learning attitude. According to Creswell (2005), survey research is adopted to a sample or to the entire population of people in order to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviours, or characteristics of the population [3]. The 10-question survey in Appendix A covering various aspects of language learning attitude was used as the instrument to investigate how the immersion experience changed a learner's motivation and strategies.

3.2 Population and sample

The population of the study are college-level intermediate and advanced Chinese language learners. Among the 9 subjects in this study, 7 trainees were Non-Committed-Officers (NCO, E5-E7) and 2 trainees were Senior Airmen. All the trainees were professional military linguists who had completed DLI Basic-course Chinese program.

They were deployed in various domestic and overseas American military bases and performed Chinese language related military tasks. Their military units sent them back to DLI to complete the 19-week long post-basic course in order to enhance their language proficiency to a superior level. Due to security reasons, many of the demographic characteristics of the samples in this study, such as military rank, gender, age, service years, are released or described in further details.

3.3 Data collection procedure

The 9 subjects were required to take ODA within one week before departing for immersion destination and one week after returning. Subjects were asked to log into the website of ODA and to complete the assessment. Results of the assessments was saved with each student's learning profile. The teaching teams of the Chinese Post-basic program collected the results of each student and submitted to me and DLI Immersion Language Office, who was responsible for recording the ODA results of each immersion group in the database.

An Immersion Specialist from Immersion Language Office coordinated this immersion trip. The specialist met the immersion students during an after-action briefing after they were back to the classrooms. During this briefing, the Immersion Specialist asked the students to complete the survey. The specialist also gave the instruction of survey, explained the purpose of the survey and clarified the students' concern and questions if it is necessary. Each student was issued a copy of survey and was asked to complete the survey within 10 minutes. Students were asked not to write down their names on the

survey form. Based on their immersion experience, the students indicated whether they agreed with the statements related to learning attitude by circling a number next to the statement, where 4=strongly agree, 3= agree, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree, 0=no opinion. After all the students complete the survey, the Immersion Specialist collected the survey paper and calculate the means of the group's response to each question. The survey results were entered into the database of Immersion Language Office. The original survey paper was kept in a safe in the Office.

4. Data analysis

Two sets of univariate data were analysed: ODA test scores (measurement) and results of the survey on learning attitude.

4.1 ODA results

The below table displays the 9 subjects' pre-and post-ODA records.

Subject	Pre-Immersion ODA Scores (Reading/Listening)	Post-Immersion ODA Scores (Reading/Listening)
Student 1	23/25	25/26
Student 2	23/25	29/27
Student 3	25/29	29/29
Student 4	23/25	26/29
Student 5	19/23	26/26
Student 6	26/28	30/33
Student 7	28/30	30/33
Student 8	25/27	31/32
Student 9	26/26	35/33

Table 1. ODA Results Analysis

4.2 Learning-attitude survey results

The following data analysis is based on the post-immersion self-assessment survey results of the 9 subjects who participated in the 4-week overseas language immersion in Taiwan. The descriptive statistics demonstrates the mean, standard deviation and variance of each of the 10 questions asked in the survey.

	# 1	# 2	# 3	# 4	# 5	# 6	# 7	# 8	# 9	# 10
count	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
mean	3.53	3.81	3.90	3.80	3.59	3.60	3.73	3.50	3.80	3.92
sample standard deviation	0.53	0.40	0.32	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.42	0.42	0.31
sample variance	0.28	0.13	0.10	0.17	0.24	0.22	0.23	0.19	0.18	0.12

Table 2. Post-immersion Self-assessment Survey Results

5. Findings

The above ODA data analysis demonstrates that the all 9 subjects' both listening and reading proficiency was enhanced after completing the 4-week long overseas immersion program. There are various reasons for this significant improvement within a short time.

Kitsantas (2004) revealed the three factors benefiting students who studied abroad: enhancing intercultural skills, gaining proficiency in subject matter and socializing [5].

The findings of this evaluation echoes various quantitative and qualitative studies in the field that recognized the unique role of study abroad programs play in improving students' language and cultural competence.

In addition, the learning-attitude survey demonstrated the 9 students' accelerated learning motivation, confidence and risk-taking tactics. Subjects in this study were all language learners enrolled in extremely intensive training programs at DLI. The opportunity to go overseas or to another location could be cherished by subjects as a change or a break from rigid traditional classroom environment. This overseas immersion provided a different level of authentic language input, opportunities of interaction with locals and maximal exposure to target culture. In general, the effects of overseas immersion on subjects' cognitive and psychological transformation were enormous.

6. Conclusion

Foreign language educators have long recognized the benefits and significance of overseas language immersion programs (Freed, 1995) [4]. In this age of globalization, overseas immersion has had increasing significance in the field of foreign language education. Despite of family, financial, psychological and social barriers, language learners are motivated to go overseas in search of a transformative learning experience and a unique and authentic learning environment (Sanchez, Fornerino and Zhang, 2006) [7]. The successful application of CLIL model in the Post-basic Chinese Program's immersion program provided participating trainees with a transformative learning experience and had remarkable impact on the learners. The results of the study thus provided convincing evidence of promoting CLIC-based overseas immersion programs for college-level language learners.

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Appendix A Post-Immersion Self-Assessment

Instruction:

Based on your immersion experience, please indicate whether you agree with the following statements by circling a number next to the statement, where 4=strongly agree, 3= agree, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree, 0=no opinion.

1. The immersion experience has increased my confidence in using the target language.	4 3 2 1 0
2. The immersion experience has increased my motivation in using the target language.	4 3 2 1 0
3. As a result of the immersion experience, I have improved my ability in using appropriate communication strategies.	4 3 2 1 0
4. As a result of the immersion experience, I am more willing to take risks linguistically.	4 3 2 1 0
5. The immersion experience has made me more tolerant of language parts that I do not know.	4 3 2 1 0
6. As a result of the immersion experience, I have less anxiety in talking with native speakers.	4 3 2 1 0
7. As a result of the immersion experience, I am more in charge of making decisions about my learning (prioritizing, using learning strategies, reflecting and analyzing learning process...	4 3 2 1 0
8. The immersion experience has enhanced my ability to understand the target culture imbedded in the target language.	4 3 2 1 0
9. As a result of the immersion experience, I have improved my ability in identifying and using available resources for my learning.	4 3 2 1 0
10. As a result of the immersion experience, my overall language proficiency has improved.	4 3 2 1 0

Design Exercises to Balance Input and Output in K-12 Classroom

Yun Zhu¹

St. Catherine's School, United States of America¹

Abstract

Based on Input Hypothesis and Output Hypothesis, the author discusses how to design exercises/tasks in k-12 classroom to achieve students' proficiency level of the target language and communicative competence in four levels: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. The author will explain the process of designing exercises by giving an example of how to teach the topic "sick". That is, how to design a series of exercises that are appropriate for students' language level. The exercises will cover linguistic (lexical, structural, etc.), discourse, and ultimately, real life perspectives of learning and practicing Chinese. Through the illustration, the participants will get to understand how to design graded exercises to promote students' Chinese language acquisition process by taking account 1. teacher's pedagogical tasks 2. students' developmental state and skill level and 3. social contexts of the second-language learning environment. Participants will develop skills on: 1. how to increase students' discourse output (not simply sentential output); 2. how to set up certain lexical and structural complexity as practice condition; 3. how teachers create scaffolding practices; 4. how to prepare practices from mechanical drilling to connecting to real world experience. The author will use PPT to show illustrate: some theoretical basis and then show a detailed process of how-to scaffolding students to achieve their language proficiency and communicative competence.

Keywords: Input, Output, Exercises

Introduction

Input Hypothesis

Krashen is a pioneer in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and in K-12 class, his theory of Input Hypothesis has been widely used. He has made significant contributions to how to understand language learning process and how to lower the affective filter of the language learners. His ideas have long been "a source of ideas for research in second language acquisition" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 38) [6].

According to Krashen, the teachers should shift from rule-focused approaches, such as grammar-translation method and audiolingual, to more meaning-based instructions, such as communicative language teaching (CLT). Till now, his theory has been the most widely accepted approach (Lightbown & Spada) [6].

Output Hypothesis

After Krashen's theory of Input Hypothesis, the output hypothesis, as another theory, has been widely used to guide in K-12 language classes. According to Merrill Swain (1997, p. 176) [10], "The output hypothesis claims that the act of producing language

(speaking or writing) constitutes under certain circumstances, part of the process of second language learning”. Output makes to move the learner from the semantic processing to the complete grammatical processing for accurate production. For Swain, constant practice facilitates the language learners to be conscious of their production and output makes them move from the semantic processing to the complete grammatical processing for accurate production.

Problems in Chinese Class

However, in the real classroom time, will comprehensible Input lead to effective Output?

In the language class, the Input theory has been used widely to guide the language teachers on how to design the instruction focusing on making the lesson more comprehensible. However, Krashen’s theory is considered to be “one of the most controversial theoretical perspectives in SLA in the last quarter of the twentieth century” (Brown, 2000, p. 277) [2]. In the Input Hypothesis, Krashen (1985) [4] claims that “comprehensible input” can lead to acquisition, however, as McLaughlin (1987) [8] criticized that Krashen failed to define the “comprehensible input” precisely. That is, he gave no clear definition. The word “comprehensible”, which literally means “able to be understood” or “intelligible”, can be explained differently (Birkner, 2016) [1].

Plus, the ambiguity of what the i+1 make it harder to fully understand what “comprehensible input” means. Krashen first he explained that i refers to “our current level of competence” and i+1 means “the next level along the natural order” (Krashen, 1985, p. 2) [4]. He talked about language learner’s “level of competence”. He then limits the type of competence to grammar alone and interprets i+1 as “structures at our next stage”. Therefore, Krashen is more inclined to a general level of competence in grammar than any specific structure, and is therefore criticized by Zafar (2010, p. 97) [11] for failing to give “specific syntactic illustrations”.

For Chinese language in a given topic, some grammatical structures tend to be acquired early while others late. Here we will use some examples of teaching *Weather*.

Input: 今天刮风 ✓

Output: 今天有刮风 ✗

今天大刮风 ✗

今天有小刮风 ✗

今天刮风很多 ✗

Based on many different types of mistakes, we have to ask: is drilling pattern input necessary? Will comprehensible input enough? How to define good and effective output?

This can happen because of the negative transfer of native language, or the utterance can be provided by someone who does not have a good command of the target language. E.g.: in English, when it has a big rain, you say “we had a big rain” or “it rained heavily”, while in Chinese, you say 雨下得很大, or 下大雨了. It is different in terms of structure and syntax.

According to Swain, there is a possible connection between input and output. Output allows second language learners to identify gaps in their linguistic knowledge. As a

result, language learners attend to relevant input. Therefore, without minimizing the importance of input, the output hypothesis complements and addresses the insufficiencies of the input hypothesis by addressing the importance of the production of language for second language acquisition.

However, in real class, when the students have output, they make mistakes on grammatical function, which means mistakes on lexical and sentential level, such as 今天有刮风 or 今天大刮风. Therefore, they cannot accomplish their communicative competence in four levels: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic competence. Also, in most cases, they fail to realize the mistakes in these four levels. In most instances, they will learn the correct expression by getting correction or feedback from the teacher instead of self-directing and self-correction.

Solution

Before the language teacher design a class, things to consider are: 1. teacher's pedagogical tasks; 2. students' developmental state and skill level; 3. social contexts of the second-language learning environment.

Because students' acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language, so first of all, give the students meaningful contexts and natural communication in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding.

Give more chances of the collaboration and interaction that students feel comfortable to work together. Cognitive science is finding that active, self-directed activities engage the brain in deeper, faster learning than sitting passively in class (Lovett, 2010) [7].

Language in this case will serve as a mediating tool, which allows students to lead with the solving-problem process they encounter in the path of acquiring the second language.

Try learn phrases in chunks. Therefore, instead of knowing the individual meaning of each word, students learn how to create new sentences and phrases with big chunks of language units instead of words.

Give feedback is important, especially, because students need advices and corrections for improving their production if the self-correction won't happen. Make each exposure to a piece of linguistic data helps students to gradually and naturally internalize language, which ultimately results in acquisition.

Conclusion

Comprehensible input is most conducive for language acquisition when it is in context, compelling and meaningful to students. However, sometimes in class, comprehension is not enough.

The native language is acquired spontaneously and in a genuine, natural, and most of the time, communicative form after we are born.

There are different factors make comprehensible input conducive. There are useful ways to use to improve both student input and output: repeated exposure over time, make input that is either compelling or high-interest, relevant and/or personalized exchanges, have more chances of the collaboration and interaction, give the students meaningful contexts, and try to learn phrases in chunks.

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Integrating Microsoft Teams into English for Specific Purposes Course for Future Learning: A New Business English course Concept

Ksenia Sharapova¹

South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, Finland¹

Abstract

What is a future scenario of English language teaching at Universities of Applied Sciences like? One of the essential shifts in English language teaching in connection to the general trend of informationalism is emphasizing learners' skills in online navigation, hypermedia analysis and all types of online communication; project-based content with possibilities of situational practice and critical thinking is to be the core of the new curriculum [8]. In addition, this change challenges English teachers to choose new tools to enhance English language learning for specific purposes. The present paper addresses the vital needs of the future English language teaching curriculum in the form of proposal for Business English course concept around project-based communication enabled through exploiting Microsoft Teams as a course platform.

Keywords: English for specific purposes (Business), Project-based communication, Microsoft Teams, Business-challenge simulation

1. Introduction

Maintaining relationships within organizations and in the business environment outside organizations is crucial and cannot be implemented without video-conferencing, real-time communication and collaboration tools among others [4]. The goal of English for Specific Purposes courses is to teach the skills that will be useful in the future profession [7]. In addition to that, the principles of English for Specific Purposes concept should be followed when choosing applications for language studies, i.e., *needs as a basis, pragmatism, efficiency, cost-effectivity and functionality* [1]. In other words, one needs to use the same tools in English language courses as the ones that are used in the real world by organizations in their professional communication.

The process of searching for the correct tools coincided with the development of Teams-application by Microsoft as a tool for more efficient collaborative communication at work place. Quick communication, transparent teamwork, mind maps, news, sharing, video calls and recording – are some of the features that make Microsoft Teams be the choice for the current concept. This solution posed further questions to answer. The use of such an application in the English for specific purposes course should be meaningful; the meaning can be achieved through correctly chosen content. Belcher, D. (2006) claims that content can be interpreted differently. Content can mean specific themes of interest, relevant to the studied subject, or it can mean connection to the professional discourse community through, for example, business cases [1]. What if students receive a chance to involve into real professional communication around one concrete project for the length of the whole course?

2. Business challenge as professional content

In the pilot version of the course, the business challenge is provided by a Dutch company and is built around a pet food product that implements principles of circular economy, responsibility and sustainability. The product does exist, though the company needs to develop the whole concept behind it; it needs visual identity, customer analysis, future market analysis and research on plausible export channels.

In this context, students are required to be involved in teamwork and actively prepare this product for export to Finland. Thus, English for Specific purposes course can be integrated with such professional courses as International Selling, Product Conceptualization, Customer Project or other courses on entrepreneurship and innovation, linking language and subject-area classes [1].

From the very beginning, the students simulate related business activities on bringing the product into the new market. According to Drury-Grogan and Russ (2013), simulations allow students to explore how they might manage in different business communication situations.

3. Pedagogical rationale

The pedagogical benefits of simulations, including cognitive, affective and kinaesthetic engagement were widely discussed in the literature [5]. Based on the study by Drury-Grogan and Russ (2013), students improve teamwork skills, learn to manage stress, understand real-life practices, and develop effectiveness of communication.

Contemporary business world sets new high demands to the use of English language. People at work places find themselves in situations when they need to produce persuasive messages, analytically interpret information, and implement complex cooperation in English. Warschauer (2000) argues that advanced argumentation and persuasion skills can be developed in a most efficient way through project-based approaches, that give the students opportunity to practice sophisticated skills of their future careers. [8] On the whole, the pedagogical rationale of the course concept rests on the elements, suggested by the New London Group in 1996: *immersion in situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice*. [8]

In addition to that, new technologies are keys to effective learning: they can be helpful in creating the authentic learning activities in authentic situations, involving authentic language. These opportunities positively influence student motivation and facilitate student engagement due to opportunities of constructing knowledge and building communities. [6]

3.1 Learning modules

The course is designed around seven thematic modules: the course runs for 14 weeks and each module runs for 2 weeks. Table 1 demonstrates an example of possible interrelation of the topical modules of innovation courses and the language course concept under development. Each module concentrates on subject related questions while language focus and tasks in the end of each module are chosen to logically fit the subject areas. Warschauer (2000) claims that projects-based courses might involve individual tasks, though the greatest benefit of project-based pedagogy is in its critical and transformative practice. Following this advice, the current course includes individual assignments (to see individual progress of each student for the purposes of final evaluation) and big amount of collaboration, including collaboration online, conveniently enabled by Microsoft Teams. [8]

Table 1. Possibilities for linking language and innovation courses

Module	Content	Language focus	Tasks
Module 1. Introduce your team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creative team building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vocabulary on education, professional skills and abilities - Getting started: introductions and team building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual Video CV of each group member - Team Profile
Module 2. Introducing the company		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation skills - Trends and figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case company presentation
Module 3. Our product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concept development - Product development - Story behind the product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary writing - Vocabulary on telling about a product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual summary of an article on the topic in question - Minutes of meetings
Module 4. Our customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final customer profile - Customer research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carrying out a survey - Other market research forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A short report on findings
Module 5. Bringing the stories together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Value Proposition Canvas - Customer problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making logical connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Product concept and the story behind it ready
Module 6. New Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seizing opportunities - Environment - Culture - Channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making suggestions - Negotiations skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negotiations simulation
Module 7. Business Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business model of the project for the Finnish market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Argumentation skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pitch it

3.2 Language skills

The chosen approach allows reaching continuous synergy between reading and writing activities raising the students' skills in both domains to a new level. As it has been fairly noted summarizing or synthesizing activities reveal students' abilities in a more profound way and let students see their own potential to work with English language sources purposefully. [1]

However, the course utilizes benefits of new technological solutions: Microsoft Teams application enables authentic interaction to be a part of curriculum when creating *participatory learning communities* [1]. In the present case, there is real-word business problem to address, research, develop and report on in different contexts of oral and written communication. The case company representatives are there to answer the students' questions and support them in their ideas, i.e., students get involved into email correspondence, skype-calls, short messages and telephone calls, training the targeted language skills in the natural environment. In addition, one of the requirements for every module is keeping minutes of all the meetings the students have, requiring that every time a different team member is the one responsible for the minutes.

3.3 Assessment

As it was mentioned earlier, the course includes individual and team assignments to make summative assessment of each individual student possible, according to their learning process [2]. The chosen format of the course assumes implementation of formative assessment [2] in the run of the course. Module structure of the course enables in-progress assessment in the formal and informal way.

Microsoft Teams as a platform makes students possible to be in immediate contact with the teacher when they feel they need support and feedback, when they have doubts and feel lost. The teacher's role is to react to these situations and through formative assessment adjust their instruction correspondingly [2]. The open character of the platform provides possibilities for qualitative peer review. Formative assessment prepares a basis for student self-assessment [2] that is the final component of the course.

4. "Mashup" in Microsoft Teams

The use of the term "Mashup" is not a mistake and the term are used on purpose: in order to give a metaphoric description of Microsoft Teams application as a tool. Microsoft Teams is smart, is full of hidden channels and buttons, is linked to dozens of applications and functionalities. Ways, in which, a language teacher would like to creatively integrate it into language courses are numerous and depend on different methodologies and personalities.

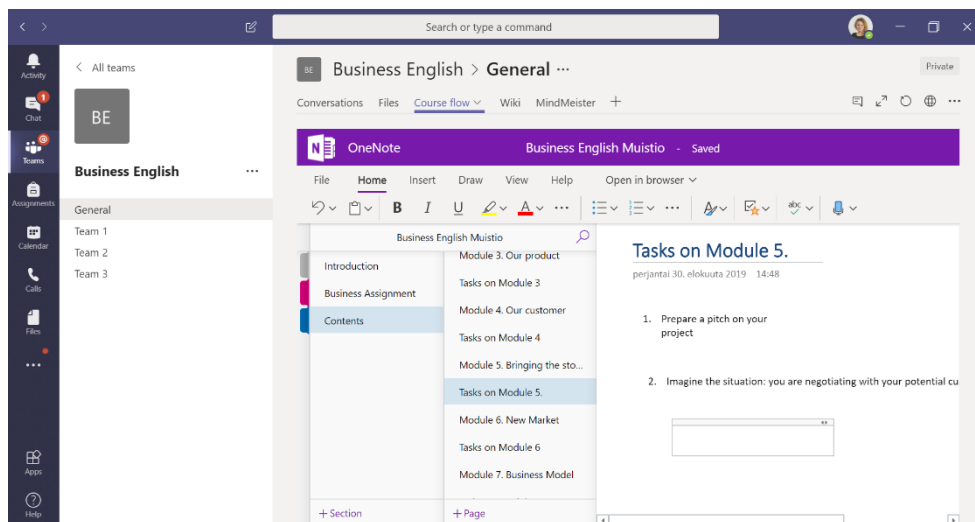


Fig. 1: Work page of the Business English course draft in Microsoft Teams

In the current course, OneNote document is an electronic guide for the students (Figure 1). Online video meetings are possible; it is possible to record them and to share.

This tool is ideal for training negotiation skills if face-to-face option is not possible.

Computer-mediated communication is an integral part of Microsoft Teams. MindMeister application, Minutes of meetings, direct links to world news, Wiki, Quizlet, Padlet: lots of freedom to do a unique Mashup for specific purposes.

5. Conclusion

Microsoft Teams is one of the new technological tools currently becoming more and more acquired by organizations. Is it really a good platform for language courses? When using it, it is good not to be blown away by “mashup” possibilities, there should be clarity and logic in applications use, that should answer the objectives of the course.

It has a great potential only when the content of the course provides a meaningful context for using it. This makes content and language integration the main prerequisite of successful use of the platform. Without the motivating content, project or challenge, using Microsoft Teams might create barriers rather than opportunities for language proficiency.

The current concept discussed introduction of a real-life business challenge from an existing company with existing targets for new markets. To make this concept sustainable, it is important to have a certain network or community of businesses ready to cooperate with universities of applied sciences for long-term involvement.

Overall, the suggested concept might be further applied to the new language curriculum of 2020 and the new study models that implement the best principles of CLIL.

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Learning from Mistakes and Detecting Specific Training Needs: A CLIL Grid

Maria Elisabetta Porcedda¹, Juan González-Martínez²
Tarragona University “Rovira i Virgili”, Spain¹
Girona University, Spain²

Abstract

The present study is a part of a broader research about the implementation of CLIL in Italy through ICTs, aimed to widespread this approach among teachers, mainly non-linguistic subject ones of Secondary schools and in particular of Linguistic Liceo, where CLIL is compulsory from the third year. With this aim, according to a review of the literature and the European Directives, which pointed out engaging results for involving non-linguistic subject teachers and encourage their collaboration with foreign language teachers, a guided CLIL intervention has been proposed in two Linguistic Liceo in Cagliari (Italy). The CLIL microteaching of ten volunteer teachers has been monitored by the authors during two hours per teacher of their implementation, through a grid, which will be illustrated. It can be regarded as a tool both for CLIL inexperienced teachers, so as to adapt their lessons to essential elements, according to the literature (such as the length of inputs, the interaction in foreign language and the use of codeswitching, the use of online tools, and so on), and for monitoring and tutoring CLIL implementations, in order to detect specific training needs. Indeed, video or audio, suggested with the same aim, are often not welcomed by teachers during their lessons and our grid tries to answer to the need to register several aspects during their CLIL practice and their results, so as to learn from mistakes with colleagues.

Keywords: CLIL implementation, monitoring grid, teachers' training

1. Introduction

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is an approach, which promotes the simultaneous teaching and learning of both content and foreign or minority languages, taking advantages of engaging learner-centred strategies and so many different models, to become an ‘umbrella’ term [4]. It aims firstly at plurilingualism for the achievement of the European citizenship, as well as at a deep change of the traditionally teacher-centred education [4], also making an extensive use of ICTs. Indeed, since its comparison in the 1994 so far, CLIL has been highly recommended by European Directives [6].

In Italy, CLIL is compulsory in the upper Secondary schools since 2010: in the last year of the Licei and Technical Institutes a non-linguistic subject is to be addressed in a FL for the 50% of its total hours, whilst the Linguistic Licei have to start the CLIL for the first FL in their third year [5]. Consequently, the Ministry of Education has been doing hitherto a great effort to train in-service non-linguistic teachers on CLIL, although its intrinsic complexity, depending on its embracing diverse competencies in many educational fields to be correctly implemented (as Didactics, Linguistics, Pedagogy,

bilingual strategies, etc.), makes hard the full achievement of the Directives [2] and in many schools it is not attained yet.

2. Background

Last scholastic year, after a survey, which revealed the interest of teachers on CLIL, but not the implementation of it, in two Linguistic Licei a guided CLIL intervention has been done, to lay the basis of this approach through some theoretical lessons and a brief implementation with their students, tutored by the authors. The six involved non-linguistic teachers have B2/C1 CEFR level in Spanish, French and English (which attended the methodologic course, but rarely implemented the CLIL; the others were not admitted, because of the language), and collaborated with their FL colleagues of German and Spanish, who participated to the theoretical part and implemented a part of multidisciplinary projects for History too, English and French. Undoubtedly, they can be all seen as unexperienced CLIL teachers, but with many decades of teaching.

3. The need of a grid to monitor teachers

With the aim to monitor the above implementations, we would have video-recorded the teachers during our tutoring, so as to make teacher teams wholly apply the LOCIT [1], which is a great opportunity to create a collaborative environment at school, both for expert and initial CLIL teachers. Indeed, only two of them previously allowed us, due to privacy reasons, only the voice-recording of a short starting phase of their project.

Hence, the grid presented underneath (Table 1) is an attempt, perfectible and to be completely validated yet, to meet the concrete detected needs to:

- take notes monitor the implementations through a form, as the same LOCIT suggests;
- register strengths and weaknesses during the two-hours-monitoring per teacher, as stated with them;
- offer them a tool to take into account before and during their CLIL lessons, so as to better perform;
- foster the analysis of the teachers' implementation in the light of the students' result and evaluation, not only as a teacher's self-assessment, like other checklists in the literature (e.g., the Cambridge one [7]);
- consider whether the observed weaknesses are to be strengthened through further training, in particular aspects.

4. The grid and its sections

Whoever aims at a CLIL intervention, carefully draws a lesson plan up, taking into account the specific elements of CLIL [1], but linking to them bilingual teaching strategies, such as the use of multimodal inputs connected with outputs and feedbacks [3], at the same time with the concern of a student-centred methodology, which often is achieved through the task-based teaching.

Consequently, it is important to particularly monitor and make aware teachers before and during the CLIL implementation of the points below, which are the partitions of our grid:

- inputs: their length, the choice of the language and the presence of codeswitching, according to the particular aim and to the addressees, are to relate to the students' output, in our CLIL grid in terms of their understanding of

inputs and FL, as well as their achieving content, FL and methodological goals (cooperation and interaction with classmates).

- feedbacks: they are crucial in the CLIL implementation, which is based on socio-constructivism [4]. Their length and modality have to be related to the results of the task.
- use of ICTs and online tools: since the employment of digital and online tools for CLIL is highly recommended [6], it is to verify if the chosen ones foster the content knowledge, the FL improvement and cognitive growth in the task, other than the cooperation among students.
- task: the results of each task should be evaluated in the light of the lesson plan objectives and of the scaffolding role of the teacher.
- students' output: they can be evaluated through rubrics, but this section in our grid aims to be strongly related, as skills, to the modality teachers put into practice for their CLIL lessons.

These aspects can be productively monitored during each phase of the implementation.

The grid here presented shows a first part, which requests introducing and conclusive data, then the points above illustrated.

CLIL MONITORING GRID (English version)

Name: _____ Subject: _____ FL: _____
 Project Duration: _____ Actual Duration: _____
 Monitoring time: _____ Project Phase: _____
 Teacher's CEFR level: _____

FL % in project: _____ Actual FL %: _____
 Number of inputs: _____
 Number of Feedbacks: _____
 Repeat for each phase, if monitored more than one

INPUT		
VISUAL TIME total length:		
MT: _____	FL: _____	GESTURES: yes no
SPEAKING TIME total length:		
MT: _____	FL: _____	CODESWITCHING: yes no
ADDRESSED TO:		
Class: _____	Groups/Peers: _____	Individual students: _____
AIM:		
Introducing: _____	Clarifying: _____	Scaffolding: _____
TEACHER'S FEEDBACKS		
Length: _____	Positive: _____	Negative: _____
FL: _____	MT: _____	Gestures: _____
ADDRESSED TO:		

Class:	Groups/Peers:	Individual students:
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
ICTs		
BYOD: yes no		SHARED DEVICES: yes no
DEVICES:		
TOOLS CHOSEN BY TEACHER:		
TOOLS CHOSEN BY STUDENTS:		
TOOLS FOR FL ACQUISITION:		
COOPERATION THROUGH ICTs: yes no partially		
WORKING TIME THROUGH ICTs:		
TASK		
BLOOM'S PYRAMID LEVEL ACHIEVED:		
Planned Duration:		Actual Duration:
ACADEMIC LANGUAGE USE:		
Reduced:	Medium:	Large:
CONTENT DEEPENING:		
Reduced:	Medium:	Large:
WORKS PRESENTATION:		
Oral:	Written:	Online:
STUDENTS' GENERAL FEEDBACK:		
Positive		Negative
STUDENTS		
Number:		General CEFR level of FL:
PARTITION PER TASK:		
Peers:	Homogeneous groups:	Inhomogeneous groups:
GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF INPUTS IN FL:		
Low:	Medium:	High:
GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF INPUTS IN MT:		
Low:	Medium:	High:
COOPERATION:		
Reduced:	Medium:	Large:
INTEGRATION:		
Reduced:	Medium:	Large:
INTERACTION IN FL:		
Reduced:	Medium:	Large:
INTERACTION IN MT:		
Reduced:	Medium:	Large:
STUDENTS WHO CARRY OUT THE TASK IN TIME:		

Table 1. CLIL monitoring grid

5. Conclusion

The grid in the present paper is born as a tool to concretely monitor what and how inexperienced teachers put into practice in a CLIL intervention, so as to verify together strong aspects of this approach in practice, how to improve their weaknesses and to detect their training needs, other than suggest them some essential points to reach.

It is, finally, to underline that it is likely to enhance and completely validate it, as a monitoring form, hitherto missing.

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Mind-Mapping as a Tool in Teaching ESP/CLIL Presentations

Anna Kucharíková¹, Martina Lipková², Jana Lokajová³

*Slovak University of Technology, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering,
Department of Languages, ÚjŠ STU, Slovakia¹*

*Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Department of Languages, ÚjŠ STU,
Slovakia²*

*Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Department of Languages, ÚjŠ STU,
Slovakia³*

Abstract

At present, preparing presentations in foreign languages tends to be an integral part of teaching academic skills both in ESP and CLIL environments. One of the most important tools in achieving successful development of ideas in designing a presentation is through mind-mapping techniques. This method based on psychological theory was developed in 1970s by Tony Buzan, and later investigated by other educational specialists, as a powerful tool for enhancing learning process by building natural connections between different concepts and associations. It enables the students to organize the facts, visualize their ideas and find logical connections between various items. In language learning, mind-mapping technique can be used at lower levels, for example when teaching grammar, or presenting basic vocabulary in different ESP fields, such as physics, geometry, materials. However, it may become a powerful tool in making presentations in more complex Content and Language Integrated Learning, as well as teaching English for specific purposes. A non-linear graphical lay-out is used to create a web of relationships around the central concept, idea or problem. It might be employed in collaborative brainstorming, creative problem-solving, project planning and note-taking. As a result, mind-mapping may be also applied to the design of teaching materials to be used within the classroom, but students can use them also individually, for designing projects and making presentations. This can be pursued through designing slides with mind-maps during the e-learning process, which might boost motivation in the second language acquisition. In this study several examples of using mind-maps in ESP and CLIL environment are presented.

Keywords: academic language skills, ESP, CLIL, cognition, brainstorming, e-learning, mind-mapping, motivation, scaffolding

A picture is worth a thousand words.

1. Introduction

Enhancing speaking competence linked with the ability to deliver presentations has been traditionally accepted as one of the most vital elements in foreign language instruction. Its mastery is required not only by the job market, but also by the global needs [1]. As opposed to “receptive” skills of listening and reading, speaking and writing

represent two productive skills, which, however, in common practice of organized ESP classes in secondary and tertiary education are not always evenly distributed [2]. This often results either in a grammar-centred approach in EAP or ESP curricula, or a text-based approach where students are over-exposed to reading long chunks of “genuine” scientific texts from specialized fields of science with limited opportunities to speak the language they have learned in a variety of exercises. Although learning of specialized vocabulary via e-learning as opposed to traditional methods has been also proven effective [3], it should not be forgotten that cognitive processing of information in ESP/CLIL classes might differ with respect to the language level of the class examined, i.e., take longer with lower language competence classes and/or with lower grades of secondary and university students, both of which represent a sample in our experiment.¹

Delivering presentations represents a common practice across a variety of job positions but professionals working in technical areas find producing them particularly difficult [4]. We have been trying to implement several new techniques to facilitate ESP learning at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, STU. One of them, the mind-mapping technique, which is originally known from business, management and project planning [5], has been introduced as an innovative teaching method in undergraduate classes.

Surprisingly, not many of the studies on mind-mapping deal with its application in language learning [6].

Two language experiments have been made at different levels, both dealing with professional language: in an ESP environment with the university students, and in CLIL teaching at secondary level. The goal of this paper is thus to verify whether mind-mapping has a potential to trigger interest in highly specialized ESP and CLIL technical language classes, and if it improves student speaking skills. The paper presents certain suggestions about the differences in student approach towards mind-mapping techniques used in ESP classes based on both audio and reading inputs.

2. Theory and methods

A mind map is a diagram structured linearly or hierarchically, whereby the information is presented in a visually stimulating way. Not only can it be used in brainstorming or problem-solving for generating new ideas, or structuring thoughts in task planning, but also in a learning process where it facilitates recall of newly acquired knowledge, e.g., in note-taking [7]. As it shows how the main concept can be broken down into specific information, the students’ knowledge may be progressively mapped. This could be employed in testing the effectiveness of learning, e.g. measuring the impact on higher test scores as pointed by Horton (*ibid*) or motivation, depending on whether students are involved in descriptive or integrative tasks, as pointed by Leonidas A. Zampetakis in his research [8].

The mind-mapping approach draws on the cognitive theory that the human brain centres around one focal point around which other ideas are generated, therefore a mind map may convert a long list of monotonous information into a colourful and highly organized diagram to help lexical processing [9]. This provides an opportunity to compare the ease of processing and recall of the lexical items from the audio inputs with that of reading inputs, and their influence on students’ speaking competence, which is a productive skill traditionally considered as intertwined with listening [10].

¹ A long-term pursuit of similar one-sided language teaching practices favouring training of one or two skills, might, in consequence, lead to a loss of motivation to learn a foreign language and willingness to take action outside of the class.

Furthermore, using mind maps could be of significant benefit to students learning English in the field of technical or scientific discourse. This, according to Trimble [11], consists of a high number of definitions, diagrams, description of procedures that are on a sentence level mostly represented by syntactically complex clauses. It is thus hypothesized that irrespective of the a) type of input and b) language level of the class, a regular employment of mind maps in ESP/CLIL environment could stimulate students to use different mind maps to improve their speaking competence. For this purpose, two questionnaires were distributed in ESP classes to obtain the students' feedback at the end of lessons. During each lesson teachers also took down the notes on the number of students involved in speaking and the simplicity/complexity of language structures they used with and without the mind-maps.

3. Mind mapping experiment in ESP classes

The research was carried out in 4 groups of 2nd year students during their ESP classes of mechanical engineering at the Slovak University of Technology, the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Bratislava during the summer semester of 2019. The total of 20 intermediate students was split into 2 smaller groups of 9 and 11 members, together with the total of 30 advanced students further subdivided into two groups of 16 and 14 students. These met on a regular basis for ten 90 minute- sessions of ESP classes per week with two different English teachers covering the same topics- a) mathematics: types of measuring units, b) physics, e.g., forces, stress and strain, gravitation and c) engineering materials. Throughout the course, mind maps were used in response to two audio and two reading inputs, in combination with warm-up exercises introduced at the beginning of each class, and revision exercises. In the final session students were asked to create their own mind-map which they could incorporate in their power-point presentation on an engineering topic.

Both teachers observed increased student participation and longer speaking time after using a mind-mapping technique with at least one central idea provided and one "radiating" association in all audio, warm-up and revision exercises. In addition, there was one type of exercise where the students were asked to create their own mind-map during the lesson based on the text. At the intermediate level, where students worked in smaller groups, motivation dramatically increased (by 50% on average) showing features of intensive collaboration with other students, which was also reflected in their survey responses. The advanced students, being grouped in larger classes, were not particularly impressed with this activity and only 8 students out of 30 were able to retell and sum up the text based on their own map (cf. Fig. 1). Despite that, according to the questionnaire, their engagement was higher by 40% on average than after merely reading the text.

An interesting result of teachers' observation, further supported in our student survey, was that the student speaking time increased in both levels after the 2nd hearing of audio recordings with the usage of the mind-map. Only a few students in advanced classes took the opportunity to retell the topic of the audio on their own without further scaffolding of the mind-map made by the teacher to stimulate student presentations. This might have been caused by the fact that the audios were long, lecture-like (3.20 min, 2.15 min), and descriptive, which supports the evidence of Leonidas *et al.*, about the reaction of engineering students [...]. Both levels benefited from the teacher's provision of basic language cues, e.g., "be divided into", "be classified into", "includes", "(sub) divides".

These proved to help segmentation of the audio meaning and served as a valuable speaking aid.

Finally, a higher percentage of intermediate students (70%) actually used a mind-map in their own power point presentation to at least one classification of a technical concept based on their topic (cars, bicycles, engines, nuclear power reactors, etc.) than in advanced classes (56,6%). This might be connected with certain distrust of some of the advanced students towards creating mind-mapping technique as they “hardly contributed to their learning process”. However, based on our survey results, even in these remaining cases where advanced students did not use a mind-map of their own, mind-mapping of certain sort was still used by students, at least in the process of their project research, e.g., in note-taking and brainstorming for the final delivery of the presentation.

4. Mind-mapping in Content and Language Integrated Learning

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) represents an integration concept. It has been regarded as an effective symbiotic fusion of studying particular academic subject matter through, not in, a foreign language [12]. Didactics of both the foreign language and academic subject matter are integrated within the specific type of education. A dual-focused educational approach assumes closer cooperation among teachers, resulting in cross-curricular link development.

For better understanding of the importance of the comparative ESP/CLIL experiment, some CLIL principles are presented in the context of secondary vocational education in mechanical engineering. The objective is to clarify how mind-mapping can be implemented into CLIL-type education as a powerful tool in lexical acquisition and communication skills, thus providing an efficient system that makes presentation more attractive for students.

The best approach to promote language proficiency simultaneously with subject-based lexical competence acquisition is implementing language learning into academic subjects, which favours cognitive skills development through activity-based learning. It provides a learner-friendly educational environment fostering self-learning in students through Vygotsky’s scaffolding concept [13], whereby the support is offered to the student by the teacher.

In secondary general and vocational education, growing interest in CLIL has been recorded recently, though not much research has been carried out to provide complex research results. Increasing graduates’ chances in the labour market is a significant factor of motivation. The ability to combine foreign language and vocational competences is becoming crucial in students of secondary vocational schools in Slovakia.

4.1 Mind mapping experiment in CLIL courses

The objective of the CLIL research carried out at the Secondary Technical School of Mechanical Engineering in Bratislava (Slovak Republic) was to increase content-based lexical acquisition and motivation in students of the second grade of study. An experiment was carried out to measure the effectiveness of mind mapping techniques in teaching Mechanics – strength and elasticity in mechanical engineering.

Two groups of 16 and 17-year-old students were involved in the experiment to compare the outcomes of the experiment, as well as the attitude towards studying English by this approach in both CLIL and control groups of students. CLIL classes were carried out in cooperation with the teacher of the respective technical subjects and it was preceded by initial selection of the content to be studied with regards to the school’s curriculum objectives. The selected subject-related topics included: a) mechanical

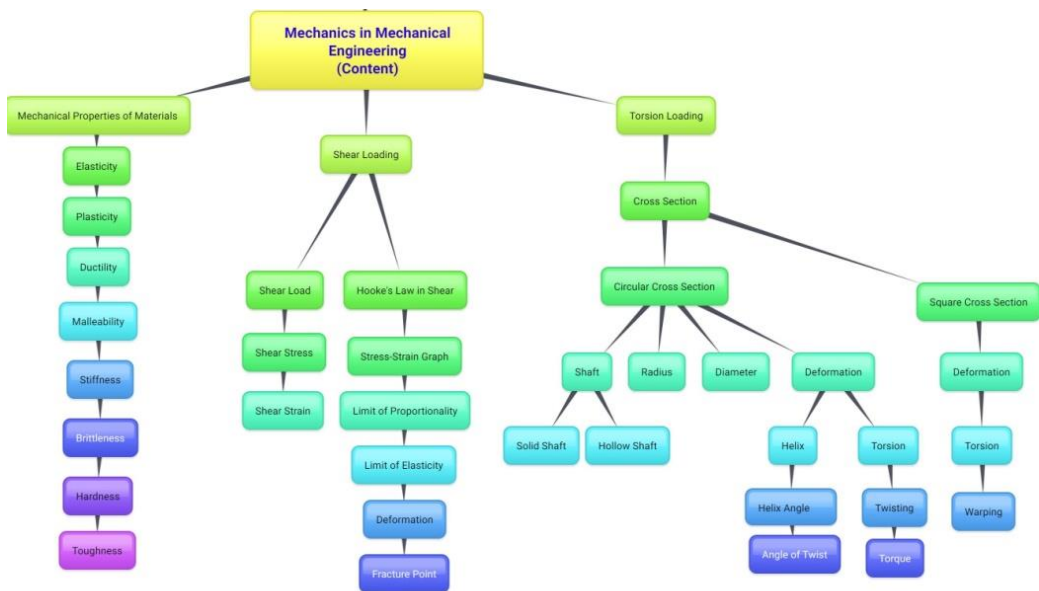
properties of materials in engineering, b) shear stress and shear strain, c) Hooke's law in shear, d) torsion loading of circular and noncircular shafts. Instructional scaffolding and K-W-L principles were applied along with the mind mapping approach.

Through instructional scaffolding the teacher helped students to achieve mastery in the scientific area. K-W-L charts helped the students organize knowledge in compliance with: what I know (K), what I want to find out (W), what I learned about the problem (L).

Mind-mapping was one of the strategies applied to develop students' motivation and speaking skills while achieving both content and language objectives. Collecting ideas around a particular topic was common for both K-W-L and mind-mapping methods, with an added value of clustering ideas and defining relationships in the latter one.

The lessons were conducted in the *soft CLIL* way, whereby the teacher concentrated on the use of tools with the focus on linguistic objectives. The lessons were planned for a short period, over which the students acquired content knowledge despite the primary focus being on lexical and communication acquisition [14]. Brainstorming was supported by mind-mapping in order to find logical connections between the content they had studied previously. An example of mind-mapping being gradually produced by students over the classes, through instructional scaffolding, is shown in Fig. 1.

Based on the results (pre-test, post-test, group activities, short presentations), the research supported the hypothesis that CLIL classes are beneficial for secondary school learners. The data collected from a short questionnaire revealed the motivation and interest in students to incorporate more technical subjects into a curriculum implementing CLIL models of education.



created with www.bubbl.us

Fig. 1: Mind-mapping in CLIL-type education – content and discipline-specific terminology

5. Conclusion

The study has shown that mind mapping has been one of the most efficient aids in note taking and organizing new technical vocabulary based on listening, and in

stimulating oral presentations of the new materials with technical students. The research also proved that the results were better in less advanced classes, where the students appreciated the visualization of difficult material, while it was less stimulating in advanced classes, as the students understood the content better even without the support of mind maps. Properly used mind-mapping techniques give more variety to both students and teachers, and stimulate real communication patterns in the classroom both in ESP and CLIL environments.

Acknowledgment

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Multi-Relational Latent Lexicology-Semantic “LEXICOLSEM” Analysis Model for Extracting Qura’nic Concept

Asma Abdul Rahman¹

Islamic Science University of Malaysia, Malaysia¹

Abstract

Al Quran is a divine text which represents the purest and most authentic form of the classical Arabic language. In order to understand the meaning of each verse, a deep knowledge of Arabic linguistic is essential. Therefore, our scholars have made their efforts by engaging themselves in the works of explaining al Quran’s words, interpreting its meanings into Arabic and other languages. Currently, more people are interested in knowing the content of al-Quran, especially for non-Muslim, after 9/11 tragedy. Thus, a flexible model that can represent Qur’anic concept is required for people to understand the content of the Quran. In this research, we propose a Multi-Relational Latent Lexicology-Semantic Analysis Model (LEXICOLSEM) based on a combination of Arabic Semantic and six multiple relations between words, which are synonym, antonym, hypernym, hyponym, holonym and meronym, to precisely extract Qur’anic concept. The existing literatures focus only on very limited relationships between words which could not extract the in-depth concept of Qur’anic without considering the importance Arabic Semantic. Therefore, the objectives of this research are:(1) to analyses and categorize Quranic words according to Arabic Semantic patterns,(2) to propose a new model for extracting Quranic concept using LEXICOLSEM,(3) to investigate semantic relationships between Qura’nic words, and (4) to validate the proposed model with Arabic linguistic, and Qura’nic experts. This research will be conducted qualitatively through content analysis approach a new innovative technological technique. It is expected that the model will come out with a precise analysis for extracting Qur’anic concept. This will be very significant in enhancing the overall Quran’s understanding among the society in Malaysia and Muslim’s world for sustainable society.

Keywords: Multi-Relational, Latent, Lexicology-Semantic, Model Extracting, Qura’ni

1. Introduction

In linguistic study, a concept is referred as a mental structure, which totally depends on relationships between linguistic representatives amongst words and phrases.

However, the interchangeable relationship could happen due to the inherent conciseness of natural language. Therefore, many researchers try to solve this problem using ontology approach and Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) (Chang & Meek, 2013; Ozcan & Aslandogan, 2004), but it needs some considerations before it can be implemented on Arabic, especially in al-Quran, which represents a special classical Arabic language.

2. Problem Statement

A variety of problems have emerged in Malaysia community as a result of the rapid developments and the flow of humanitarian and scientific knowledge. Thus, that people unable to adapt to the huge number of methods and means of modern education technology. The impact of foreign media and audio-visual and print and unsecured computer network bring about strange behaviour, not only in Malaysia social aspects, but also Arabic language education procedures. The reform of this problem calls for more attention to be paid on theories education teaching methods, so as to the quality and quantity the rules, principles, methods and curricula of teaching and evaluation. This may include putting emphasis moral, cultural and heritage education based on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The uniqueness of Arabic Semantic makes the combination with LSA and ontology more significant to extract Qura'nic concept. It is because Phonological analysis is a basic step in various applications including text mining, information retrieval (IR), machine translation, automatic summarization, and Arabic learning systems (Desouki, 2011). LSA on the other hand has limitation, such as difficulty in differentiating fine-grained relations between lexical semantics, synonyms, antonyms and hypernyms. Due to that limitation, various studies have been carried out to overcome this weakness of LSA introducing Multi-Relational Latent Semantic Analysis using synonym, antonym and hypernym (Chang & Meek, 2013) but it has not yet been applied on Arabic Text such as al-Quran. Furthermore, Qura'nic ontology studies are lacking of accuracy of language because it depends on the translated version of al-Quran and uses aplastic noun (Azman Ta'a, Abidin, Abdullah, Ali, & Ahmad, 2013; Hikmat Ullah Khan, Muhammad Saqlain, Shoaib, & Sher, 2013; Maha Al-yahya & Hend Al-khalifa, n.d.). The existing literature shows that there are still gaps and problems in extracting Qur'anic concept as have been mentioned previously, due to inappropriate approaches that had been used ignoring the importance of Arabic Semantic and LSA in deriving the meaning of Qur'anic word.

Therefore, in order to address the above mentions problem, we propose a new model in extracting Qura'nic concept based on Arabic Semantic and Multi-Relational Latent Semantic Analysis, using combination of six multiple relations between words, which are synonym, antonym, hypernym, hyponym, holonym and meronym.

3. Objective of the research

- 3.1 To analyse and categorize Qura'nic words according to Arabic Semantic patterns.
- 3.2 To investigate semantic relationships between Qura'nic words.
- 3.3 To propose a new model for extracting Qura'nic concept using LEXICOLSEM.
- 3.4 To validate the proposed model.

4. Research Questions

- 4.1 How to analyse and categorize Qura'nic words according to Arabic Semantic patterns?
- 4.2 What is result of investigate semantic relationships between Qura'nic words?
- 4.3 How to propose a new multi-relational Latent Lexicology-Semantic Analysis for extracting Qura'nic concept?
- 4.4 What is the subject matter expert's opinion about the proposed model?

5. Literature Reviews

Arabic is considered one of the phonologically complex languages. Each word can be derived from roots which have, in most cases, three letters by applying templates construct stems and then attaching them to prefixes and suffixes to obtain a very large number of different surface forms (Amr El-Desoky Mousa, Ralf Schluter, 2012). Besides that, a single root can be transformed into different word with different pattern, vocalism and pronunciation (Bassam Al-Salemi; Mohd. Juzaidin Ab Aziz, 2011). The uniqueness of Arabic Semantic makes the combination with LSA and ontology more significant to extract Quranic concept.

Generally, LSA attempts to reveal the hidden conceptual relationships among words and phrases based on linguistic usage patterns. Usually it will be presented in taxonomic structure consisting of a hierarchy word and its relationship, such as synonym, antonym, hyperonym/hyponym, meronym/holonym (member, substance, and part), entailment, cause, attribute, and similarity. LSA has multiple uses in various fields such as an instrument of text summarization and summary evaluation (Steinberger & Ježek, 2004), an approach to Source-Code Plagiarism Detection and Investigation (Cosma, 2008), and Term Prediction instrument (Zhao & Callan, 2010). The following diagram illustrates the relationship between the component parts of the semantic model used by Martin Bryan (2003):

However, LSA has limitation such as difficulty in differentiating fine-grained relations between lexical semantics, synonyms, antonyms and hypernyms. Due to that limitation, various studies have been carried out to overcome this weakness of LSA by introducing the notion of polarity. The recent LSA research combines multiple relations between words by constructing three relationships which are known as Multi-Relational Latent Semantic Analysis using synonym, antonym and hypernym (Asma Abdul Rahman 2007-2017).

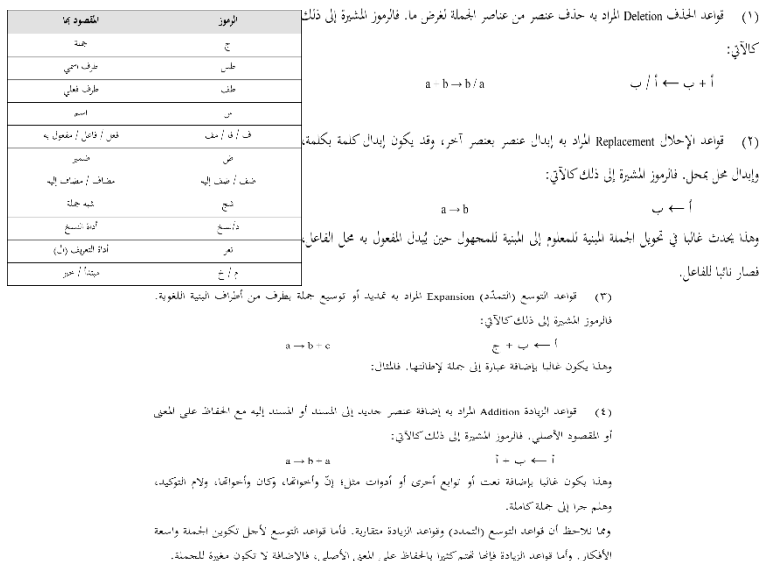


Fig. 1: Multi-Relational Latent LEXICOLSEM formula Analysis by Asma Abdul Rahman

language.

5.7 The existing literature shows that there are still gaps in extracting Qur'anic concept because the aspect of Arabic Semantic and LSA does not fully utilize. Therefore, in order to address the above mentions problem, we propose a new model in extracting Qur'anic concept based on Arabic Semantic and Multi-Relational Latent Semantic Analysis, using combination of six multiple relations between words, which are synonym, antonym, hypernym, hyponym, holonym and meronym.

6. Methodology

This research is focusing on designing a multi-relational LSA model in extracting Qura'nic concept based on combination of Arabic Semantic and six multiple relations between words, which are synonym, antonym, hypernym, hyponym, homonym and meronym. The researcher will used text analysis method as follow:

For more specifically, this approach will be conducted in the following techniques as follows:

1st Phase: Phonological Root Analysis. This phase will be conducted in following steps:

1. The researcher will identify digital document file of Qur'anic text. The text's authentication will be verified by expert.
2. The digital document will be analysed using corpus analysis using Wordsmith version 2.1.
3. Each word in text will be categorized into two families of verb and noun, excluding particles.
4. The researcher will identify root of each word in these two categories, then categorize the words belong to similar root in another sub-family.
5. To enhance the confidence of investigation, the result then will be triangulated with three Arabic referred dictionaries:
 1. Lisan al-Arab by Ibn Manzuur,
 2. Mu'jaam al Waseet by Majma' Luhghah al-Arabiyyah in Cairo, and
 3. al-Mu'jam al-Asasi by al-Munazzamah al-Arabiyyah lil Tarbiyyah wa Thaqafah wal 'Ulum.

2nd Phase: To Propose A New Model for Extracting Qura'nic Concept

Based on previous 1st phase result, the researcher will follow the next steps:

1. Create and propose a model using six multiple relations between words in Latent Semantic Analysis as follow:
 - i. Synonym: a word or phrase that means exactly or nearly the same as another word or phrase in the same language
 - ii. Antonym: a word opposite in meaning to another
 - iii. Hypernym: a word with a broad meaning constituting a category into which words with more specific meanings fall
 - iv. Hyponym: a word of more specific meaning than a general or super ordinate term applicable to it
 - v. Holonym: A concept of which this concept forms a part
 - vi. Meronym: A term that denotes part of something
2. Related connections of word to conceptual meaning then will be identified
3. Linking the related connections to key concept in tree-form drawing.
4. Describing the design of extracting Qura'nic concept based on ontological approach in Latent Semantic Analysis.

أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يَجْمَعَ عِظَامَهُ، ﴿٣﴾	
أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ الْكَافِرُ أَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَى جَمْعِ عِظَامِ الْإِنْسَانِ.	البنية العميقة
أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَى جَمْعِ عِظَامِ الْإِنْسَانِ.	أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ (الْكَافِرُ) أَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَى جَمْعِ عِظَامِ الْإِنْسَانِ.
أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يَجْمَعَ عِظَامَ الْإِنْسَانِ.	أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ نَقْدِرَ (عَلَى) جَمْعِ عِظَامِ الْإِنْسَانِ.
أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يَجْمَعَ عِظَامَ (الْإِنْسَانِ).	أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يَجْمَعَ عِظَامَ (الْإِنْسَانِ).
أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يَجْمَعَ عِظَامَهُ.	البنية السطحية

Fig. 5: A sample of proposed model in using LEXICOLSEM to extract Qura'nic concept
Extracting Qura'nic LEXICOLSEM concept from various multiple relationships between in the structure of sentence by Asma Abdul Rahman

7. Finding and New Result Novelty

7.1 Policies for government agencies to help them curb and solve the educational system in teaching and learning Arabic linguistics training and practices in tricking consumers into thinking that particular product by apply a new innovative method for whole level of students and society. This is a new invention thus; no comparable product existed in the market. Impact on human being and socio economic. The “(LEXICOLSEM)” have improved knowledge and linguistic skills in the production of higher quality of human capital. Furthermore, the researcher was sales from text and reference, more formula books, CDs and Courses, training, workshop generate additional income for.

7.2 Harmonized society and community where Muslim and non-Muslim can seat together enjoying their communication with multiple lingual; that Muslim be it Malaysian or international could be unity of the nation local or foreign without any doubt or miscommunication.

7.3 Academically closing the gap on communication between society and community related research, providing the aspect of language, culture and society perspective.

7.4 As academics, we aim to contribute in closing the gap on miscommunication related research by looking from the aspect of language, culture and society perspective.

The research will result in publications and we target to bring about the knowledge into seminars nationally and internationally and symposium to share with universities and industry players and those who are interested.

We have to find that the research output will useful to attract foreign direct investors, mainly Asian countries, and other potential interested investor from Middle East, and Europe to understand the opportunity in linguistics education, to join in the development of Malaysia and other countries of Renewal Energy (SCORE) specifically in two identified clusters Linguistics Education with a new innovative method, society, cultures – Hub sustainability and Tourism.

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Pluriliteracies and LOCIT for CLIL

Letizia Cinganotto¹
INDIRE, Italy¹

Abstract

The paper is meant to describe the potential of the LOCIT (Lesson Observation and Critical incident Technique) model in Continuous Professional Development with particular reference to CLIL and Pluri-literacies, in line with the latest Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (2019). The main principles of the Pluri-literacies approach promoted by the European Centre of Modern Languages in Graz (ECML) will be described as a new interpretation of CLIL. A study involving a sample of Italian teachers using LOCIT and video-annotation during a CLIL methodological course will be presented and commented as an example of an effective tool for self-reflection, meta-cognition and professional growth.

Keywords: CLIL, CPD, Pluri-literacies, LOCIT

1. CLIL and Pluri-literacies

CLIL (Content and Language Integrating Learning) [1], [2], [3] is an active and interactive methodology integrating subject content and foreign languages which puts the learner at the centre of the educational agenda. It is highlighted by the European Commission and by the Council of Europe, as an innovative methodology and a quality agent for school curricula.

In particular, the latest Recommendation for a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (May 2019), pointed out the remarkable situation in Italy, where CLIL has been mandatory since 2010, according to a democratic and inclusive approach, providing CLIL to all upper secondary school students in the fifth year, notwithstanding their language competences.

A recent illuminating interpretation of CLIL is offered by the Graz Group at the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), where the author is involved as a member of the consultancy team.

The project, coordinated by Oliver Meyer, Do Coyle and Kevin Schuck, is titled “Pluri-literacies Teaching for Deeper Learning” [4] and is aimed at fostering the wide range of literacies (subject literacies, language literacies, digital and transversal literacies) our students need in order to meet the challenges of 21st century.

The model aims at building up a “learning ecology” in class, involving all the different stakeholders in an active way: students are the protagonists of the learning pathways, with all their expectations, emotions and anxiety, which we should take into account where the teacher plays the role of a coach or mentor, scaffolding the learning process in order to guide learners towards progressive autonomy starting from a novice level to a mastery level of learning.

The project also focuses on transferable skills that can be fostered through a pluri-literacies approach, aiming at being aware of the specific features of every subject

literacy in terms of textual genres and language choices, in order to be able to observe the world through a mathematician's eyes, a physician's or a philosopher's eyes. This is the way we can help our students reach deeper learning and appreciate both the content and the "language" [5] of every single subject.

The ECML consultancy team provides training to the member states all over Europe who apply for specific pluri-literacies sessions.

The author took part in a very interesting training session in Montenegro, led by Do Coyle and Kevin Schuck, where the participants were guided to understand the principles of the Pluri-literacies model through practical and engaging activities, like the one in Fig. 1, where they have to focus on Do Coyle's 4 Cs (Cognition, Communication, Content and Culture) and match them with certain teaching activities described on some strips of paper distributed to the participants.



Fig. 1: Trainees in Podgorica engaged in practical activities

2. LOCIT model

LOCIT model by Do Coyle (Lesson Observation and Critical Incident Technique) [6] consists in video-recording CLIL lessons, in order to analyse them in depth with the help of a colleague as a critical friend, or in some cases, with the contribution of the students themselves, comparing the different perspectives. The main aims of the analysis and reflection while watching the recording are "critical incidents" and "learning moments".

Critical incidents may occur during the teaching pathway and the teacher may not be fully aware of them when deeply engaged in the teaching process. Therefore, a careful observation of the videos may help identify the critical incidents better, reflecting on the possible reasons for them.

Considering the same perspective, learning moments may be singled out, identifying those steps of the learning pathway when deep learning and understanding occurred, according to evidence in the video-recording.

The LOCIT model recommends repeating the same lesson in the same teaching context, considering the critical incidents and the learning moments previously identified, in order to improve the outcomes and learn from the previous experience. LOCIT model can be considered as an important added value for teachers' continuous professional development, especially within the latest conceptual framework on CLIL defined by Coyle and Meyer within the afore-mentioned Pluri-literacies model.

This is the starting point of CIT (Critical Incident Theory), which is based on the potential of video-documentation, reflection and discussion about a teacher's own lesson clips, but also some other teachers.

A critical incident is any unplanned event that may occur during class and if teachers are provided with the opportunity to reflect formally on these critical incidents, it is easier for them to uncover new understandings of the teaching and learning process and to change and adjust the actions that follow.

According to Tripp [7], critical incidents do not exist independently of an observer, but they are created and interpreted by the specific significance the observer will ascribe to them.

A Critical Incident can help to reach a deep reflection that goes beyond the simple description of an event, trying to get the most from it in terms of personal and professional enrichment.

Fowler and Blohm [8], pointed out strengths and weaknesses of CIT, as in the following table:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage participants at a personal level in examining attitudes and behaviour that will be critical to their effectiveness; • Can be written for a variety of situations; • Require analysis and reflection, decision-making; reduce idea of answers being available from an "expert"; • Short reading time; move quickly into reflection; • Can be used singly or grouped to illustrate concept or processes; • Can lead to role playing and situational exercises to provide practice; • Appeals to concrete experience and reflective observation learning styles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants may complain they receive too little information; • Incidents need to be carefully written, revised, or selected to make desired point; • If aimed at culture-specific learning, need host-country resource people; • Most effective if individual reflection is discussed in small groups of fewer than eight; • Frustrating technique for abstract conceptualization learners.

Fig. 2: Strengths and weaknesses of CIT model

As shown in the table, this technique may also have some weaknesses, as incidents should be carefully selected and commented on and feedback should be effective and constructive, addressing teaching practices avoiding touching on the personal and emotional sphere.

As culture is the filter of every CLIL activity, it is important that the analysis of the videos is culture-bound and so the people involved all share the same culture.

Fig. 3 shows Coyle's LOCIT model in a very effective way.

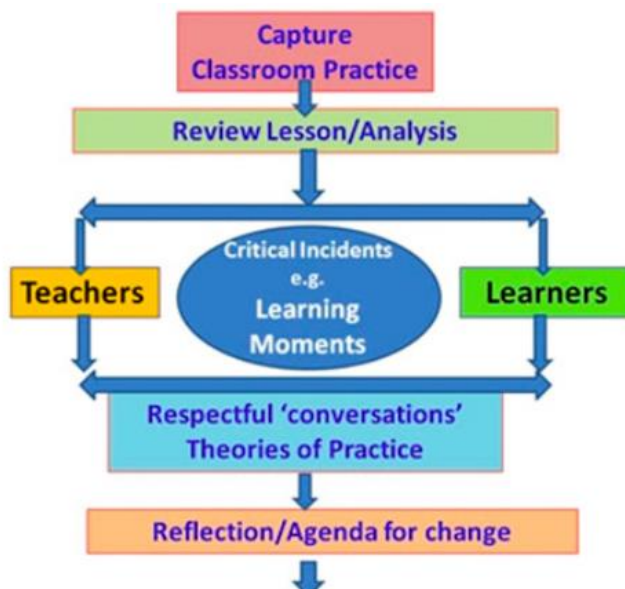


Fig. 3: LOCIT model

After capturing a lesson on a video-recording, the analysis is made separately by the teacher and possibly a colleague as a critical friend and by the students. It will be interesting to match observations and comments from teachers and students during “respectful conversations”, as Coyle defines them. The teacher will have the opportunity to realize if his/her impressions on learning moments and critical incidents are in line with the students’. All these remarks will lead to reflection and to a shared agenda for change and improvement.

3. Video annotation for CPD in CLIL

Video annotation [9] allows teachers and learners to interact with video via note taking, discussions and comments.

Sharing notes will help to share reflection and relevant information about the teaching and learning process, in a cooperative and peer learning perspective. Through a specific software such as *moochnote* or *edpuzzle*, students can annotate a video quickly and also view existing annotations.

In a CLIL lesson video annotation can be exploited in several ways, especially using specific functions such as labels, categories, scales, timelines: students and teachers can annotate their learning moments and critical incidents on the video recording of the lesson exactly at the precise point where they occur.

As Lemke underlines [10], working with videos allows teachers to experience teaching from a different perspective, as they get ‘inside’ a learning event, thus having a worthy tool for self-reflection.

Donald Schön (1983) introduced the concept of “Technical Rationality” which refers to professionals “thinking in action”: video-annotation can help reflect in action (while doing something) and on action (after you have done it) which should become an important feature of continuous professional development, especially in the field of language learning and CLIL.

In fact, the use of videos in a training pathway can help teachers reflect on their own

teaching strategies and style in order to find out weaknesses and strengths and to improve the following actions [11].

Some universities have already introduced the use of video-recoding lessons for microteaching in CPD in Italy, however, the added value of videos in teacher training could be better highlighted in training programmes.

4. Some LOCIT experiences in Italy

LOCIT model was experimented and interpreted by a group of Italian secondary teachers attending methodological CLIL courses in English in the academic year 2018-19. LOCIT model was adapted to the specific target of teachers, whose level of English was B2, also taking advantage of the use of technologies: specific webtools were used to embed the videos of the lessons (especially *moochnote* and *edpuzzle*) and comment directly on them through video-annotation.

A wide range of reflections on methodological and linguistic aspects were highlighted by the teachers as added value to their professional growth and to their deeper understanding of CLIL methodology and of Pluri-literacies. Here is a screenshot from a LOCIT model by a teacher of art during a CLIL module on Feudal Society. The teacher embedded the video-recording of her lesson on the webtool for video annotation and commented on it through specific notes whenever she felt it relevant, not only learning moments and critical incidents identified during the lesson. In the picture below she presents the particular moment as a brainstorming activity.

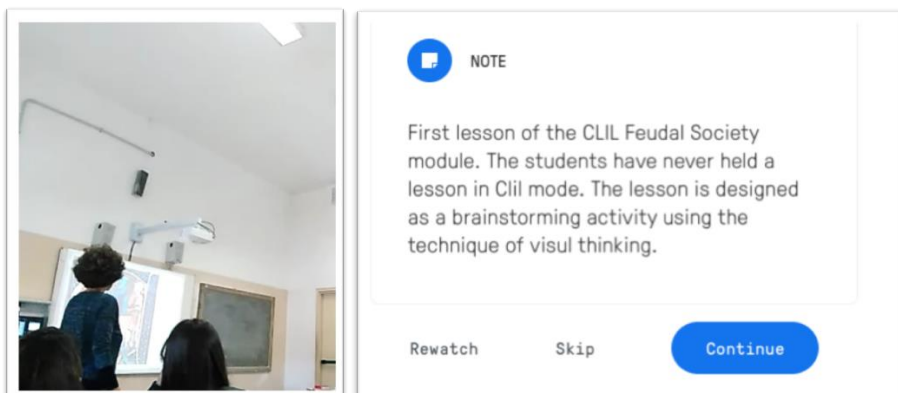


Fig. 4: An example of LOCIT with video annotation

These were the main findings from the teachers' experimentations with LOCIT through video annotation:

1. Teachers should facilitate exposure to input by selecting attractive authentic materials, visual aids, images, videos, objects, multimodal inputs, not only oral or written texts
2. Teachers should facilitate output production by adopting different interactive formats and practising creative forms of oral (presentations, round tables, debates) and written or digital (letters, surveys, articles, manuals, ppt presentations, videos) output production (also in pairs or groups)
3. Translanguaging may be considered as a useful resource both for teachers and students, when needed, while some teachers in this study considered it as a critical incident.

5. Conclusions

The paper meant to stress the importance of teachers' awareness of Pluri-literacies and of LOCIT model for their continuous professional development (CPD) in the field of language learning and CLIL, in line with the latest Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages. The LOCIT model was described, drawing on CIT theories and the experimentation of this model through video annotation from a sample of Italian teachers which showed how effective this tool may be for both personal and professional growth.

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The Heart Speak Project: Stepping out of the CLIL Classroom and Learning Language through Dance...

Angela D. Kaufman¹

Freelance teacher of dance and ESL in primary and nursery schools, Italy¹

Abstract

I created The Heart Speak Project in 2009 after many years of teaching two separate subjects; English and dance, in reply to what I saw ten years ago as something parents desperately wanted for their children in Italian state primary schools; the opportunity to experience English in a bilingual environment. In recent years the introduction of CLIL in classrooms in this country has seen a welcome explosion. This project goes a step further and specifically consists of dance classes conducted in L2. What began as a fun experiment has developed into a fully-blown mission. All Heart Speak sessions are structured using sound principles of dance technique and within a solid framework of English language-learning, combined with a wide variety of music, illustrations and storytelling. Children are encouraged to find a voice, in any 'language' other than the spoken word and in the beginning the emphasis is on listening and comprehension. They are then guided by pictures, story, music and characters with feelings to express what they have absorbed through any means in as many creative ways, gaining confidence and boosting self-esteem in the process. Co-operative learning occurs by way of pairing, small group and whole class activities, as does memory enhancement, co-ordination, spatial awareness and stamina within choreographies that culminate in real performances. By starting with our most basic tool, our body, learners and teachers alike experience how we can always create something both powerful and poignant from nothing. In fact, the Heart Speak Project prides itself on one simple, basic premise. All you need to take part is a body, some space, and (perhaps) some music. The fact the project needs very little resources in order to work is what makes it so viable. In a fast-moving and constantly changing world, increasingly dominated by high-speed technology, the development of an approach to teaching that encourages more connections and a deeper search within our inner world of the self through the creative arts, I believe, will prove vital. This article will outline very briefly the fascinating journey I have experienced in schools to see for myself the value of the arts as a channel for second-language learning, especially in the early years when language acquisition is blossoming at its fastest pace. But as children must absorb and learn slowly, so Heart Speak aims for a more nurturing approach, allowing children in the beginning to 'learn a language' without uttering a single word.

Keywords: CLIL, dance, creative arts, connections, language acquisition, bilingualism

Introduction

The Heart Speak Project is, by its very name, an experiment. A word invented for a project that takes an approach to language learning based on the simple premise that our own bodies are our best tool and that to communicate in any way at all does not

necessarily require the spoken element of language. Devised for primary schools in north-west Italy after many years of experience and in reply to a very pressing need, the project today appears to meld with a framework of CLIL methodology, now at the forefront of education at all levels. It continues to strive to create an atmosphere that is conducive to language learning for young children, up until the last year of primary school (11 years). With this paper I intend to demonstrate how, specifically dance, (combined with music and art) can be potentially more effective in helping to connect all subjects on the curriculum; the heart of CLIL.

Stepping out in the gym

Right from the first session, the children step out of the classroom and into the gym and immediately become involved in physical movement. The emphasis is on *listening*, however complete comprehension is not expected. For visual clues the children are encouraged to also look, observe and mimic movements and gestures as well as stillness. The introduction of rhythms, first with body percussion and then the children's own names soon develops to music and the skill of listening is enhanced further. When the children are invited to sit for a story, read by the teacher with no first language translations, listening once again becomes the central focus, where the rhythms and tones of the language are simply to be enjoyed while the illustrations in front of them are essential tools with which to enter into a new L2 world. Coming around full circle, the children then return to the open space to take part in physical activities that spring from the story and the characters, all led by the teacher in English. Precision not perfection is on display here. It is enough to get the gist of the communication from the teacher, enjoy the 'melody' of the new language as well as the real music and let it accompany the joy of dancing. Many feelings emerge from the first Heart Speak sessions, with the impact of a mother-tongue English teacher leading a dance lesson, which is why I call these first impressions the E-MOTIONS. The project is full of them.

Learning as dancers do

Curt Sachs, (1881-1959), German musicologist, called dance "the mother of all arts" [1]. I would tend to agree with him, for dancers receive the least acclaim for all their toil and dedication, much like most mothers I know. Donata Zocca, in her book *Laboratorio Danza*, also makes the connection of dance to a maternal and universal bond, suggesting "we all take our first dance steps in the womb" and that according to anthropologists, "there aren't any people anywhere in our world that don't dance" [2].

From my own experience I can confirm that it is very rare to find a child who refuses to dance just as it is very difficult to find someone who actively dislikes moving their body to music. In this project, total refusal to dance has never been an issue. If anything, more lessons could be longer in order to contain the immense energy that children have for dancing stories. Results are visible during performances, where all the practice and hard work becomes invisible to the audience, proof that this is learning, performing-arts-style, and not simply a sport or P.E.

Hanna Poikonen, of the Cognitive Brain Research Unit at the University of Helsinki, in her recent paper of 2018 claims that "dancers brains develop in a unique way" [3]. Her results show that dancers' brains react more quickly to changes in music at a subconscious level and that they are more synchronized with frequencies associated with emotions and memory. Her findings claim they could influence future developments of therapies for the treatment of various pathologies such as autism and mood disorders.

For HeartSpeak, this is evidence that the inclusion of dance lessons in educational curricula can be of value for a number of reasons and beneficial to children with all kinds of issues; attention deficit disorders, autism and learning difficulties. The lesson here is simple. The tools we have need not be 'perfect' in a conventional sense but when those tools meet music, they can communicate.

Learning language like a bilingual baby

The HeartSpeak Project believes language learning should be as close to first-language learning as possible, thereby giving every child the opportunity to experience what it means to be fully immersed in a bilingual environment where language acquisition is not the single only objective of the lesson but is part of a wider spectrum of development. In other words, a truly holistic interpretation of dual-subject CLIL.

In the same way Caleb Gattegno's Silent Way [4] of teaching English was radical in the 1970s, taking away all reliance by the students on the teacher and his/her voice, this project instead relies completely on the teacher as guide, much like a parent and asks of the children to be mostly silent, at least while dancing. The emphasis on listening is paramount, as is observing in order to gather visual clues for comprehension and it is through illustrated books and animations that the language input is introduced. For primary school children, this project uses the story of "The Snowman" by Raymond Briggs, to demonstrate the value of 'silent' storytelling in L2. The book is wordless, yet young language learners have shown high levels of motivation in a number of activities involving mime, movement and play that require imagination, spatial awareness and co-ordination through musicality, all the while consolidating language skills. The journey the children embark on during the HeartSpeak Project mirrors somewhat the discoveries the character of the snowman encounters. A new world, a new language with which to decode meaning, and like James the young boy in the story, a new way of seeing and dreaming. It is very much a metalinguistic experience, finding language in a story where there is none, and within such a magical story, it is a metaphysical as well as a physical one.

Children nowadays are already used to teaching methods that employ whole participation and 'acting out' of words, phrases and songs in their textbooks. TPR, or Total Physical Response plays a very large part in this project and gives shape to many of the activities proposed in response to story and lexicon. Originally developed by Professor of psychology James Asher in the late 1970s, Asher's observations have very much inspired the aims of this project; that language learning occurs first through listening and internalizing through movement in the body; that effective language learning must engage the right hemisphere of the brain, again where physical movement stems from; and finally that language learning should avoid any negative emotions that would inhibit the natural process and should be stress-free. Asher describes language acquisition like this; "In a sense, language is orchestrated to a choreography of the human body" [5].

His suggestion that young children spend a long time listening to language before ever attempting to speak, and that they understand utterances much more complex than those they can reproduce themselves, mirrors what I feel many educators may be afraid to try, but which the HeartSpeak Project challenges. The core aspect of our education systems that push children, *all* children, to speak, denies them the time to absorb, consolidate and relish the new language and concepts they are discovering for the first time. This requires new ways of thinking.

Fritjof Capra, in his "Tao of Physics" (1975), puts into question old ways of thinking

and encourages us to embrace new viewpoints, that will “[transcend] the realms of thought and language [and] which will not be communicated in words.” As an experiential educator, I appreciate the courage needed to envisage education that goes beyond words, even the ‘unthinkable’. Capra quotes the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu more than two thousand years ago who said simply about knowledge, “He who knows does not speak, he who speaks does not know” [6].

How the HeartSpeak Project fits into a CLIL programme in schools

The focus in any discussion involving CLIL revolves around the integration of content with language communication and at its core is multidisciplinary. This added freedom for learning has been seized by the HeartSpeak Project, which can be incorporated into English and Physical Education lessons, as well as music, art, science, geography and history lessons using endless links across the school curriculum with well-chosen stories and poems that illustrate multitudes of topics. But there are other connections to be made too.

In his book ‘The Systems View of Life’, Fritjof Capra devotes some time appealing to educators and artists of the need to connect and collaborate and realise the potential of art in education. Encouraging us to perceive differently, he calls for eco-literate future generations who prioritise multidisciplinary connections, processes and relationships over linear knowledge, end products and ‘growth’. This new shift in perception involves visualizing and he sees this moment in time as an opportunity for educators to “open the door for integrating the arts into the school curriculum” [7]. He goes on to stress, “there is hardly anything more effective than the arts – be they the visual arts or music and the other performing arts – for developing and refining a child’s natural ability to recognize and express patterns[...] In addition, the arts enhance the emotional dimension that is increasingly being recognized as an essential component of the learning process.” The HeartSpeak Project answers his call and embraces the idea of pattern in multiple ways; across a vibrant and stimulating network of subjects by means of a ‘foreign’ or second language; through the recreation of illustrations from a linear storyline; through varied and changing patterns in space within choreographies comprising of small group or whole classes that explore 2- and 3-dimensions both on the floor and within the air; and of course through the students’ very own bodies and feelings. When the learning potential within this framework is so far-reaching, and in a way, unknown and impossible to predict, we could say that words of *any* language are rather superfluous and probably inadequate to describe the process and product which tend to be very much in the moment, fleeting and continuously changing ‘works in progress’.

The growth of CLIL within schools reflects the increasing diversity of our societies and embraces wholeheartedly an inclusive message. As teachers traverse multiple subjects in one lesson it makes sense that they allow students to enter into the content in a similarly varied way. Howard Gardner, Professor in cognition and education wrote about seven (and later eight) intelligences that offered a framework for describing the different learning styles that exist; linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily/kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. He suggests that “any concept worth teaching can be approached in at least seven different ways” [8].

Specifically, within a project involving dance and the arts, his findings make interesting reading and beg for further development and research concerning innovations in language learning. That “the ability to use one’s body to express an emotion (as in dance) [...] is evidence of the cognitive features of body usage”, is at the core of HeartSpeak’s objectives.

With tightening budgets and resources, schools are often faced with curricular decisions based on finances. The HeartSpeak Project literally lifts words off the pages of books, transforming stories into visual and moving images. There is no limit to the artistic creativity that can spring from a room of bodies in a space with some music and therefore, due to its minimal material requirements, the project is extremely viable in monetary terms, priding itself on the belief that in every sphere 'less is more'.

In a world increasingly sedentary, The HeartSpeak Project is all about exercise and can tackle a very real problem of child obesity or at the very least enables a child to experience activities that can be practiced later after school.

With growing insecurity for their future, young people and children need a school environment that is able to help improve self-esteem and offer tools with which to cope with stress. With no emphasis on tests, the end of course performance is a 'moment' of achievement in many languages aside from L1 and L2 – the universal languages of dance, music and art combine to communicate a voice and tell a story. Moments of calm and stillness, self-reflection and empathy mean that The HeartSpeak project offers small doses of psychotherapy through movement, music and art while consolidating authentic language communication against a CLIL backdrop.

Gender issues will undoubtedly surface during the first dance lessons but HeartSpeak challenges full on the stereotype that dance is a 'feminine pastime'. HeartSpeak specifically targets boys throughout, with carefully chosen choreography and music that allows them to touch a more sensitive side of themselves. More importantly, they are permitted to show to others without ridicule, and importantly as artists. The HeartSpeak Project is inspired by initiatives such as Project B, a three-year project run by the Royal Academy of Dance that aims, as one of its ambassador teachers Jason Thomas says, "to make boys proud to dance" [9].

Conclusion

Children are not robots, nor should education be reduced to a mechanism to be programmed. Despite the recent rush to technologize everything and everyone, I beg to suggest that we take a moment to slow down and re-evaluate the power of our own bodies that physically makes us people. We must give children the time to savour for themselves activities requiring feelings that go beyond numbers in test results and gaps to be filled on pages. Their ideas, imaginations and curiosity must be sparked in multiple and exciting ways in order to help them learn about a world they have yet to enter fully but which will ask of them many attributes in the future. To embark on a task with the energy of a young child influences how we grow and become who we are. I suggest education must start from much deeper. If we can connect with our inner selves, touch a part of us rarely exposed when we listen, feel, move and express all of this richness through the languages of the arts, then we can begin to connect to others, the big wide world around us and ultimately, learn. The HeartSpeak Project is E-MOTION in its purest sense. It is the invisible thread of a myriad of languages that whisper to us in new, diverse and mysterious ways. When we dance, long before we can speak with words, those whispers of 'language' can simply be heard in the heart.

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Visual, Tactile and Motor Grammar Learning in the Project-Based Approach

Mija Selič¹

C00ISch00I Language School, Slovenia¹

Abstract

The Project-Based Approach (PBA) to young foreign language learning has been introduced in primary teaching (children aged 5-11) to combine the lexical approach, project work and socialisation, while at the same time supporting the neurology of learning, which is the basis for academic learning. Since children up to 12 years of age cannot yet comprehend abstract thinking, the PBA introduces visual and tactile sentences, stories and grammar, created with flashcards. Visual-motor integration and hand-eye coordination are employed to execute the activities, which enable better procedural thinking and understanding, as well as enhancing imagination and divergent thinking. In order to comprehend the time concept, specific rhythmic and movement games are integrated and tailored to the context covered. Cooperating with peers makes the activities highly motivating (as a change from digital technology), and children enjoy the challenge of being able to understand abstract knowledge (grammar) by the age of 11.

Keywords: lexical approach, project work, socialisation, hand-eye coordination, visual-motor integration, primary school language learning

1. Introduction

The traditional practice when introducing a foreign language to young learners is to teach children vocabulary; children's memory works brilliantly, and they can memorise things quickly. In order to facilitate memorisation, coursebook chapters are divided by topic and activities are gamified (learning by association and through action). Since children cannot yet comprehend a lecture on abstract knowledge (grammar) due to their developmental stage, the traditional 'coursebook' approach teaches isolated vocabulary and random structures; the focus is only on learning a language by heart, while meaningful communication is not taught.

Compared to the 'coursebook' approach, CLIL, Language Immersion and Content-Based Instruction (CBI) have shown better social and academic results. When students are immersed in communication, peer interaction and are interested in material they are learning they are intrinsically motivated and can achieve more [1], [2]. Learning a language through content, or lexically (through chunks: polywords, collocations, institutionalised expressions) [3] makes language useful and meaningful.

According to the learning skills pyramid (Fig. 1), cognitive learning is possible only when neuro-sensory-motor integration is well developed to establish healthy conditions for socialising, learning to communicate and, lastly, developing strategies for academic learning.

The Project-Based Approach (PBA) is a CBI for young learners; the content is a

project and the language learning promotes communication. Projects subtly and systematically integrate language and social skill learning through steps. The activities stimulate sensory and motor functions at an early age in order to establish the conditions for effective academic learning. From the age of nine, the activities address academic learning through visual, tactile and motor engagement. Each PBA activity has different levels, so that it can address children with different abilities within the same age group.

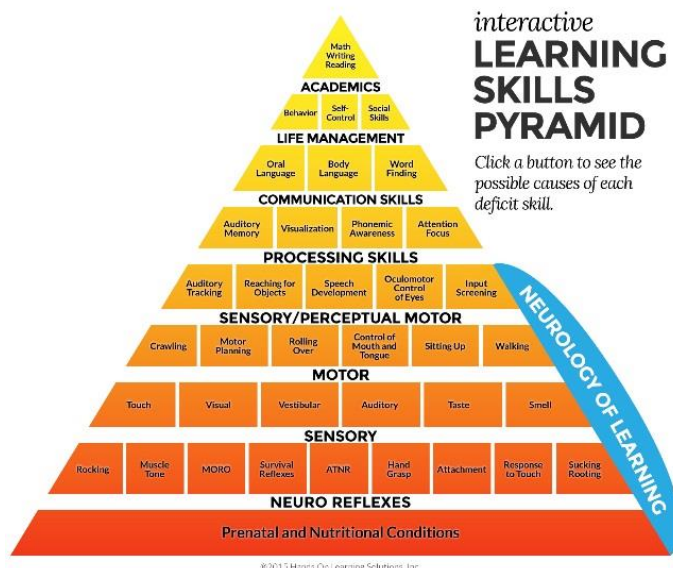


Fig. 1: Learning Skills Pyramid (Hands on Learning Solutions, 2015)

2. Methodology of the PBA

The PBA model was developed in small groups (up to eight children) to establish a framework. Later, it was put into practice in public schools with groups of up to 30 children. Projects address various themes through five steps with a set of activities combining social, motor, sensory and language skills.

2.1 Age 5 to 8

Children experience *the use of language* through a varied set of activities, while at the same time practising sensory, social and motor skills. They are immersed in the project through a story; in this way, the language is presented in a mixed-topic context (rather than being divided by topic) in which vocabulary and grammar are embedded in the story. The story makes the learning process *meaningful*.

The activities used in the PBA are called *serious games* [4]; they have all the elements of a game, but what the players win is knowledge. Games make language learning *engaging* and enable children to interact with their peers, which makes the learning *natural*.

The activities are organised so as to address the *children's point of view*, where everything is a game with their peers and they are motor, sensory and tactile engaged.

2.2 Age 9 to 11

In this period, children are already asking for clarification of specific grammar rules; however, explaining rules abstractly is not met with understanding. 'Showing grammar' through visual, tactile and motor activities, on the other hand, makes it understandable.

Building sentences by arranging vocabulary and grammar flashcards, changing their positions and relating them to other flashcards [9] helps children to explain sentence structure, the plural of nouns, the time concept, grammar tenses, the relationship between question words and parts of speech, the use of auxiliaries, the forms of verbs in relation to tenses, and the use of prepositions. In order to address sensory and motor skills through grammar learning, and to prepare the brain for a higher state of performance (flow) [5], one specific three-beat rhythmic game, based on the 'We Will Rock You' (WWRY) beat by Queen, is employed (See Fig. 2).

3. The model of the PBA framework

The well-structured framework has five goal-oriented steps for the teacher to follow. Each step focuses on different language and social skills, which, followed sequentially, enable the children to understand the content (project), use (and learn) the language, and benefit from cooperation.

3.1 Step one: OPENING THE THEME

The theme is opened through storytelling. The main aim of this step is for the children to understand the gist of the story (global understanding – listening skill) from which the whole project is developed. Through the three parts of the storytelling (pre-storytelling, storytelling and post-storytelling activity), motor and sensory skills as well as pre-literacy are addressed.

3.2 Step two: DO IT YOURSELF

The children take relevant pieces of information (vocabulary, chunks and the relevant 'grammar') from the story presented and create a new, similar story through open-question instructions. For example, they choose the character's friends, family, the place they live, the clothes they wear, the food they eat, etc., and create a drawing based on their choices.

The activity centres on practising focused listening, fine motor skills and pre-literacy (introducing writing). The children create the worksheets themselves while using the language they believe is important to them, thus establishing personal attachment, which consequently enhances motivation.

3.3 Step three: SOCIAL GAMES

For lexical and meaningful learning, grammar and vocabulary are embedded in gamified activities (*serious games*).

Flashcards are used as isolated words (pieces of information), which, in the context of games, acquire the linking text according to different situations. While playing, the children create sentences: they ask questions, give answers, use different structures, etc. The WWRY rhythmic game provides the basis for a gamified activity that addresses different sensors and enhances focus and concentration, while also introducing time (past, present, future) and sentence structure (the 3-beats relate to subject-verb-object/time).



Fig. 2: Rhythmic game (author's archive)

3.4 Step four: LITERACY

The children learn how to present a structured topic. The activities should be introduced sequentially, as listed below, with each new activity commencing only after the previous one has been comprehended.

Reading picture books (from the age of eight). A colour-coded reading method [6] helps the children to connect sounds to letters through story reading.

Visual and tactile sentences [8] (Fig. 3) (from the age of eight). The children take flashcards (words) from the unique Picture Dictionary (The Theme and Alphabet House) [7], [8], and create sentences on a pre-structured chart. When placing a word in its proper location, or changing its location according to its use, the children employ hand-eye coordination (tactile activity). In the process, they become familiar with certain question words, parts of speech (subject, noun, verb) and prepositions.

Text activities (from the age of eight/nine). Using a text prepared on the theme covered in the project, the children learn how to determine text structure (introduction, body, conclusion), how to find information in a text, how to understand an unknown word from the context, and how to find grammar that has already been practised through visual sentences.



Fig. 3: Visual and tactile sentences (author's archive)



Fig. 5: Visual and tactile grammar (author's archive)

4. Conclusion

In practice, the PBA has shown better results than the traditional 'coursebook approach'. Children instructed using the PBA from the age of five cooperated better and were more eagerly engaged in activities than their peers using the 'coursebook approach'. Moreover, they took responsibility for their learning.

By the age of eleven, the children communicated in English: they followed English instructions easily and spoke or wrote in English using all of the basic tenses (simple past and present, progressive past and present, GTF and WF) while presenting a structured and familiar topic. In spontaneous conversation, they still mixed tenses to express the future, sometimes choosing the incorrect form of the verb, and sentence structure was influenced by their mother-tongue. However, the message was consistently conveyed.

Visual, tactile and motor grammar learning has proved to be a very good approach for children who have learning disabilities, as hand-eye coordination helps them with their procedural thinking.

The PBA can be effectively used in institutions where foreign language instruction is limited to 2-3 hours per week, with only appropriate flashcards [9] and picture books required. Moreover, the same PBA model can be used for any language, not only English.

Practice has shown that children enjoy the challenge presented by the PBA; they are highly motivated and not afraid to speak. It is, however, more challenging for teachers to accept language as a communication tool rather than as an object of learning as in a 'coursebook' approach.

For the above observations to be confirmed, further research should be undertaken.

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E-Learning Solution

Distance or Face-to-Face Education for Language Learning: A Case of English

Dursun Akaslan¹
Harran University, Turkey¹

Abstract

Face-to-face education has a history that spans almost with the existence of humanity while the beginning of distance education goes back to the 18th century. Distance education started with basic correspondence through postal service and continued with the wide variety of tools available through the Internet. However, today, distance education is perceived as an umbrella term because it covers a wide range of concepts such as online learning, e-learning, synchronous and asynchronous learning. However, in Turkey, distance education refers to the education in which higher education institutions are planned and carried out on the basis of information and communication technologies, and the courses are given simultaneously by the instructor without having to be in the same place on the basis of the interaction between the student and the instructor and between the students. Nowadays, distance education application and research centers (DEARC) are responsible for the efficient running of distance education in Turkish Higher Education Institutions. Courses generally known as “common courses” such as Atatürk’s Principles and History of Turkish Revolution, Turkish Language and Foreign Language (e.g., English) are controlled and authorized by DEARCs. Since the number of students enrolled in these courses is thousands, it highly deemed to understand whether distance education differs from face-to-face education in terms of learning language (i.e., English). The purpose of this study is to compare student success in the two areas: distance and face-to-face education. 4308 and 6071 students are enrolled in the English course respectively in the spring term of the academic year 2017-2018 and fall term of the academic year 2018-2019. The number of students enrolled in English course are categorized into distance and face-to-face groups. To achieve the aim of our study, first, the grades of students in their mid-term exam, final exam and resist exam are calculated and then compared. With the support of the trial version of the IBM SPSS Statistics, descriptive and inferential statistics were computed. Independent-sample T-Test are used to compare the success of the distance group with the face-to-face one.

Keywords: Distance, Online, English, Face-to-face

1. Introduction

Face-to-face education has a history that spans almost with the existence of humanity while the beginning of distance education goes back to the 18th century [1]. Distance education started with basic correspondence through postal service and continued with the wide variety of tools available through the Internet. However, the increasing sophistication and affordability of technology in the 21st century has fostered the rapid of distance education especially at the university level along with the increased accessibility

to the Internet [2]. Today, distance education is recognized all over the world and is imparted in public and private institutions in almost all countries of the world [3].

However, the main characteristic of distance education has not changed since its birth and still focus on the separation of tutors and learners by putting a physical distance between them. On the other hand, distance education is perceived as an umbrella term because it covers a wide range of concepts such as online learning, e-learning, synchronous and asynchronous learning. Today, in Turkey, distance education refers to the education in which higher education institutions are planned and carried out on the basis of information and communication technologies, and the courses are given simultaneously by the instructor without having to be in the same place on the basis of the interaction between the student and the instructor and between the students.

Additionally, it is important to note here that the prevalence of distance and face-to-face education in public and private sectors fosters the number of researches on their differences in terms of several concepts such as achievements and attitudes of learners.

Nowadays, distance education application and research centers (DEARC) are responsible for the efficient running of distance education in Turkish Higher Education Institutions. Courses generally known as “common courses” such as Atatürk’s Principles and History of Turkish Revolution, Turkish Language and Foreign Language (e.g., English) are controlled and authorized by DEARCs.

Since the number of students enrolled in these courses is thousands, it highly deemed to understand whether distance education differs from face-to-face education in terms of learning language (i.e., English). The purpose of this study is to compare student success in the two areas: distance and face-to-face education. The research questions of the study have been formulated as:

- Firstly, is there any significant difference between the mean score of students’ grades in distance and face-to-face education?
- Secondly, might daytime and evening education affect students’ grades in distance and face-to-face education?
- Thirdly, to what extent do 2-year and 4-year education affect the grades of students in both distance and face-to-face education?

In this study, the comparison of students in distance and face-to-face education will be specifically investigated in terms of whether they study during daytime or evening.

This specific investigation is important since daytime and evening education exist in almost all private and public institutions at the post-secondary education.

2. Methodology

2.1 Population

Table 1 illustrates the number of students enrolled in the English course in the spring term of the academic year 2017-2018 and in the fall term of the academic year 2018-2019 respectively. The number of students enrolled in English course are categorized into distance (N: 3437 in the Spring and N: 5509 in the Fall) and face-to-face (N: 871 in the Spring and N: 568 in the Fall) groups. The study also revealed that the majority of the student’s study during daytime in the English course in both spring and fall terms as shown in the Table 1. The number and percentage of the students in 2- and 4-year education is also illustrated in the Table 1.

Table 1. Population

Year	Term	Education	Year	Distance		Face-to-Face		Total	
				n	%	n	%	n	%
2017-2018	Spring	Daytime	2	1119	32.56	319	36.62	1438	33.38
2017-2018	Spring	Daytime	4	1787	51.99	341	39.15	2128	49.40
2017-2018	Spring	Evening	2	251	07.30	170	19.52	421	09.77
2017-2018	Spring	Evening	4	280	08.15	41	04.71	321	07.45
Total				3437	100.00	871	100.00	4308	100.00
2018-2019	Fall	Daytime	2	2907	52.77	73	12.85	2980	49.04
2018-2019	Fall	Daytime	4	1838	33.36	418	73.59	2256	37.12
2018-2019	Fall	Evening	2	464	08.42	13	02.29	477	07.85
2018-2019	Fall	Evening	4	300	05.45	64	11.27	364	05.99
Total				5509	100.00	568	100.00	6077	100.00

2.2 Statistics

With the support of the trial version of the IBM SPSS Statistics Toolbox, descriptive and inferential statistics were computed. Independent-sample T-Test are used to compare the success of the distance group with the face-to-face one. To find out the success of the students in the English course, first, the grades of students in their mid-term exam (40%) and final exam (or resit exam) (60%) are used to calculate their grade average in the course and second, relative evaluation system was applied to find out the letter grade of the students in the course.

3. Findings and Discussion

This section is divided into two parts: The first part reports the descriptive statistics of the students' average grade in the English course whereas the second part compares their average grade in terms of whether they take the English course through distance or face-to-face education. Additionally, the differences among students based on their faculties are also examined in this part.

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

The number mean and standard deviation of the students' average in both terms are presented in the Table 2. As specified in the table, in the spring term of the academic year of 2017-2018, the average grade of the students in distance education was 41,10 out of 100,00, which is higher than the one of the students in face-to-face education with 33,20. However, the difference changed in the fall term of the academic year of 2018-2019. As illustrated in the table, the score of face-to-face students was better than the one of the students in the distance education.

Table 2. Number, Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' Average Grades

Year	Term	Distance			Face-to-Face			Total		
		N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
2017-2018	Spring	3437	42.10	20.96	871	33.20	20.17	4308	40.30	21.10
2018-2019	Fall	5509	31.01	23.28	568	33.19	25.00	6077	31.21	23.45

In the spring term of the academic year 2017-2018, the school attendance in both distance and face-to-face education was compulsory. The students in both types of education was asked to attend the 70% of weekly lectures whether lectures are delivered online over the Internet or face-to-face in the classroom. However, in the fall term of the academic year 2018-2019, the university senate did not impose the compulsory school

attendance on distance education. This might make us think that the compulsory school attendance is critical for the success of students in distance education.

Table 3. Differences in 2- and 4-Year Education

Year	Term	Year	Distance			Face-to-Face		
			N	M	SD	N	M	SD
2017-2018	Spring	2-year	1370	36.34	20.45	489	30.08	19.49
2017-2018	Spring	4-year	2067	45.92	20.21	382	37.29	20.34
2017-2018	Spring	Total	3437	42.10	20.96	871	33.20	20.17
2018-2019	Fall	2-year	3371	26.47	21.53	86	22.85	22.75
2018-2019	Fall	4-year	2138	38.17	24.14	482	35.04	24.95
2018-2019	Fall	Total	5509	31.01	23.28	568	33.19	25.00

However, the results of the descriptive statistics of the students' average grade in terms of the students' associate (two-year) and bachelor's degree (four-year) in Table 3 cause a change in our thoughts. As shown in the table, the average grade of the students studying in distance education are higher than the ones in face-to-face education whether they study in a 2-year or 4-year degree. As illustrated in the table, the increase in the number of the students in 2-year programs had an impact on the general average grade of the students. On the other hand, the compulsory school attendance might be thought as a positive factor on the success of the students in distance education because there is a decrease in the amount of the average grade from 45.92 to 38.17 in 4-year education and from 36.34 to 26.47 in 2-year education. Additionally, Table 4 also illustrated the differences in daytime and evening education.

Table 4. Differences in Daytime and Evening Education

Year	Term	Time	Distance			Face-to-Face		
			N	M	SD	N	M	SD
2017-2018	Spring	Daytime	2906	42,97	20,97	660	34,90	19,85
2017-2018	Spring	Evening	531	37,37	20,23	211	27,90	20,29
2017-2018	Spring	Total	3437	42.10	20.96	871	33.20	20.17
2018-2019	Fall	Daytime	4745	31,80	23,80	491	33,99	25,62
2018-2019	Fall	Evening	764	26,09	19,06	77	28,09	19,97
2018-2019	Fall	Total	5509	31.01	23.28	568	33.19	25.00

As illustrated in the table, the mean score of the daytime students in both distance and face-to-face education is higher than those of the evening students. This points out that evening education has a negative effect on the success of the students regardless of whether they study through distance or face-to-face education.

3.2 Inferential Statistics

Independent-sample t-test was used to verify statistical significance of differences in mean scores on various variables namely between associate's and bachelor's degree, among different faculties and colleges and between daytime and evening education with the utilization of the IBM SPSS Statistics. The difference between distance and face-to-face education is always assumed to be a controversial. However, it is not consistently observed in all cases. On the other hand, Table 5 shows that students in distance education in terms of the spring of the academic year of the 2017-2018 show higher success in the English course because there was a significant difference in the mean of the students' grade ($t=11.27$, $p<0.01$)

Table 5. Differences in Distance and Face-to-face Education in terms of Year

Year	Term	Education	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	t	Sig.
2017-2018	Spring	Distance	3437	42.10	20.96	0.15	0.901	11.27	0.000
2017-2018	Spring	Face-to-face	871	33.20	20.17				
2018-2019	Fall	Distance	5509	31.01	23.28	6.47	0.011	-1.99	0.046
2018-2019	Fall	Face-to-face	568	33.19	25.00				

Table 6 illustrates the mean score of the student's grade in terms of whether they are studying during the daytime or evening through distance or face-to-face education. As shown in the table, there is significant difference between the mean score of students in distance and face-to-face education regardless of whether they study during the daytime or evening while they are taking the English course.

Table 6. Differences in Distance and Face-to-face Education in terms of Daytime and Evening

Term	Time	Education	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	t	Sig.
Spring	Daytime	Distance	2906	42.97	20.97	0.63	0.43	9.01	0.00
Spring	Daytime	Face-to-face	660	34.90	19.85				
Spring	Evening	Distance	531	37.37	20.23	0.20	0.66	5.75	0.00
Spring	Evening	Face-to-face	211	27.90	20.29				
Fall	Daytime	Distance	4745	31.80	23.80	6.56	0.01	-1.82	0.07
Fall	Daytime	Face-to-face	491	33.99	25.62				
Fall	Evening	Distance	764	26.09	19.06	0.00	0.93	-0.88	0.38
Fall	Evening	Face-to-face	77	28.09	19.97				

Table 7 illustrates the mean score of the student's grade in terms of whether they are studying in 2-year (i.e., associate degree) or 4-year education (i.e., bachelor's degree) through distance or face-to-face education. As shown in the table, there is significant difference between the mean score of students in distance and face-to-face education regardless of whether they study in 2-and 4-year education in the terms of Spring while they are taking the English course. However, there is no significant difference between the mean score of 2-year students in distance and face-to-face education. On other hand, the significance exists in the mean score of 4-year students.

Table 7. Differences in Distance and Face-to-face Education in terms of 2- and 4-year Education

Term	Time	Education	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	t	Sig.
Spring	2-year	Distance	1370	36.34	20.45	0.528	0.47	5.89	0.000
Spring	2-year	Face-to-face	489	30.08	19.49				
Spring	4-year	Distance	2067	45.92	20.41	0.502	0.48	7.68	0.000
Spring	4-year	Face-to-face	382	37.20	20.34				
Fall	2-year	Distance	3371	26.47	21.53	0.003	0.96	1.54	0.124
Fall	2-year	Face-to-face	86	22.85	22.75				
Fall	4-year	Distance	2138	38.17	24.14	1.279	0.26	2.56	0.011
Fall	4-year	Face-to-face	482	35.04	24.95				

4. Conclusion

The main goal of the study to investigate whether there is a difference between face-to-face and distance education in terms of the mean of the students' grade in the English course in several aspects. This study revealed that there is significant difference

between distance and face-to-face education on the students' school success as the statistical results point out in the IBM SPSS. Moreover, it was discovered that the compulsory school attendance in distance education has a positive effect on the success of the students registered in the English course. Moreover, the mean scores of students studying in a program of 4-year education is higher than those in 2-year program in both distance and face-to-face education. This may indicate that the motivation of students in 4-year programs is higher in terms of pursuing their education in Turkey. However, it should be noted here that the findings of the study are limited to the number of students enrolled in the English course in the fall and spring terms of the academic year 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 respectively in Harran University and may not be generalised to other contexts or domains. However, our empirical findings might heighten the awareness on differences in distance and face-to-face education.

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Practice and Development of Oral Skills through Self-recordings in EFL

Ana Guadalupe Torres¹
Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico¹

Abstract

The University of Veracruz considers the educational experiences (EE) of Language 1 and Language 2 as mandatory for all its students. One of these EE is English 1 which is offered in different modalities such as in-person, blended, virtual and autonomous.

The virtual modality has become relevant in recent years due to its flexibility in time and schedules. However, the practice of oral expression in this type of learning environment is often complicated for some students who have difficulties to practice the language synchronously.

Therefore, this research paper aims at describing an intervention project designed to provide asynchronous oral practice opportunities for virtual students. The strategy was carried out through the qualitative action research methodology and consisted of performing self-recordings of different conversations with the basic contents of the course in the target language to improve the pronunciation and fluency of the students. The strategy resulted in a significant improvement of the participants' oral production as well as a good level of performance in their final exam and a positive opinion about this pedagogical intervention.

Keywords: Self-recording, oral production, pedagogical strategy

1. Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICT) in educational programs represent a great support for teachers in the adoption of innovative teaching methods and techniques, achieving some positive effects on the learning process. Authors like Blin, (2004); Guo & Willis, (2006); Bozzo, (2012); Hernández *et al.*, (2012) agree that ICT provides language students with great opportunities to become autonomous learners.

As a consequence of this, the educational model of the University of Veracruz, promotes the constant search for innovative teaching-learning strategies in which the student puts into practice the knowledge acquired within the classroom, either in-person or virtual, in real or simulated contexts.

Therefore, in the teaching of the English language, we have worked with different methodologies such as the communicative approach, which can be understood as a series of principles on the goals in teaching a language, the way in which students learn, the type of activities that facilitate learning and teacher-student roles in the classroom (Richards, 2006, p. 2) and the task-based approach, where the student undertakes to carry out an activity to achieve an objective by making use of the target language (Van Den Branden, 2006, p. 4). Through the use of these methodologies, students can develop the four skills in acquiring a foreign language: speaking, writing, listening and

reading.

For this intervention project, it was decided to focus on the oral ability to support the students of the virtual modality to have a good level of execution in their final oral exam through self-recordings of conversations with the basic contents of the course in the target language.

Hence, the background and objectives that led us to the implementation of this design are presented first. Then, the methodology used to carry out the intervention is described and finally the results obtained that include an analysis of the execution of the students in their final oral exam as well as their opinion about the intervention.

1.2 Background

The educational model of the University of Veracruz is composed of four main areas that are:

General Basic Training Area (AFBG for its acronym in Spanish), disciplinary training area, free choice training area and terminal training area.

In the AFBG it is intended that students acquire knowledge and skills with multidisciplinary and contextual nature to be able to communicate effectively and lay the foundations for the study of a professional career through the educational experiences (EE) of Language I and Language II, Reading and writing, and Critical and creative thinking skills, which are mandatory for all students enrolled in the different degree programs offered by the university. (Universidad Veracruzana, "Propósito AFBG", par. 1 and 2).

Learners who study the EE of English 1 and English 2 can do so through different modalities of study such as: in-person, blended, autonomous and virtual.

The virtual courses of English 1 and 2 are carried out through the Eminus institutional platform. Each course is made up of ten units where learners have to study the thematic contents, do practical activities and tasks as well as participate in discussion forums.

Although the online learning process may lack oral practice (Hernández, A., *et al.*, 2012), most students are able to develop this skill at a basic level by performing synchronous practices monitored by the counsellor.

Oral expression is a productive skill and is defined as an interactive process through which meaning is constructed, and involves producing, receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994, cited by Vez and Bertani, 2018).

It is also one of the most difficult skills to teach (Vez and Bertani, 2018), mainly in the virtual modality where the student has fewer opportunities to practice the language than in the face-modality. Therefore, the implementation of carefully designed activities to support students in the development of oral expression is highly necessary (Ellis and Yuan, 2005).

The intervention project described in this study was carried out with students enrolled in the EE of English 1 in the virtual modality who, since the beginning of the semester, presented communicative difficulties and had problems to perform oral production practices synchronously with the counsellor.

1.3 General objective

To describe the implementation of an intervention project for the practice and development of oral skills through self-recordings of conversations with the thematic contents of the English 1 course in virtual mode.

1.4 Specific objectives

- Provide opportunities for oral practice in the English language asynchronously.
- Improve the pronunciation and fluency of students in the target language.

2. Methodology

This qualitative study was implemented using the action-research methodology; which, according to Latorre (2003), constitutes an inquiry strategy that starts from the detection of a specific problem to which a pedagogical treatment is applied in order to obtain data that must be tested experimentally to modify an educational reality. This method is done by collecting information in daily teaching practice and analysing it with the objective of making decisions about how it should be in the future (Wallace, 2008, p. 4).

We followed the procedure of Bizquerra (2009), which indicates that action-research is carried out through a systematized process that includes the following steps: problem, diagnosis, design of a change proposal, application of the proposal, and evaluation.

2.2 Problem and diagnosis

During the August-December 2018 period, a group of students presented serious difficulties to speak in the target language. As they did not have time to attend in-person sessions to practice this skill, it was decided to support them through an intervention project which is described in the following section.

2.3 Proposal of change

An intervention proposal that consisted of the self-recording of the conversations included in each of the course topics was designed. For this purpose, a free online voice recorder was available on the page: <https://online-voice-recorder.com/es/>. The conversations were written in a Word document for the students to study and were recorded by the course counselor with the objective that the students would listen and imitate the teacher's pronunciation.

2.4 Application of the proposal

To start with the application of the intervention proposal; a set of instructions, a Word file containing 10 conversations which included the main subjects of the course, and an audio of the dialogues was sent to the students through the institutional platform.

The steps to follow consisted of listening to the audio and reading the conversations several times to practice pronunciation. Instructions for the use of the online recorder software were also sent. These directions requested that they record several versions and select the one they considered to have a better pronunciation for submission to review.

2.5 Evaluation

The evaluation of the intervention was carried out through the development and analysis of the self-recordings, the results of the final oral exam, and the students' opinion about the intervention. These three moments are described in the results section.

2.6 Participants

In this pedagogical treatment we worked with 8 students of different faculties enrolled in the virtual educational experience of English 1 during the semester August 2018-January 2019. They presented problems to communicate in English and had serious

difficulties to perform their practices in terms of oral skills synchronously with the course counselor.

3. Results

The results obtained at the end of the intervention focused on the development and analysis of the proposal, the final oral exam and the students' opinion about the project.

3.2 Development and analysis of the intervention

At the beginning of the intervention, participants were explained that they would make a series of recordings for the practice and development of oral production with which they would replace in-person work. First, an email was sent with the voice recorder software link and the explanation for using it. Once the students confirmed that they understood how to handle it, they were sent a Word document with all the conversations they would have to practice during the semester. Students should read the dialogues and make sure they understand all the suggested questions and answers contained in the document.

Subsequently, the recording of the conversations was sent with the instruction that they should listen to them and repeat them continuously with their own responses to practice and improve their pronunciation. Once students practiced enough, they should use the software to record the conversations as many times as they considered necessary until they heard their pronunciation similar to the one sent to them as an example.

The analysis of the self-recordings made by the participants is summarized below:

- Students showed enthusiasm for participating in the intervention.
- Some proposed using WhatsApp audio messages instead of the suggested software.
- Conducted and sent all conversations in a timely manner.
- Of the 8 participants, 2 presented good pronunciation, 4 regular pronunciation and two bad pronunciation.
- One of the students who presented poor pronunciation made the recordings again, showing a slight improvement.
- Regarding intonation, it follows that 5 of the participants practiced several times before recording their conversations since they imitated the intonation of the facilitator.
- One of the participants recorded their conversations at a very fast pace, but did not agree to record them again at a slower pace.
- It was found that some students corrected their own pronunciation errors during recording.

3.3 Final oral exam

The final oral exam for the EE of English 1 in the virtual modality consists of two parts.

Part 1 is divided into two stages: personal questions and selective questions. In personal questions participants are interviewed individually about their personal information and in selective questions the student responds to a set of questions about a specific topic (daily routine, favourite food, weather, among others). Part 2 corresponds to a "role play" where the students, formed in pairs, make use of a card that raises a situation of daily life to ask and then answer questions each other.

This exam is evaluated by two teachers, the professor of the group that acts as an interlocutor and an examiner who only listens and assigns scores. For both, part 1 and

part 2, the examiner evaluates property (use of grammar and vocabulary) and communication (pronunciation and fluency) with a scale of value from 0 to 4 for each of the parts, giving a total maximum of 16 points, and the interlocutor only assigns an overall score of the student's execution with the same scale (from 0 to 4 points), adding a total of 20 points maximum.

The results obtained by the students in their final oral exam are shown below:

Students:	Part 1		Part 2		Global mark	Total	Final grade of the course
	Property	Communication	Property	Communication			
1	3	4	3	4	4	18	8
2	4	4	4	4	4	20	9
3	4	4	2	3	4	17	8
4	4	4	2	3	4	17	8
5	4	3	4	4	4	19	8
6	3	2	2	3	3	13	7
7	3	4	3	4	3	17	8
8	4	4	4	4	4	20	10

Table 2. Results of the final oral exam

Table 2 shows the results obtained by the participants in their final oral exam. It can be seen that the majority of the students obtained high scores that fluctuated between 17 and 20, which was of benefit for their final grade of the course since the group qualification obtained an average of 8.25.

3.4 Students' opinion about the project

Finally, it was considered necessary to know the students' opinion regarding the development of their self-recordings. For this purpose, a questionnaire of 14 questions was designed that included interrogations concerning the software used, practice sessions, the usefulness of the recordings to develop oral skills and improve their pronunciation, as well as questions about the participants' feelings. The answers of the students are summarized below.

- Most participants rehearsed the conversations 6 to 10 times before making the final recording.
- The software used was easy to handle.
- Most students think that the recordings helped them improve their oral production and listening comprehension.
- All students felt that the intervention helped them improve their level of English and provided them with practice opportunities to develop their pronunciation and fluency.

4. Conclusions

This intervention project on self-recordings of conversations in the English language, was designed based on the need for a group of virtual students of the educational experience of English 1 who had difficulties to practice oral skills synchronously.

The results include a description of the way in which the intervention was carried out, as well as an analysis of the students' results in their final oral exam and their opinion

regarding the benefits perceived with this pedagogical treatment. It was found that the activity was carried out without major inconveniences; the majority of the students obtained a good grade in their final oral exam and their opinion about the project was positive.

From the above, it is concluded that the intervention strategy was very supportive for the practice and development of oral skill since the participants achieved a good performance in their final oral exam, which helped them obtain a good grade.

The students, knowing that they were weak to communicate orally in the target language, showed a great commitment to listen and practice the conversations several times before making the recordings and delivering them in a timely manner, which resulted in greater confidence at the time of submitting their final exam. For this reason, most of the students agreed that the intervention allowed them to improve their pronunciation and fluency.

It was perhaps unexpected to find that the students who proposed to record their audios through WhatsApp voice messages, had no problem using the suggested software, since they commented that it facilitated the self-recording process.

Finally, the importance of continuing to look for synchronous and asynchronous practice alternatives for students coursing English as a foreign language in the virtual modality is highlighted.

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Sundanese, Arabic and English Phonology: Introducing a Classless Linguistic Learning

Dedi Sulaeman¹, Gugun Gunardi², Dian Indira³, Elvi Citraresmana⁴
Faculty of Culture, Padjadjaran University, Indonesia^{1,2,3,4}

Abstract

The uniqueness of teaching phonology in English Literature, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati – located in Pasundan, West Java, Indonesia is the integration among sounds of native (Sundanese), daily prayer (Arabic) and foreign (English) as the main courses. These three sound systems are used frequently in daily activities in the campus. As time flies, the method of teaching adapts the condition of the era. The method of teaching gets many changes; beginning from using chalk and blackboard, then board marker and white board, then using laptop, projector and screen then now transformed to the latest version: android. When the lecture provides the materials in android, all students could easily access it anytime, anywhere. By doing so, the students can follow and attend the lecture fully without any reason of being absent or having other activities outside of the class. This teaching of phonology today is aided by today's technology development. Besides having been completed all materials, videos and other multimedia, the lecturer and the students can develop other creative task in order to reach the peak of the learning goals. In other words, it could be said that the subject of this phonology serves the students digitally by using the apps provided at play-store to have the experience of the classless linguistic learning.

Keywords: Sundanese, Arabic, English, Sound System

1. Introduction

The interaction among Sundanese, Indonesia and Arabic language has been established for a long time in West Java. As a native language, Sundanese is acquired and used in everyday life. Before getting on to the formal school, some Muslim children learn Arabic through informal institutions such as play group, kinder garden or mosque.

Although they do not realize the complexity of sound productions, they are exposed to have the various sounds of Arabic, since they have to begin to pray using Arabic sound system. When they are going to the study formally in elementary school, they are also exposed to Bahasa Indonesia. It means that before learning lingua franca, Bahasa Indonesia, they learn foreign language (Arabic) for their early need to pray. Moreover, still in elementary school they are also exposed to learn English. It can be said that before going to the junior high school, some Muslim children of Sundanese have four sound systems: Sundanese, Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia and English.

The researcher also has this experience, namely learning Arabic for the need of pray before having formal education in elementary school. This description still happens up till now, especially in West Java, Indonesia. In one side, it is good to transform sound literacy by exposing various sounds for various meaning. In another side, however, it is a challenge for the language trainers to transform the sound correctly. It has to be done

because in fact they learn other languages, especially the sound system by producing the sound with native language, namely Sundanese.

2. Institution's vision to lecture's content and method

As the vision of the campus is to show local wisdom, Islamic value then the core material, the subject of phonology taught in English Literature of the State Islamic University is developed by enriching the local sounds of Sundanese, the prayers sound of Arabic then the core material, the sound of English phonology. Since these sounds are complex, the android system is built to assist the learner to have the correct sounds that can be access anytime and anywhere. By developing the android system, the complexity of these sound will easily be aided. This application is technologically advanced in order to have similar sound like native. At least the learner will learn based on native sounds.

Arabic has a feature of long vowels or double consonants as phonemes that distinguish meaning each other. Unconsciously the language of prayer used in our daily worship is also a language that is very close and pronounced with high and constant frequency. Some Muslims recite Arabic at least five times a day at least in the obligatory prayer service. So that this application also helps Sundanese people to learn Arabic sound systems to have better sound produce in their performing prayers. Although English does not have double consonants in the pronunciation, English has also double vowels (long vowels) that Sundanese does not. By doing so, the application also helps Sundanese people to learn these features in order to master the vowels and consonants well. From the perspective of the content, the lecture of Sundanese, Arabic and English phonology has been done in the way of application. So that application can bring the lecture to be classless language learning. It is one of the alternatives for the learners to learn these three sound systems.

3. Android applications bring the content to support classless linguistic learning

The following is the description of the application of Sundanese, Arabic & English Phonology.

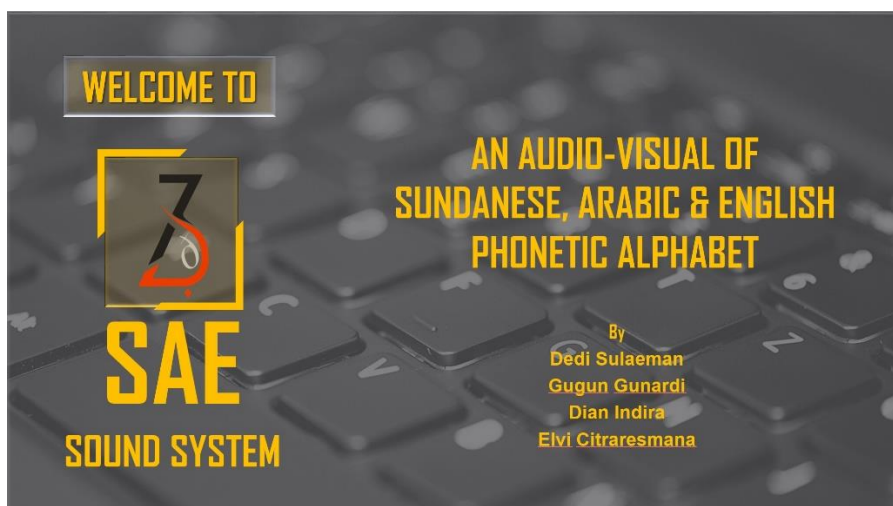


Fig. 1: The first screen of the application

The first screen of the application shows the title of the application. It welcomes the readers to the SAE (Sundanese, Arabic & English) sound system. After a while, the next screen sill appears. It shows the contents of the application. Here is the screen.

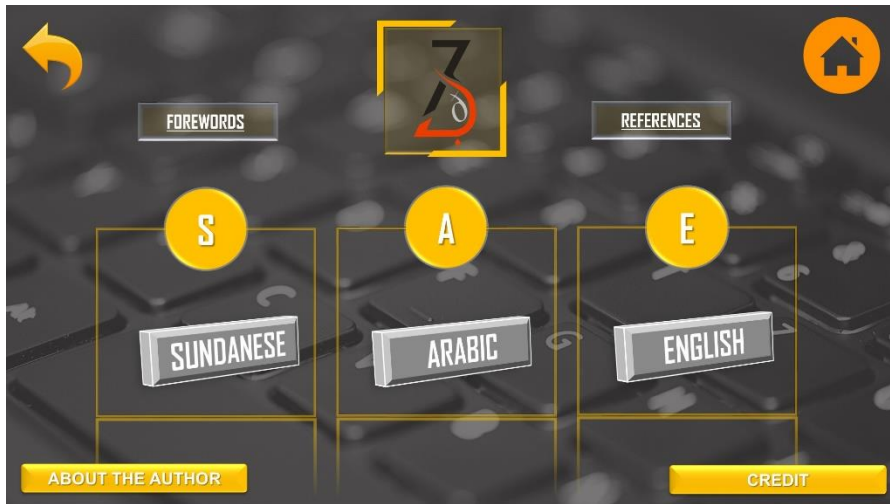


Fig. 2: The second screen of the application

This second screen consists of forewords, references, about the author and credit. In the middle of the screen, it shows the three icons of each sound system, namely S for Sundanese, A for Arabic and E for English. The button of foreword links to the first edition of the application. It is about how the application is made and how to use it. The button of reference refers to the books, the source, and the other previous applications from android and play store. The button about the author tells about the short biography of the creator of the application. The button of credit that conveys gratitude to those who help the application. The button of letters SAE links to each language sound systems.

When the users touch the button S, the screen will appear like bellow.

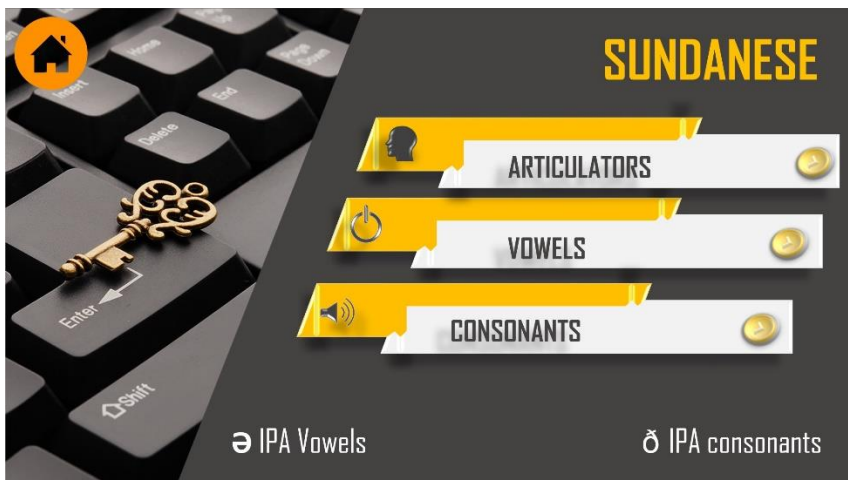


Fig. 3: the third screen of the application, Sundanese sound system

This menu shows the content of Sundanese sound system. It consists of five buttons, namely articulators, vowels, consonants and direct link to IPA vowels and IPA consonants. The articulators' button links to the human organ of speech and its names.

The vowels button links to the Sundanese vowels and its way to produce each. As Djajasudarma [1] states that the number of phonemes of Sundanese vowels are bigger to the Indonesian vowels. The number of Sundanese vowels are seven, they are [a], [ɪ], [ʊ], [e], [o], [ə], and [ɛ:]. Besides, there is also nasalized vowel [a']. She emphasizes also that [2] Sundanese has eighteen consonants phoneme that is produced when there is closure of the air in the mouth as there is collision of the tools of speech. There are three aspects affect the quality of sound that creates the consonants, the cords or vocal cords statement, the place of articulation, and the manner of articulation. Regarding to those aspects, the eighteen consonants phoneme of Sundanese are [h], [n], [c], [r], [k], [d], [t], [s], [w], [l], [p], [j], [y], [ŋ], [m], [g], [b], [ŋ]. The consonants button links to the Sundanese consonants and its way to produce each. In order to know and compare to the sounds internationally, the IPA button helps the users to link to the IPA complete with its sound to produce each vowel, as well as The IPA consonants button. The screen for Arabic and English sound systems are similar to Sundanese screen.

Different from Sundanese, Arabic [3] consists of six vowels, i.e. [a], [a:], [ɪ], [i:], [ʊ] and [u:] and twenty six consonants, namely [b], [t], [θ], [j], [h], [χ], [d], [ð], [r], [z], [s], [ʃ], [ʒ], [d], [t], [ɣ], [f], [q], [k], [l], [m], [n], [w], [y], [ħ], [ʕ]. The following is the screen for the Arabic sound system.

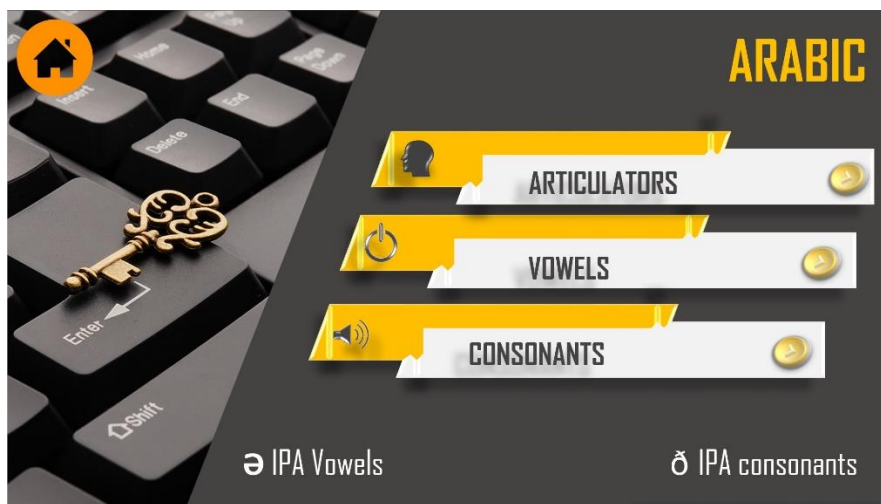


Fig. 4: the third screen of the application, Arabic sound system

Then the last is English sound system. English consists of twelve vowels and twenty-four consonants. Roach [4] states that English consists of short vowels and long vowels. They are [a], [ɪ], [ʊ], [e], [o], [ə], [ɛ:], [a:], [i:], [u:], [æ], [ɑ]. He [5] further describe the twenty four consonants are [p], [b], [f], [v], [m], [θ], [ð], [n], [t], [d], [s], [z], [l], [c], [j], [ʃ], [ʒ], [r], [ŋ], [k], [g], [w], [h], [y]. The following screen for English sound system.

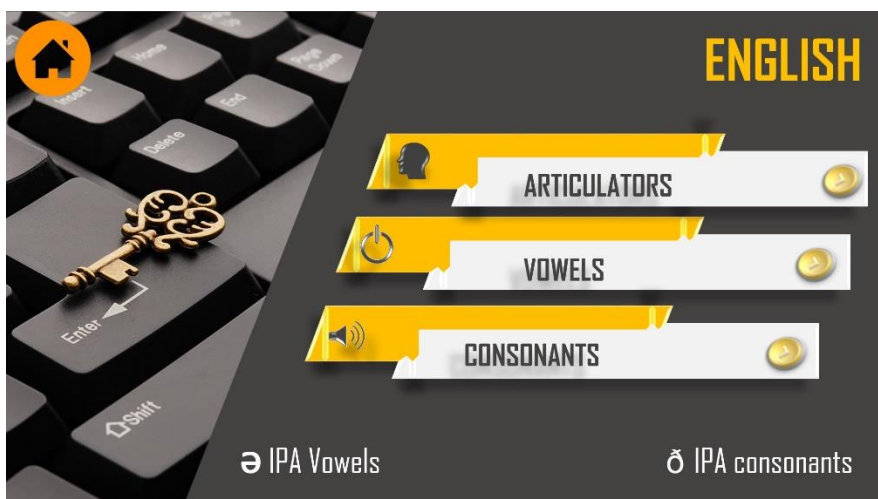


Fig. 5: the third screen of the application, English sound system

The following is the example screen of the consonant sound.

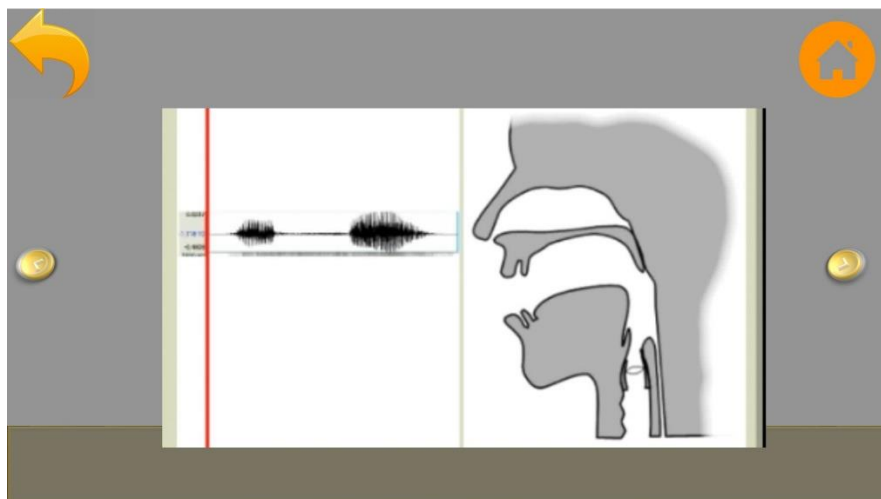


Fig. 6: the screen of the application, consonant sound

This screen shows the example of a consonant sound. It consists of animated video that can be played by the user by clicking the button play under the screen video. The video also shows the graph of the sound. The graph functions to measure the standard of the particular sound. So that the users can compare the result of the sound produce by the user and the application.

4. Closing

Beside these differences of sound systems, other interesting features are the videos.

The videos tell about all terms and the explanation of the related topic discussed in the syllabus. It can be concluded that by developing the android application, the user can implement a classless linguistic learning.

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ICT Based Language Teaching and Learning Approaches

A Cross-Cultural Study of Students' Attitudes towards Digital Language Learning Tools

Christina Rosén¹, Soniya Billore²
Linnaeus University, Sweden^{1,2}

Abstract

In this study, we explore students' attitudes towards the use of digital tools in the learning of English in Sweden and Germany. English is the first compulsory foreign language in both countries. In both countries, there is also a new national strategy with proposals for actions to better exploit the potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education. The hypothesis of this study is that there will be differences in the treatment of, and attitudes to, digital tools between the students, and between the two countries. Data was collected through a semi-structured questionnaire answered by 155 German and 185 Swedish students, aged 15-16. Our results show that the attitudes towards digital tools for language learning differs between the two countries. While the Swedish students use a variety of tools, there is a lack of access to digital learning tools in Germany. There are stark differences in the students' attitudes towards how they seek value from the learning tools for English. The study shows differences in user behaviour and related appeals and challenges and discusses possible reasons for these differences in a cross-cultural context. The results give implications for the development and enrichment of digital tools in language learning.

Keywords: Student Attitudes, Digital tools, European, Language classroom, Sweden, Germany

1. Introduction

ICT is becoming an increasingly valued and utilized feature within education. Children of today have access to a number of learning platforms in which they interact with educational resources using predominately digital tools. In 2006, the European Commission identified eight common key competences for life-long learning (European Commission, 2010) Three of these key competences are: Communication in a foreign language; Digital competence; Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, all important for the digitalization of education. Research studies conducted on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) implementation in school education point out that, despite ICT being around us for so long, there is a serious dearth of knowledge on how ICT affects learning at school level. To answer this issue various multifaceted studies are required that explore the use of ICT at various points of student and school interaction (Cox & Marshall, 2007).

Over the last decade, discussions concerning students as “consumers” of education is gaining increasing attention in consumption behaviour. Students are increasingly aware of which education services to buy in face of the highly competitive global situation regarding education, skill development and employment opportunities. Players in the education business sector are creating competitive differentiation in education services by providing additional value for their users in creative ways, including digital learning

platforms. Cox & Marshall (2007) further point out, that in the use of ICT, what students learn depends largely on the type of resource used and the subject for which it is being used. Therefore, it is critical that for any research on ICT based learning and competitive service user and provider behaviour, the actual types and uses of ICT should be measured as accurately as possible to determine the attitude of its users and their related experiences with it. To what extent are schools equipped with digital tools? What programs and what technical devices are available? What influence does this have on students' choice as consumers of education?

The aim of this study is to investigate and compare the attitudes towards ICT and the use of digital learning tools in the English language classroom among 16-year-olds in Sweden and Germany. Sweden and Germany are important business partners and closely related in many aspects. Especially interesting is, that in both countries, there is a new national strategy (2017-18) with proposals for actions to better exploit the potential of ICT in education. These proposals aim at supporting all students and teachers to develop the digital skills they need in order to improve results and to prepare students for an increasingly digitalized society. Nevertheless, the situation concerning digitalization differs between the two countries. In Sweden, almost every student receives a laptop from his or her school and this started already more than 10 years ago (Åkerfeldt *et al.*, 2013). In March 2017, the Swedish Government (Regeringskansliet, 2017) decided to change the current curriculum to ensure and enhance the digital competence amongst Swedish students. In 2016, the German Minister of Education and Research planned to invest "5 billion euros over the next five years to equip more than 40,000 schools and colleges with faster internet, wireless access points and tablet computers" (Reuters 2016). At the same time, there is an ongoing discussion in Germany whether every student really needs a laptop.

The purpose of our study is to highlight and analyse the use of, and attitudes towards ICT among high school students. When treating students as consumers of language education and consumers of digital technology in schools it is important to explore the following aspects:

- a. To what extent are digital tools used in school and at home?
- b. What are the attitudes towards using digital tools in school?
- c. What equipment and what digital learning tools are used when learning English?
- d. What differences can be found between Sweden and Germany concerning the use of digital tools in the language classroom?

Results from the study will provide a cross-cultural comparative insight into language schooling in Europe and create business implications and strategic viewpoints to strengthen the use of digital technology in an optimal manner. Although the context is language learning, it can be seen that attitudinal differences towards the use of ICT mark how students expect or adapt to certain norms followed by social systems including schools.

2. Contextual background

In 2018, almost 100% of all Swedes aged 16-24 had access to a computer at home (SCB 2019). In most schools, every student gets a laptop or an iPad from school from the age of 7 and in some from the age of 12. In high school though, almost every student gets his or her own laptop, often referred to as having a 1:1 computer system. In 2017, the Swedish government took a new decision (Regeringskansliet 2017), meaning that every student shall get their own digital device. From July 1, 2019 it is compulsory to use iPads for all children from the age of one in all pre-schools in Sweden, this as part of the

national digitalization strategy for the school system (Regeringen 2017). Even if Sweden is far ahead of Germany in the use of computers at home and in education, teachers' lack of training in using digital media has been reported (cf. Fredholm 2016).

In Germany there are 16 different *Bundesländer* and school systems across the country are not quite alike. In each state, it is a matter of money, and how the school is sponsored by the state largely influences the quality of digital technology in schools.

Each school has to apply for money for each "digital idea". Thus, the digitalization plans and resulting infrastructure is largely the effort of the schools' ambition to integrate digital technology in the learning process. Almost half of all devices are used in computer rooms, but there is a trend towards mobile terminal equipment, as the proportion of tablets is growing (Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur, (2019). The German Minister of Culture said "the technique must follow the pedagogy and not vice versa. [...] Replacing a book with a laptop or a tablet is no pedagogy. We still need scientific insights" (our translation) Czimmer-Gauss, 2017).

3. Theoretical background

Schooling is becoming a competitive sector in terms of offering the best possible resources to study so that the school graduate is equipped with all the necessary knowledge and skills that will take him/her further and into competitive university education. More and more schools are bringing in digital tools as a regular feature of learning. Hence, it is important to know students' attitudes towards digital tools and the subsequent perceived impact on their language use and proficiency. Here the term attitude is defined as follows: "A person who holds strong beliefs that positively valued outcomes will result from performing the behaviour will have a positive attitude toward the behaviour. Conversely, a person who holds strong beliefs that negatively valued outcomes will result from the behaviour will have a negative attitude" (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008: 71).

Haelermans (2017) discusses ICT in education and how to bridge the gap between research and practice. Simply having access to ICT in education does not lead to its effective use, and might even lead to negative results if ICT is merely a distraction and not applied in an effective way (*ibid.*: 17). Experiments on ICT in the Netherlands showed medium positive significant effects for mathematics but only for some aspects of language learning, as grammar and spelling. No effects were found for language domains such as listening, text comprehension and formulating (*ibid.*: 71). Barera-Osorio & Linden (2009) conducted a randomized experiment among 97 schools and more than 500 students in Colombia where the private sector had donated computers to public schools for teaching language. They found no effects on test scores and other outcomes and concluded that the computers were not effectively incorporated into the educational process.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research framework

This paper presents the results from the questionnaire answered by the 16-year-old students, in Sweden and Germany. The paper is part of a research series that explores various relationships in ICT led language education, attitudes of students, teachers and entrepreneurs. For detailed information on our complete research model, we refer to Billore & Rosen (2017). The method is mainly quantitative, with descriptive statistics, but also qualitative, as the answers to the open questions are analysed and compared in a

contrastive and cross-cultural perspective.



Fig. 1: Research framework to investigate students' attitudes towards digital tools in language learning

4.2 Data collection and respondents

The semi-structured questionnaire was constructed in English on questions from earlier national and international studies and created on an electronic platform called Survey & Report as this platform was accepted in both Sweden and Germany (as regards GDPR). The survey link was first sent to the teachers who then further distributed it to their respective students. The questionnaire was divided into 4 main clusters: Demographics, User behaviour, Appeals and Challenges. 155 German and 185 Swedish students participated in the study. The period of data collection was from 2017 until 2019.

5. Results and Data analysis

The following section presents some of the empirical results of the study in 4 sections – Demographic details, User behaviour, Appeals and Challenges.

5.1 Demographic details:

Respondents	Swedish students	German students
Female	82	85
Male	102	66
Diverse	1	4
Total	185	155

5.2 User behaviour

There is an evident difference in how much Swedish and German students use a computer/an iPad at home per week. 55% (102/185) of the Swedish students use this device more than ten hours a week, 26.5% (49/185) more than twenty hours a week. Of the German students, 36% (56/155) use a computer/an iPad at home per week and only 13.5% more than twenty hours a week. Concerning the number of students who use a computer for doing their homework, the difference between the groups is small: 82% (151/185) of the Swedes and 86% (133/155) of the Germans. Whereas 28% (51/185) of the Swedes use a computer for learning languages, only 17% of the Germans do so.

Among other answers the Swedish students chose "Skype, shopping, programming" while the German students opted for "research, presentations and mails".

Concerning the time spent on using digital devices in school the difference is even more striking. The use of computers in Swedish schools is much more frequent than in German schools. 56% (103/185) of the Swedish students use a computer/an iPad more than ten hours a week, compared to only 8% (12/155) of the German students. Twice as

many of the Swedish students (82.2%) are used to working with digital devices for learning a language compared to the German students (44.5%). This confirms the results in earlier studies concerning digitalization in school (cf. Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur, 2019; SCB, 2019).

The Swedish students mentioned a variety of programs they use in school. Only some of the programs are freely accessible and each school has to pay a license for using the digital learning tools. It is remarkable, that as many as 89 German students said that they do not use any digital programs at all for learning English. The rest of the students only mentioned *dict.cc*, *leo.org*, and *pons*, which are all dictionaries and no “programs” for learning English. The results show the lack of digital learning tools for learning English in these German schools.

5.3 Appeals

Swedish students think they learn English better by using a computer, 65.9% (122), and only 34.1% (63) by using a book. Among the German students only 40% (42) think they learn better by using a computer and as many as 60% (93) by using a book. When asked to motivate ‘why or why not’, the groups did not differ very much, contrary to what could be expected. Concerning the negative attitudes towards using digital tools for learning English, 31% of the Swedish and 35% of the German students were negative.

Many of the negative comments among the Swedes concerned the disadvantages of using a computer/an iPad instead of books and paper and a pencil. Many of the German students talked about negative health effects from using digital devices. When asked what they liked about different language learning tools, Swedish students mainly mentioned vocabulary learning and grammar. As many as 55 (36%) of the German students said “don’t know”, “we don’t use programs” or “We don’t use any programs to learn languages”. Their answers correlate with their answers on the question “What programs do you use in school for English language learning?” presented in 5.2.

5.4 Challenges

a. What kind of programs/digital tools would you like to work with on your computer to make your English better?

Programs you would like to use	Frequency – 185 Swedish students	Frequency – 152 German students
Watch films	72	61
Vocabulary learning	34	15
Grammar exercises	32	16
Read books	26	29
Listening exercises	19	20
I don’t know	38	32

Answers in both groups indicate, that there is a lack of adequate digital learning tools in education. The majority answered films, which are not actual learning tools. The students were asked to specify if there are programs they do not like. Among the 90 German students who answered this question, 65% (59/90) said that they did not know.

We also asked them to suggest how the programs could be improved. 51% (74/144) of the Swedish students said that no improvement was needed. 59% (53/90) of the German students said “I don’t know”.

6. Conclusions and implications

At least in Sweden, school policy seems to be more about the presence of ICT, i.e., having ICT as the goal, instead of looking upon ICT as the means of achieving the goal of higher student performance. This is contrary to the attitudes and discussions going on in Germany. Our study shows that the Germans are more careful concerning the time spent using digital devices in school and at home. Our results as well as political decisions indicate this. In general, although digitalization in Sweden started long ago, this study confirms that there is a lack of efficient language learning tools in both countries.

However, in terms of student attitude towards digital language learning there is marked difference between the two countries. While Swedish students appear to have a well-formed attitude, German students lack exposure and hence are unplaced. Swedish students are more aware of the different ways of learning, types of digital language tools and opinion regarding the use of these tools in terms of positive and negative effects, preferences and possible changes or expectations as compared to German counterparts.

A Simple Blueprint for Using Oculus Rift in the Language Learning Classroom

Dimitros Boglou¹
Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus¹

Abstract

For the past three years, I, as the director of the Cyprus University of Technology's Innovation Centre and a language lecturer and academic member of the Cyprus University of Technology's Language Centre, have been experimenting with various Virtual Reality systems in order to enhance the language learning environment and make the language learning experience more effective. Although, this innovative technology has a lot of potential to transform and revolutionize our 21st century language learning classroom and the learning environment overall, Virtual Reality is surrounded by a complex technology that requires the user to have specialized knowledge of the hardware and the software that he or she is about to use. A lack of such knowledge can turn an exciting VR experience into a frustrating nightmare for the language lecturer. Furthermore, it will also fail to become an effective technological learning tool for the language learner. This lack of knowledge has discouraged many language instructors and instructors overall to adapt VR as a learning tool in their courses [1]. Taking this issue into account, I decided to create a simple manual where all the technical and non-technical issues a lecturer might face when trying to set up and use an Oculus Rift VR system for a language learning class. This paper focuses on the simple errors and pitfalls that can be avoided prior to introducing and using the Oculus Rift VR system in a language learning classroom or course. It could also function as a simple blueprint for training language lecturers in order to use it effectively and stress-free.

Keywords: Virtual Reality, ICT, Teacher Training, Learning Approach, ESP

1. Introduction

As a language educator in a tertiary education environment for the last 12 years, I am continuously looking for new ways to enhance my language learning classroom with new technological tools in order to create a more interactive and creative learning environment to keep students engaged and improve their language skills. One new emerging technological device that has permeated our classrooms in the last couple of years is Virtual Reality. Even high immersive VR systems such as HTC VIVE and Oculus Rift have become more accessible as prices have declined [2], the evolution of VR technology made the immersion into the digital world almost flawless and more VR applications are available that can be exploited for language learning purposes with new applications being developed [3]. These developments made VR more appealing as it would make my English for Specific Purpose (ESP) classroom more interactive. The strength of VR technology lies in the 3D computer generated world in which a person can immerse him- or herself and interact in it [4]. However, the high price and complex technology surrounding high immersive VR systems has kept them out of the

mainstream classroom [5]. Regardless of these aforementioned issues, I purchased and decided to implement a high immersive VR system in my ESP language classroom.

Unfortunately, I underestimated the various technical and non-technical pitfalls, which I would encounter during the set up and usage of the VR system, as it led to student and educator frustration, and a lot of unexpected class interruption due to technical issues.

All these challenges raised my scepticism regarding the usage of VR in the classroom, but it was also the catalyst in recording all the pitfalls connected to the VR.

The aim of this paper is to offer solutions to potential challenges and prepare language educators, who might be interested in utilizing the high immersive VR system Oculus Rift in their language classrooms as the benefits of VR outweighs the pitfalls.

2. Benefits of VR in Education

The question might be asked by many educators why they should consider using a demanding technological tool like VR in their classrooms. Literature provides some compelling evidence regarding the potential benefits of VR when it is used effectively.

Firstly, VR helps to increase students' motivation by providing an immersive and engaging experience [6]. Studies have also reported that VR improves students' academic performance [7]. Furthermore, VR promotes students to become more active learners as the VR systems allow students to learn more autonomous and encourages them to utilize their decision-making skills [8]. Language learning studies also revealed that VR technology increased motivation in class and out of class. [9]

3. Why Oculus

There is a wide variety of VR systems available in today's market. However, there are only two high immersive VR mainstream systems available at the moment. The first one is the HTC VIVE, which is produced by HTC and the second one is the Oculus Rift which was taken over by Facebook. Both systems are high performance devices which allow the user to have the best immersive experience. [10] The Oculus was chosen as it was sold locally, and its price tag was more affordable than the HTC.

4. Data collection

Data was collected during the fall semester 2018 and spring semester 2019 during three different occasions. The first data collection took place during the VR introduction sessions at the Cooperative and Interactive Language Learning Centre (ReCILLC) of the CUT Language Centre. The second data collection took place at the CUTing Edge an American Space innovation center during a VR research project regarding ESP. The final data collection was at the CUTing Edge during the LC' s VR workshop. I observed and recorded all the challenges and how each challenge was solved in a journal.

5. Examining the pitfalls

The pitfalls and issues that an educator could face during the entire process of the Virtual Reality usage and experience will be split into three categories: the practical, the technical and other critical issue.

5.1 The practical issues

Two of the most important practical issues an educator might face when setting up the VR equipment is the amount of space that is needed and the space's layout for efficient and safe usage of Oculus Rift. In order to operate the Oculus, a powerful computer is required and a monitor so that you, the educator can follow the process and progress of the VR user. Furthermore, The Oculus Rift headgear is connected to the computer with an HDMI and USB cable. Moreover, two motion sensors are also connected to the computer in order to track your position. Finally, during the VR experience the user holds two controllers to interact and control the movements in the virtual reality world. This requires adequate space for equipment so users can move the controllers and body freely and safely. Having inadequate space or layout will inhibit the VR experience.

Therefore, classrooms or lecture halls where Oculus Rift VR will be implemented should be measured and cleared of any obstacles that would inhibit movement.

5.2 The technical issues

The technical issues are usually the issues that discourage instructors from using Virtual Reality in the classroom as specific technical skills and knowledge is required to operate it effectively.

- a. The setup of the computer hardware and connecting the Head Mount Display (HMD) correctly and adjusting it in order to allow the user to experience the immersion effectively.
- b. VR systems and VR apps need updates and usually you do not know if updates are available or needed until you are about to use them. By neglecting to perform regular required system updates can cause significant lesson delays which lead to student disengagement from the lesson and causing frustration among the language instructors and students. The solution to this issue is to check for any updates available and to give yourself enough time in order to update the system if necessary, before the VR usage.
- c. Language instructors should also check if the VR App that they have chosen to use in class does not need any internet connection. Oculus Rift needs a stable internet connection and WIFI is not recommended.
- d. The various hardware and software that are coming together in order to create the Virtual Reality learning experience can be overwhelming for one person. You might have all the knowledge to set up and execute the Virtual Reality experience; however, it can be quite difficult to handle it alone as various questions from students and technical issues might arise during the experience. I and my research partner had one to two student assistants that were familiar with Oculus in order to address any technical issues. Thus, allowing the instructor to focus on teaching and facilitating students' learning needs and tasks.
- e. At the moment, there are not many educational applications available specifically for language learning. However, that does not mean that you cannot choose various other Apps and use their content for language learning. In order to use them effectively each App should be researched and tested to learn about the functionality of the particular application that you have chosen in order to be integrated successfully into your curriculum.

5.3 Other critical issues

One of the common side effects that VR user might develop is motion sickness. Some of the motion sickness can be contributed to the latency of the VR system [11]. However, during a VR for ESP research I and my research partner noticed that students very

turning their heads too quickly in various directions in order to take in all the information that the virtual environment enabled them to see and experience.

Some students even showed some fear when they put on the HMD as they feared the unknown. In order, to minimize these issues and create a comfortable learning environment we organized a pre- VR usage seminar where we introduced each individual part related to the VR system. Furthermore, we also showed the students how to move their head when navigating in the virtual world so that motion sickness can be minimized.

6. Conclusion

Effective high immersive VR implementation into a language learning classroom can be achieved if adequate training and assistance in combination with a blueprint of how to avoid or mitigate VR challenges is provided to the educator. By having all that I strongly believe that a language educator is able to provide students an unequivocally vivid learning experience with a high immersive VR system such as the Oculus Rift.

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Advancing Scholarship in Immersion Teaching and Learning through Blogging

Tadhg Joseph O' Ceallaigh¹
University of Limerick, Ireland¹

Abstract

In immersion education, teachers concurrently address content, language and literacy development through their students' second language. To do so effectively, requires significant teacher preparation and professional development [7]. Scholars have argued that in addition to native or near-native proficiency in instructional language(s), immersion teaching requires a particular knowledge base and pedagogical skill set [6]. Immersion teacher preparation, therefore, is essential for the continued success and growth in language immersion education. Despite our increased awareness of the importance of providing a balanced instructional focus on form and meaning across the immersion curriculum, immersion teachers' understandings of how to design and implement the most effective and efficient blend remains incomplete [8]. This paper reports on how blogs were used in intense and multifaceted ways to cultivate interconnected aspects of immersion teacher knowledge. Collaborative blogging was used to enable twenty-two Irish immersion teachers to understand the critical connection between language and content and to develop the mandatory linguistic competencies and associated pedagogical practices of immersion. Data were collected from a variety of sources e.g., an extensive online questionnaire, reflections, assignments and focus groups. Findings provide unique insights into the knowledge demands related to designing and implementing content lessons and reveal the challenges for Irish immersion teachers in providing balanced language and content instruction. Findings suggest that the collaborative nature of online interaction was central to developing teachers' linguistic resources in the immersion language and extending and transforming immersion teacher knowledge. Blogging enabled immersion teachers to engage in on-going, in-depth, systematic, and reflective examinations of their teaching practices and cultivated learner autonomy, motivation and success. Collaboration, motivation and challenge in turn promoted self-regulated language learning and advanced scholarship in immersion teaching and learning. This paper will conclude with a discussion on implications for designing meaningful and effective professional development experiences for language immersion teachers through collaborative blogging.

Keywords: immersion, blogging, linguistic competencies, scholarship, form, meaning

1. Introduction

Immersion education can be perceived as an enrichment bilingual education model that is most commonly associated with students who are learning through their second language (L2). While the strong development of students' receptive skills in listening and reading in the immersion language has been noted, their productive skills in speaking and writing have consistently shown linguistic inaccuracy [4], [9]. Scholars speculate that

immersion teachers' lack of attention to language in their content instruction is, in part, related to the shortcomings that have been observed in immersion student language acquisition [12]. There is now an increasing consciousness that in order for the immersion language to be learned effectively, a focus on the language forms of that language must also be integrated into the curriculum [6]. However, neither pre-service nor in-service teachers who teach in immersion programmes have been given adequate support or guidance to focus on linguistic features of the target language while teaching subject matter content at the same time, and there is an increasing call for appropriate, systematic and sustained professional development to achieve this goal [2], [5], [11].

Very little research has been conducted on teacher professional development focused on immersion instruction, and teachers' perceptions, experiences and voices remain scarcely studied in the literature [2], [8].

2. Immersion teacher education in the Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland, immersion teacher credentials are parallel to those of non-immersion teachers even though research constantly highlights how the specific needs of teachers in Irish-medium immersion (IMI) contexts are not being met by current provision [8], [9]. IMI education is normally provided to students for whom Irish is not their first language (L1) in schools outside the *Gaeltacht*¹ regions, known as *Gaelscoileanna*. 2018/2019 statistics reveal that a total of 323 Irish-medium schools cater for a student population of 60,052 students [13] i.e., approximately 6.4% of all school going children. The goal of IMI is academic achievement, bilingualism and biliteracy as well as expansion of the minority language and culture into the community and nationally.

Teaching content matter to immersion students in a language in which they have limited proficiency clearly requires teaching strategies unlike those used in mother tongue instruction. The crux of effective immersion teaching is content and language integration, yet the instructional integration of language and content continues to prove challenging for teachers. They struggle to conceptualise how language can be meaningfully integrated into content teaching and report gaps in their declarative knowledge about and competence in the immersion language [8]. These deficiencies in turn constrain IMI teachers in successfully integrating content and language in instruction. The extent to which immersion pedagogy entails the integration of language and content is seen to affect learning outcomes [7]. Research confirms that Irish-medium immersion teachers who teach content through their students' second language or to a group of linguistically diverse students require considerable professional development to do so effectively.

3. Integrating language and content in higher education through blogging

In an attempt to address the professional needs presented above among others, a new blended learning postgraduate programme, Master of Education in Irish-medium Education (*An M. Oid. san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge*), was officially launched in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland in 2013. An underlying aim of the programme is to demonstrate best practice in content and language integration and in so doing, enable students to transform and enrich their understandings and practices in relation to content and language integration in their immersion contexts. A blended learning design was

¹ *Gaeltacht* is an Irish-language word for any primarily Irish-speaking region

adopted to provide students with opportunities to experience learning in collaboration with peers and experts locally and globally and to narrow the chasm that sometimes exist between teacher education offerings and IMI teacher realities. In order to seize the potential of digital technologies and social media, for enhancing and innovating the student learning experience, a diverse range of technology enhanced learning tasks were designed and strategically used in intense and multifaceted ways to bring about desirable results. The creative use of collaborative blogs is one example of this pedagogical approach. A blog is a journal-like website made up of dated posts, presented in reverse chronological order, often with threaded comments under each post [10]. Blogs are multifaceted offering unique proportions of links, commentary, and personal thoughts and essays and are thus argued to be ideal spaces for the development and expression of expertise [1]. Blogs support reflective learning and the development of a sense of ownership or authority [3]. Blog-enhanced tasks stimulate learning and building community [10], [1].

4. Methodology

This study is a qualitative analysis of immersion teachers' perspectives on how a professional development initiative emphasizing language-focused content instruction impacted their practices. In pairs and using an instructional sequence [6], participants designed, implemented, recorded and evaluated a content-based unit that integrated a focus on an identified language feature immersion learner find challenging. The instructional sequence included four interrelated activities: a noticing activity designed to make language features more salient; an awareness activity that required learners to manipulate and reflect on the language features (analysis or inductive rule discovery); a guided practice activity that pushes students to use the features in a meaningful yet controlled context with feedback in order to develop automaticity and accuracy; an autonomous practice activity that encouraged students to use the features in more open-ended ways to develop fluency, motivation, and confidence. Participants were invited to record and analyse the teaching and learning sequence, critically analyse and reflect on their role in the process and present an improvement plan based on evidence.

Participants also shared insights, experiences, critical incidents and engaged in collaborative reflection and feedback at an end of module professional learning event.

Twenty-seven Irish-medium immersion teachers with varied language backgrounds, teaching and learning experiences, needs, dispositions and learning styles participated in the study. In order to gain insights into participants' experiences throughout the process, as well as the impact of collaborative blogging on outcomes, the research focused on the following research question: What is the impact of collaborative blogging on participant experiences and outcomes? In this case study, a number of data collection tools were used to capture the breadth and richness of participants' understandings, experiences and learning. Data were collected from an extensive online questionnaire, individual interviews, online discussion fora, and focus groups.

5. Results

Findings suggest that collaborative blogging geared at content and language integration cultivated participant capacity and community.

5.1 Cultivating capacity through collaborative blogging

Participants interacted together and shared their knowledge and skills in order to achieve specific but tailored content and language learning goals. A strong sense of enlightenment and reflection was at the heart of participants' experiences during the blogging initiative. Immersion teachers underwent a significant clarifying process regarding the four interrelated activities of the instructional sequence and in so doing expanded their pedagogical repertoires. They had the opportunity to incorporate new concepts regarding both content and language into their teaching as well as reflect upon their previously held beliefs and teaching methods. These experiences led to transformative learning. Through creatively engaging with new language in blog-enhanced content-driven interactions, participants became more language aware and language informed. They demonstrated explicit knowledge of specific lexicon, grammar and semantics (i.e., declarative knowledge) and reflective, responsive and self-directed language use (i.e., procedural knowledge) during asynchronous online discussions.

Collaborative blogging therefore supported immersion teachers to demonstrate understanding of content and language integration but also advance linguistic skills and competences in the language of instruction.

5.2 Cultivating community through collaborative blogging

All blogs were linked to other blogs by their authors, thus creating networked communities of writers and readers, known collectively as the 'blogosphere'. This class 'blogosphere' stimulated: intellectual exchange and shared experience outside the classroom (which focused intensely on content and language instruction); an integrated mindset and an openness to change; the interrogation and critique of their assumptions, understandings and experiences and the ability to see themselves and develop as content *and* language teachers; learning conversations based on immersion knowledge in practice and dilemma management in immersion; collaborative reflection and strategic planning informed from evidence fostering an effective learning culture, cultures of inquiry and a community of practice. Collaborative sharing enabled immersion teachers to engage in systematic monitoring and planning for language-focused content instruction and progress their learning and scholarship.

6. Discussion, implications and conclusion

This initiative placed particular emphasis on the acquisition of subject content knowledge while concurrently building second language proficiency. These findings provide unique insights in relation to the impact of collaborative blogging on participant experiences and outcomes. The complexities and challenges of identifying and integrating specific linguistic outcomes in diverse subject domains in linguistically diverse Irish-medium classrooms were unpacked through collaborative blogging and high-impact teaching and learning strategies which fostered content and language integration were examined. The pivotal role of immersion teacher language awareness in this process was also interrogated. Immersion teachers demonstrated the ability to apply knowledge of form-focused instructional strategies that enhance content and language learning throughout the curriculum. Capacity and community, facilitated through collaborative blogging, were fostered through critical reflection, deep knowledge investigation, development of expertise, learning conversations and collaborative dialogue and support. Blogging enabled participants to track their own learning trajectories and critically reflect on those experiences. Collaborative blogging therefore stimulated professional growth and enabled participants to advance their scholarship in immersion

teaching and learning. While there is a growing body of literature on effective immersion teaching, the research base on immersion teacher preparation and professional development is somewhat scant. It is important to continue to contribute to this research base and to build on these experiences to inform and develop a coherent vision or strategy for continuous professional development initiatives for immersion teachers.

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Assessing the Capacity of the Machine Interpreting Technologies: The Russian Experience

Nataliya Belenkova¹

*Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University),
Russian Federation¹*

Abstract

The role and efficacy of various machine interpreting technologies are widely discussed nowadays.

These technologies are viewed from both theoretical and practical angles. Technical characteristics, the potential and prospects of their development are considered in research papers. As far as the practical application is concerned, the study of machine interpreting technologies and their use is integrated in the curriculum of higher education institutions. Interpreters-to-be are trained to use machine interpreting technologies in their professional activity. The output of machine interpreters is compared to the output of human interpreters. The specific features of machine interpreters; the ways of their use in practice are the subject of professional analysis of interpreters-to-be. The current paper provides the findings of the research held by the Department of Foreign Languages of Law Institute, RUDN University (Peoples' Friendship University of Russia). The research had the following purposes: first, to examine the fidelity of the samples interpreted from a foreign language into Russian made with the help of machine interpreting technologies and second, to present some aspects of training interpreters-to-be in legal setting. The paper shows the results of the practical experiment.

Keywords: machine interpreting, modern interpreting technologies, experiment findings

1. Introduction

Translation and interpreting computer-aided technologies have become very popular nowadays. They are part of the curriculum at higher education institutions especially in the translators and interpreters' training courses. These technologies are studied both from a theoretical angle [1-10] and their practical application. The efficiency of the interpreting machine technologies in practice was the subject of the research hold by the Department of Foreign Languages, Law Institute, RUDN University.

2. The Course of Experiment

The application of machine interpreting tools was studied at the classes "ICT for language learning" where the students are trained to use various online dictionaries and resources both English-English and English-Russian, essential links for preparing research papers and bachelor and master thesis. The students were supposed to learn how to use machine interpreting tools in practice.

For this purpose, the circuit of two gadgets was used. One device imitated the speaker in a source language and another device was used as an on-line interpreter,

that generated speech in the target language.

The following online machine interpreting tools were tested: Google Interpreter, API Microsoft Interpreter as the most well-known software and Yandex online interpreter the product of Russian developers. These applications should realize interpreting samples of the accented speech from English into Russian.

The materials of the experiment were the videos from the YouTube with the recordings of people from Africa, Latin America, Asia, East European countries who spoke with a strong local accent. Then, fragments of about 1-minute length were extracted for machine interpreting and further analysis. However, at this level of the experiment neither of the systems recognized the speech in the source language and consequently did not generate a speech sample and interpreted it into the target language.

At the second level of the experiment each speech sample was divided into separate semantic segments consisting of from 2 to 7 words. Afterwards, each segment was tested by the interpreting systems mentioned above. The examples of the results of interpreting are given in Table 1.

Original Segment N	Microsoft Translator Speech API	Google Translator	Yandex Speech Interpretation system
2. Thank you so much as you've said my name is Foni Joyce	Thank you. So much I'll have saved my name is 20 days Спасибо. Так много я спас мое имя 20 дней	Thank you so much I can take my name is funny J's Большое спасибо что я могу принять что меня зовут Веселье Джи	Thank you so much Огромное спасибо
3. I was born in Sudan but originally from South Sudan	I was born in Sudan but originally from South Sudan Я родилась в Судане, но родом из Южного Судана	I was born in Sudan but originally from South Sudan Я родилась в Судане родом из Южного Судана	I was born in Sudan Я родилась в Судане

Table 1. Examples of machine interpreting output

The results of the interpreting were generalized and then assessed from the point of view of lexical and grammar validity. If a lexical unit was recognized in a wrong way or was not recognized at all, it was considered as a lexical mistake. As far as the grammar structure of the languages is concerned, apparently, that the English and Russian languages have different morphology and syntax that are not identical. In some cases, the language transformations in the grammar structures are not justified. If such changes were reasonable, and the fidelity of the grammar of the interpreted sample was approved, it was assumed that there were zero grammar mistakes. If the changes were not reasonable, the fidelity of the interpreting from the grammar point of view had not

been achieved, the level of grammar mistakes was assessed in two points.

Finally, all results were generalized and compared. The examples are given in Table 2.

Segment N	Microsoft Translator Speech API		Google Translator		Yandex Speech Interpretation system	
	Lexical	Grammar	Lexical	Grammar	Lexical	Grammar
2	4	2	3	1	5	1
3	1	1	1	1	4	1,5
7	4	2	6	1	7	2
Average	3,0	1,7	3,3	1,0	5,2	1,5

Table 2. Interpretation mistakes

3. Conclusion

The analysis of the experiment data showed that:

- Yandex Speech Interpretation system makes grammar mistakes in almost all semantic segments. The number of lexical mistakes made by this Interpretation system also exceeds the results of other systems. The least number of mistakes was made by Microsoft Translator Speech API, namely 3, 3 lexical mistakes and 0, 7 grammar mistakes for 40 semantic segments;
- Microsoft Translator Speech API had the highest level of fidelity and less mistakes made in speech recognition and generation. Whereas the Yandex Speech Interpretation system has the worst results.

However, these data cannot be considered as final. The issue examined during the experiment should be studied further. First, as the Yandex Speech Interpretation system was developed by the Russian researchers, the experiment where the source language is Russian, and the target language is English should be held. Presumably, the results of the experiment will differ. Second, another pair of languages e.g., English-German or German-Spanish etc. should be tested. The concentration on Chinese or Arabic languages might cause much interest.

Furthermore, these Interpretation systems should be tested not only on the samples of general language, but also on the texts of special domains i.e., interpreting of the language for specific purposes should be also studied.

Such experiments can be the center of the students' projects and increase their motivation in studying foreign languages at universities.

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Beyond Marginalized Fragmentation: Technology and Innovation in English-Language Learning in Palestinian HEIs

Aida Bakeer¹, Alan Bruce²

*Al Quds Open University, Palestinian Territory, Occupied¹
Universal Learning Systems, Ireland²*

Abstract

Advanced ICT and digital learning platforms are not just wondering of modern technology. They exist in contexts of real human relationships, mirror prevailing systems of power and control and extend the possibility of transformative educational practice if deployed well. This paper examines the critical need for innovation in teaching and learning English in the exceptionally complex conditions of Palestine. For socio-political reasons, English language learning in Palestine is fraught with challenges and difficulties. The ineffectiveness of traditional lectures, outdated curricula, psychological factors, and teacher centered classrooms are the norm. Academics struggle to communicate and interact with international peers. The exchange of knowledge, skills and culture with others poses huge problems for Palestinian institutions. ICT supported English language teaching can create a new dynamism regarding quality education by encouraging local HEIs to update methodologies, strategies and contents. The occupation in Palestine impacts the movement of people, divides the territory geographically and fragments social relations. This has led to inequitable access to quality education for all students in Palestine. This paper describes the TEFL-ePAL capacity building project funded by the EU. This builds on the results of Emancipatory Action Research on 21st century skills initiated in 2015. This confirmed that teachers felt insufficiently motivated, with inadequate ICT resources and developmental programs. The results accorded with the findings of the policy paper on Teacher Education Improvement Project funded by the World Bank, and developing inclusion for global education [UNESCO, 2005]. Palestinian educators are now striving to use advanced technologies and new trends that focus on principles of personalized-differentiated learning, student-centered instruction, and constructivism. There is the wider issue to adapt technology to facilitate student engagement and participation, and allow students to be more interactive inside the class and have wider opportunities that “can help English language learners further develop their academic language proficiency and confidence in using the language”. The wider objective of this project is to implement initiatives that develop learners’ linguistic capacity, skills, and English language excellence, to bridge educational and socio-political gaps, enhance modernization, internationalization and lifelong learning. To achieve this goal, European and Palestinian partners will share their knowledge, experience and expertise, and will support the process of developing and implementing new curricula to be taught in innovative approaches. Internationalizing the context and contents of Palestinian English-language learning is but one step in a process to circumvent the fragmentation and underdevelopment of Palestinian educational institutions as they try to engage with the wider world as equal players.

Keywords: Technology; TEFL; Innovation; Palestine

Overview

Advanced ICT and digital learning platforms are not just wondering of modern technology. They exist in contexts of real human relationships, mirror prevailing systems of power and control and extend the possibility of transformative educational practice if deployed well. This paper examines the critical need for innovation in teaching and learning English in the exceptionally complex conditions of Palestine. For socio-political reasons, English language learning in Palestine is fraught with challenges and difficulties. The ineffectiveness of traditional lectures, outdated curricula, psychological factors, and teacher centered classrooms are the norm. Academics struggle to communicate and interact with international peers. The exchange of knowledge, skills and culture with others poses huge problems for Palestinian institutions.

ICT supported English language teaching can create a new dynamism regarding quality education by encouraging local HEIs to update methodologies, strategies and contents. The occupation in Palestine impacts movement of people, divides the territory geographically and fragments social relations. This has led to inequitable access to quality education for all students in Palestine. This paper describes the TEFL-ePAL capacity building project funded by the EU. This builds on the results of Emancipatory Action Research on 21st century skills initiated in 2015. This confirmed that teachers felt insufficiently motivated, with inadequate ICT resources and developmental programs.

The results accorded with the findings of the policy paper on Teacher Education Improvement Project funded by the World Bank, and developing inclusion for global education [UNESCO, 2005]. Palestinian educators are now striving to use advanced technologies and new trends that focus on principles of personalized-differentiated learning, student-centered instruction, and constructivism.

The wider objective of this project is to implement initiatives that develop learners' linguistic capacity, skills, and English language excellence, to bridge educational and socio-political gaps, enhance modernization, internationalization and lifelong learning.

To achieve this goal, European and Palestinian partners will share their knowledge, experience and expertise, and will support the process of developing and implementing new curricula to be taught in innovative approaches.

This paper will describe the method and intent of the project as it relates to building capacity in advanced technologies, access and universal design for learning, open methodologies and quality in EFL teaching – all within the context of Palestinian socio-economic realities.

Technological revolution, curriculum stasis

New technologies are often heralded with excitement and claims for their transformative power. Educational technologies are a strong example. Examples of productive use of new technologies are present in many educational contexts: internet use connecting global students in international learning communities; online learning projects giving rural students access to courses; use of handheld computers for data collection. But after decades of widespread computer deployment in schools, their role in expanding opportunities for teachers and students remains largely elusive. Despite their potential, these technologies are still used largely to support old goals, methods, and assessments that operate in unchanged traditional contexts. It is clear that educational systems and curricula impede teaching and learning for all. The framework of *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL), articulates a new view of the nature of learner diversity and shows that designing digital tools and content to respond to diversity yields

a viable blueprint for change.

Although it seems that computers have been in the classroom for a long time now, as a technology they are still relatively young. Like most technologies in the early stages of application, classroom computers are mostly being used in traditional ways – new tools to do old things. Word processors, calculators, and learning games have been assimilated into conventional curriculums to support and augment traditional instructional activities (Reinking, *et al.*, 2000). Core components of the curriculum – goals, media and materials, teaching methods, and assessments – remain essentially as they always have been.

In Palestine, English is the primary source of communication with the international world and is known as the window to that world. English language instruction has many important components, but the most important one of many EFL classrooms and programs are the textbooks and instructional materials used by language instructors. As Hutchinson and Torres (1994) suggest: “The textbook is an almost universal element of English language teaching. Millions of copies are sold every year. No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has a textbook”. Decisions related to textbook selection affect teachers, students, and overall classroom dynamics in learning and teaching processes. Quality English language textbooks should contain contextualized content to respond to sensitive cultural and social variations and expectations; it should be authentic, natural, recent and relevant. This project investigates instructors’ and students’ perspectives on teaching and learning English in four Palestinian academic institutions. Textbook evaluation and innovative ICT deployment are key processes for future curriculum development plans for TEFL programs in Higher Education Institutions in Palestine.

Methodology

Emancipatory approaches to education are a means to mobilize disenfranchised individuals and groups towards democratic engagement. Central to this view is that teaching and learning should enable critical thinking and facilitate meaningful knowledge building to indigenous populations (Giroux, 2011; McLaren, 1995). By raising awareness of the root causes of social marginalization, economic inequalities and political exclusion, oppressed people are set free from fatalistic, irrational and deterministic mind sets and collectively empowered to improve their living conditions.

Technology demonstrates that world-class capabilities can be provided and developed in educational systems. If the technology is provided freely and openly, the potential for innovation increases significantly. The increase in innovation is due to the decrease in transaction costs. Lower transaction costs decrease the overall cost and risk of experimenting with various innovations, thereby increasing the number of actors capable and willing to innovate. (Wiley and Hilton, 2009). A number of organizations already combine their particular business knowledge with openly available world-class educational material. Open service providers are those individuals or organizations that provide access to world-class capabilities under open licenses and at lower transaction costs. Because open service providers lower the cost and risk of educational experiments, they are a critical piece of the infrastructure necessary for enabling rapid educational innovation. It is in this sense that Wiley (2009) argued that “content is infrastructure,” referring to the important role of open educational resources in enabling educational innovations.

Open service providers will be at the center of many future educational innovations due to their role in enabling rapid, inexpensive, low-risk experiments. For Higher

Education Institutes, this involves two issues. First, availability of world-class capabilities from open service providers and other organizations creates an increasingly fierce competitive climate for higher education, resulting in significant pressure to adopt a strategy of dynamic specialization.

Second, because open service providers play central roles in facilitating future innovation, conventional universities must decide what role they want in the evolution of higher education. If institutions want to exert a significant influence on the direction of higher education, they will likely need to become open service providers in order to maintain their central positions of influence.

The main justification of implementing technology in Palestine lies in the lack of both resources and expert native speakers. Students need to value their classes in a clearer, more effective and attractive manner in learning English. Utilizing modern technology in developing educational interventions means that new methods will reduce complexity in English learning. In addition, these tools will help teachers to transfer information easily and also pass suitable information to the students in easier ways.

Blended learning, a new approach in educational planning, is defined as an applying more than one method, strategy, technique or media in education. Today, due to the development of network infrastructures and improved student access, the Internet can be utilized along with traditional and conventional methods of training. Most students believe that using ICT during lessons has a positive effect on class atmosphere and various deep learning processes (European Commission, 2013). Al-Quds Open University, the first Palestinian academic institution which adopted open learning systems, has been delivering a variety of blended learning courses since the academic year 2007/08, to overcome constraints of space, time, and cost associated with traditional instruction using virtual classes, video streaming, and Moodle (Shawish and Shaath, 2010). Students can supplement school learning with high quality advanced courses offered at a distance, and access to supportive information. Blended learning environments are increasingly used in the world, especially in university degrees and are based on integrating web-based learning and face-to-face learning environments.

Educationists are looking at many approaches to improve students' performance in English and one of the approaches that stands out is blended learning (Siew-Enga, Muuk, 2014).

In this project, the aim is to increase creative thinking and hands-on innovative training of students in universities and make education processes simpler and more engaging. The key objective is to focus on English language skills and competences (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). These skills need to be represented in technology frameworks used in lectures and tutorials that develop models in Palestinian society to increase the value of education, equip students with lifelong learning and provide them with the 21st century skills needed to participate successfully in sustainable labor market outcomes. To achieve this main aim and other specific objectives, European and Palestinian partners are collaborating by sharing information and knowledge to develop Palestinian skills through training on content design, technology integration in education and teaching best practices. Consequently, the Palestinian partners will develop 4 courses and establish the infrastructure needed in blended learning (platforms, language labs, etc.). The new curricula will provide more freedom and participation, and will be taught in a blended environment (face to face and online).

The new curricula will be piloted and then adopted by the HEIs participating in this project.

Locating context and competence

An understanding of the profound issues confronting multilingualism begins with consideration of the educational, social, cultural and economic needs involved. Our approach settled on a research perspective located in the theory of linguistics (reflecting concerns voiced by Noam Chomsky over 40 years ago), pedagogical methods, rights, multiculturalism and self-confident competence for learners – and their teachers. This project recognises that interculturalism in itself is increasingly part of pedagogical perspectives. At a time of profound change and socio-economic shock/transformation, it is critical to refocus on the contribution multilingual education makes to processes of socio-economic development. For example, multilingual education forms the basis of a range of activities that stimulate collective cultural processes of meaning, innovative thinking and creative approaches to joint working.

Over recent decades a revolution has occurred in understanding concepts of knowledge and theories of learning. This revolution has enabled changed thinking about educational approaches in significant ways. Education is linked to – but very separate from – structures of schooling. Education systems and schooling structures have mirrored the societies and cultures of which they are a part, reflecting society in terms of values, structures and processes. Traditional learning systems in the Western world, for example, had classrooms structured in strictly didactic ways in terms of pedagogy.

Students received; teachers delivered. In addition, classrooms were located in fixed places – even the architecture reflected notions of hierarchy, order and control.

Learning today reflects a world that is, in a contradictory sense, both more connected and more fragmented. The impact of globalization and new technology has produced a planetary connection. Deep divisions of labor, chronic levels of underdevelopment and unequal access to wealth have, however, also produced great inequalities and discrepancies in social order and structure. This has a huge resonance in Palestinian contexts.

Among the key issues facing learners today is:

- Relevance of education for future employment prospects
- Availability of learning
- Quality and progression routes that are unbiased and transparent
- Enhanced access for all
- Removal of barriers around prejudice, discrimination and exclusion
- Addressing issues around cultural and ethnic difference and diversity
- Flexibility to meet individual learning needs in non-traditional contexts.

Change and learning are two sides of the same coin. Accelerating change confronts communities, professionals and organizations with new problems. In turn, these demand new skills. The market selection of change-oriented firms further accelerates innovation and change. There is nothing to indicate that the process will slow down in the near future. This is one reason why, over the next couple of decades, innovation policy will be crucial for economic performance. A major objective must be to contribute to the learning ability of firms, knowledge institutions and people. At the same time society must address the possible negative effects of the learning economy in terms of social and regional polarization or imbalance.

The 1993 Oslo Peace Accords created a period of limited Palestinian self-rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The first-ever Palestinian *Ministry of Education* was established in 1994 to prepare aspirant Palestinian citizens for institution building, state formation, and the global information economy. The Ministry serves approximately 75% of students in the OPT, with 15% by the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

and the remaining 10% through private enterprise, mostly ecumenical. This has entailed rebuilding an outdated educational system with severe shortages of qualified teachers and school buildings, and an outdated foreign curriculum. For financial assistance, the resource-deficient Palestinian National Authority (PNA) turned mainly to international sponsors. The World Development Indicators identified Palestinians as among the highest per capita recipients of assistance in the world. PNA reliance on international donors and expertise for wide-scale educational reform exacted a heavy price on Palestinian educational autonomy. The results of this dependence can be seen at geopolitical and policy formation levels.

Considerable research exists on the challenges and issues surrounding second language acquisition. Some of these relate to pedagogical principles involved in developing awareness, competence and fluency. Such research generally looks at teaching methods and contrasts them with less formal second language acquisition modalities. The wider objective of this project is to implement initiatives that develop learners' linguistic capacity, skills, and English language excellence, to bridge educational and socio-political gaps, enhance modernization, internationalization and lifelong learning. To achieve this goal, European and Palestinian partners will share their knowledge, experience and expertise, and will support the process of developing and implementing new curricula to be taught in innovative approaches. Internationalizing the context and contents of Palestinian English-language learning in the difficult circumstances of Occupation is but one step in a process to circumvent the fragmentation and underdevelopment of Palestinian educational institutions as they try to engage with the wider world as equal players.

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Classification of Games to Be Used in Virtual Learning Environments: Some Reflections Based on the EU-Funded GUINEVERE Project

Michael Thomas¹, Christel Schneider², Tuncer Can³
University of Central Lancashire, UK^{1,2}
Istanbul University – Cerrahpaşa, Turkey³

Abstract

In the context of the EU-funded GUINEVERE Project (Games Used IN Engaging Virtual Environments for Real-time language Education, 2017-2019), research has been undertaken to define different categories of games used in virtual language teaching environments. This paper aims to analyse and categorise selected games for language learning, created and provided for 2D and 3D virtual learning environments and identify their suitability for use in 3D immersive virtual language learning. The field-testing events within GUINEVERE offered sound evidence of the effectiveness of selected games according to levels, categories, needs, and their adaptability to a variety of language learning contexts, as well as different virtual learning platforms such as Second Life, Open Sim, and Minecraft. The models of game-like activities described in this paper show many examples of good practice that indicate how important it is to encourage learners to become actively involved in the learning process [1], [2].

Keywords: Categorising games, Language Learning, Virtual Worlds, Minecraft, Second Life, Open Sim

1. Introduction

When designing games for language learning in virtual environments, it is useful to find inspirations from games or game-like activities that have been successfully used in the physical classroom. Such games can range from simple board games, puzzles, scavenger or treasure hunts, and role plays to task-based, experiential or problem-based learning experiences. The games and game-like activities discussed here are not the stand-alone types of games. Most of what is generally addressed as games in the language classroom are in fact learning activities rather than real games in the strict sense as they don't have the structured competitive rules evident in gameplay [3]. By identifying our classification of games for virtual language learning, we aim to offer a useful resource for classroom teachers to help them to select games according to levels, categories, needs, and their adaptability to a variety of language learning contexts. The exemplary games used in our framework were characterised according to their applicability to Second Life (SL), OpenSim (OS) or Minecraft (MC).

2. Classification of Games and Game-like Activities

The educational value of games or game-like activities in the language classroom is that students learn a language through interaction by using the language in a meaningful

way provided that the learners are able to communicate at this level. It is therefore important to pitch the level of difficulty depending on the complexity and the level of a game as it can be boring when it is either too complex or too easy [4]. In his taxonomy of player types, Bartle [5] identified that each player is defined by the gaming elements they enjoy most. Based on a case study carried out during the EU-funded CAMELOT project [7] we discovered that teachers often can't afford the extra time necessary to design games for their own classes [8]. Therefore, in GUINEVERE we aimed to save time by classifying games in an easy to use taxonomy. This process aimed to encourage teachers to create and use games as teaching tools in different contexts [4].

From the great variety of approaches available we have adapted Whitton's [3] categorisation of games in the context of the GUINEVERE Project, which has eight aspects. Two teacher training courses were designed by the GUINEVERE project and these provided instructions and additional material on how to use games in 3D immersive virtual environments for different languages and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) as well as how to adapt the games according to learners' specific needs.

One way of classifying games is to specify linguistic contexts to support teachers as regards to their usability and adaptability in their teaching curricula. This includes investigating the selected games in terms of their goals, teaching objectives, the skills they require, and elements of language to be practiced, as defined in the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) at levels A1-C2 (from basic to proficient user): listening/understanding; spoken interaction/speaking with other people; spoken production/making announcements and speeches; and reading and writing (from notetaking to report writing) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Template for categorizing games

Name of the game				
The way to learn with/through the game according to Whitton's [2] classification			Specific goals of the game	
Linguistic/Language Skills i.e., reading, and understanding listening, speaking, writing. Vocabulary practice, grammar practice, i.e., if-clauses...	Skills in a virtual environment i.e., moving around, voice-chat, text chat, teleport, building, mining...	Platform SL, OS, MC	Level A1/A2/B1/B2/C1/C2 according to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference)	Time required for the game/activity

2.1 Board Games

When considering the design of games in 3D virtual worlds, there are numerous classical games we can take inspiration from in the physical world. They all follow similar patterns including rules, goals, progression, and rewards. There are several templates to be found on the internet that can be adjusted to learners' needs and the language skills required for storytelling and more. One of the most enjoyable elements in 3D immersive virtual environments is that learners can act as counters and move their avatars (or counters) on the board and give them a personal touch as Figure 1 shows.



Fig. 1: Example of a board game with avatars as counters

Note: EVO ViLLAGE 2016 (Photo: C. Schneider)

The more players are involved in a game, the longer it will take and the more boring it might get for other players standing around until it is his/her turn [4]. As an example, the Giving Advice Game is a simple game to help learners to talk to each other (see Table 2). Players take turns to throw a dice and move forward on the board according to the number they score. They read the 'problem' on the section they have moved to, while other players give advice (see Figure 2).



Fig. 2: The Advice Game

Note: Carol, An, Letty, and Hazel on EduNation in Second Life (C.Schneider)

Table 2. Sample for categorizing the Giving Advice Game

The Giving Advice Game				
Learning with entertainment games/Education		Skill-based/Problem-solving/Interactive		
Linguistic/Language Skills	Skills in a virtual environment	Platform	Level	Time
Giving advice: Language: <i>You should/you shouldn't,</i> <i>You ought to/ you'd better,</i> <i>Why don't you/ what you can do is...</i>	clicking objects, moving around	SL, OS	B1/B2/C1	15-20 minutes
Skills practiced: reading, spoken interaction, listening, and understanding				

2.2 Popular Games and Activities

During the field-testing period of the project, we discovered that mazes are very popular in virtual learning environments and provide significant opportunities to trigger language use or to recycle or practice specific vocabulary at different language levels [9]. Puzzles can be effective to fill a gap in between activities such as jigsaw reading puzzles, which can simply be created as competitive tasks in teams or pairs. In such an activity, each team is given different parts of a story that they have to reassemble to get the complete story in the right order (see Figure 3).



Fig. 3: Building a treehouse

3. Role-Plays and Simulations

Mawer and Stanley [10] consider roleplaying and action games as the most popular and highly motivating games among students. Falconer [11] understands role-plays as situations in which learners take on the role profiles of specific characters or representatives of organizations in an artificial setting. In role-play much of the learning occurs because the learning design requires learners to explore and articulate viewpoints that may not be their own [12]. In contrast to role-plays, the key characteristic of a simulation is that people don't take part in the play in the form of interaction [13].

4. Pedagogical Agents in Action

Based on the assumption that spaces created in 3D immersive worlds are often

deserted after a project, the idea is to make use of such learning spaces created in SL, OS or MC and offer them for autonomous language learning by employing non-player pedagogical agents (NPCs). NPCs or chatbots, provide a natural language interface to their users and have a positive effect on learning outcomes [14]. A good example is the design of the *III Magnifico Bar* at *Virtual Prato* in Second Life, created by Kaylee West at Monash University, Prato, Italy (see Figure 3).



Fig. 3: *III Magnifico Bar* at *Virtual Prato* in *Second Life*

At the entrance of the bar you find information about a Hud (Head-up-display) that avatars needs to wear in order to display their wallet which can be used to purchase various items around the island; some by directly clicking on the item, others by engaging in conversation with the NPCs in Italian at various locations of *Virtual Prato*.

5. Findings and Discussion

The idea to provide language learners with a choice of holodeck scenarios, equipped with a variety of pedagogical agents is a significant step into the future and would help language facilitators to provide extra learning scenarios outside the regular classroom.

It will give learners the opportunity to experience several learning scenarios to practise their language skills. Such settings could also be facilitated in addition to physical classes. By using ideas from face-to-face situations and transferring them to 3D immersive virtual language learning, the GUINEVERE project demonstrated a wide array of games, mazes, treasure hunts, quiz games, role-playing games, board games, and simulations. We also showed how such games could be applied to the 3D virtual language classroom.

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- [6] Boutique Renoir-Changing Outfits: https://youtu.be/5_S0sDcPOfc
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- [8] Making the Opinions Game in OpenSim: <https://youtu.be/pf44YEdJchY>
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- [10] Storytelling game:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=UuzTmb5Knt0&t=14s>

EFL in the I-City and ii-Learning Community Lab: A Class in a Cyber-Metropolitan City to Address Education Inequality Stemming from Economy and Geography

Akiyoshi Suzuki¹, Shin Kurata², Norio Nakamura³, Kōichi Matsumoto⁴
Nagasaki University, Japan^{1,2,3,4}

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to present an idea to address education inequality stemming from economy and geography, especially in English education. Schools on small islands in Japan serve very small numbers of students. While they have advantages in English education because of the small teacher-to-student ratio, they have disadvantages given the limited interaction they have with people of various cultures and with various Englishes to improve academic skills in English and to cultivate the ability to understand and respect others. This is true of other countries as well. Numerous people in large cities come from rural areas. Therefore, a joint class in a cyber-metropolitan city (i-City) created by connecting schools on small islands in several countries could be beneficial, especially by utilizing Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Such a class could help address the problem of educational inequality. We set up an English class as a project with the use of Zoom and large screen displays. Analysis of the answers in the questionnaire conducted after classes showed that students felt stimulated and empowered by each other which led to an increase in their levels of motivation to learn more English and also to learn more about each other's culture and the people themselves. For the sustainability of the English class, we set up the online portal community for teacher's collaboration between islands and islands where teachers in the world can call for a partner of English class. This community fulfils the i-City project that addresses inequality in EFL stemming from economy and geography.

Keywords: Inequality of Education, Compulsory Education, Islands, Secluded Areas, ICT

1. The issues and a potential solution

There are many schools delivering compulsory education systems on islands and in remote areas of the world. Some regions themselves comprise many large and small islands, which is true of Japan as well. Characteristically, the number of students in elementary and junior high schools on the islands in Japan has always been small. In recent years, this number has been decreasing rapidly due to the declining birth-rate across the nation. As a result, many schools have been closed or merged, or often, students are educated in combined classes. This will also happen in other regions with a low birth-rate in the future.

Such an educational environment is advantageous in some respects and disadvantageous in others for students in English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL)

education [1]. Teachers can provide individual attention to students because of the low teacher-student ratio. Besides, as Matsumoto *et al.*, found, a combined class, which consists of students of different ages, fosters effective development of students' academic abilities, as well as their social/emotional development, given the opportunities for collaborative learning [2]. However, students in such schools are disadvantaged, unlike their counterparts in a large city, because their geographical location limits their opportunities to exchange opinions, to practice listening to various English pronunciations and expressions, to learn about multicultural phenomena, and to meet people from other parts of Japan and from other countries. Nowadays, the English language is increasingly the center of attention because of a global society, hence, some students move to a big city to secure a better EFL education, and of course, relocation costs a lot. In addition, an island or a secluded area suffers from depopulation and economic recession [3]. These advantages and disadvantages are true of schools on small islands and in secluded areas in other countries, wherever students learn English as a foreign language.

Is there a solution to the problems stemming from geographical isolation, so that schools on islands and in isolated areas of the world can provide at least as effective an English education as schools in large cities?

A potential solution is to provide an English class in a cyber-metropolitan city, or i-City, for students on small islands, as well as for students from various ethnic backgrounds in remote areas in other countries, who can connect with each other through Information and Communications Technology (ICT). People who live in large cities have often come from different rural communities. If students from small islands get together and communicate with each other in a given area, they can learn English in an educational environment similar to that found in large cities.

Such an educational environment can be created by ICT, especially through a telecommunication/teleconference system, such as Zoom, Flickr, VoiceThread, and a virtual learning environment, such as CANVAS. They can create a school in a virtual cyber-metropolitan city, or i-City, where schools connect with each other and their students can experience and learn more about diverse cultures, thoughts, expressions, and different pronunciations of English. They can engage in an exchange of opinions, just like their peers in large cities. The i-City can be a global society as well, when schools on small islands or in secluded areas of the world are connected by ICT.

2. Joint classes in a cyber-metropolitan school

To test the i-City as a concept, we set up an English class as a project; eleven- or twelve-year-old students from two elementary schools on two islands in Japan – in Hokkaido and the Goto Islands in Nagasaki, and Sado Island in Niigata – in Japan in 2016 and 2017, and on the Goto Islands in Nagasaki and Oahu in Hawaii in 2018, joined the class with the use of Zoom and large-screen displays.

The preparation for all the classes was basically the same. We had discussed the preparation in other papers, and now we review points from the past papers, and add new information about the class between the Goto Islands and Oahu.

In preparation for the class, we discussed the theme, the main task, the activities, the content, the class schedule, and so on, with the classroom teachers of both schools [4].

Generally speaking, an elementary school teacher in Japan has to use textbooks in class, which are approved by the Ministry of Education in Japan. The textbook for English is *Hi, friends!* The teachers chose a lesson from this book, Lesson 7, which was suitable for the joint English class, and its theme was “to express an idea plainly and clearly in

English.” Consequently, the activities for the class were as follows: the students of each school split into several groups and one group set a quiz for the students of the other school on their own characteristic, cultural or historical matters or events; the students in one of the groups from the other school answered the quiz; then the students who set the quiz told the other students the correct answers. They then made a short presentation as an introduction to their culture in a way which could be easily understood.

The students of both schools did the quiz-answer-presentation activities so that each group of students had a turn. Before the day of the class, the students had prepared for their presentations, choosing topics from the exhaustive list of themes that are used in an English class to promote cross-cultural understanding, and which are in the book *Languages and Children: Making the Match* (1994) by H. Curtain & C. A. Pesola. Also, we suggested that, in the presentation, the students of the two elementary schools should share a socio-cultural and geographic fact, for instance, that they live on small islands surrounded by the sea, because as Zhang points out, it is critical for mutual understanding in a global society that there is recognition of affinity as well as difference [5].

In addition to them, teachers in schools on the Goto Islands and Oahu prepared for the class, taking special care with the following matters: before the class, students practice communication in English slowly, loudly, and clearly; students in Hawaii practice to use comparatively easy words; the themes are limited to food, festivals, geography, and sightseeing so that students can easily ask questions and answer them; and teachers support their students when they cannot catch what students in the other school say and when they do not know how to answer questions. Thanks to these preparations and support, students in both schools can communicate with each other better and more smoothly than expected.

3. Result and discussion

After the classes, we gave out a questionnaire using free-answer questions about the class to all the students and the teachers of the schools who had taken part. We compiled a corpus of their answers and focused on significant words and phrases. The results of the analysis (the total number of students in six schools is 87) are as follows: “fun” (83)/“I want to join this class again” (75); “I want to study English hard/how to make a presentation” (69); “I discover what self-worth I could build in being part of humanity and in my academic ability in English by making myself understood in English and developing a mutual understanding” (68); “I was excited to talk with students of different cultural backgrounds for the first time in my life” (68); and so on. In the Goto-Oahu class, almost 70% of the Oahu students wrote that they should study how to make an effective presentation after admiring presentations by the students in Goto. It means that this kind of class is significant not just in English teaching but in the interactive stimulation of academic ability.

It should also be noted that, as a consequence of the project, the English class in the i-City had a big impact on the teachers as well. All of them wrote in the questionnaire that the English teaching of the teachers in the other schools was very informative and helpful for their own teaching. In this sense, the teachers, who always work with the same teachers on their island, were also stimulated and empowered by each other.

Thus, it can be concluded that the outcomes of the project show the true potential that the English class in the i-City embodies.

4. Learning community lab for sustainability of i-City

To build the sustainable i-City, we must consider several things, such as differences of time zone, gap in academic ability of English, a suitable class period, and a platform on the Web for schools to freely and autonomously carry out their class. If the academic abilities in English of students all over the world were similar, they could communicate freely and empower each other in the cyberspace class among several classes, but it is not realistic, especially for the elementary or junior high school student. Presentations in English and quiz-and-answer sessions are down-to-earth ways to deliver educational outcomes. It is not feasible, however, to connect many schools, just two schools, because of the time-limitation of the class. Also, teachers have to look for a partner school.

As a solution to these issues, we set up the online portal community for teacher collaboration between islands (ii-Learning Community Lab), with the use of an application on the web such as CANVAS. CANVAS presents a community where teachers all over the world can search for a partner school, according to time-zone difference, the students' academic ability in English, and other criteria. Teachers can access the community lab and can connect with each other anytime, design lesson plans, identify useful tools for the class. This community fulfils the i-City project that addresses education inequality stemming from economy and geography, especially in EFL education.

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EFL Teachers' Perception of Internet Assisted Language Teaching

Lalla Meriem Ouahidi¹
Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Morocco¹

Abstract

To meet the requirements of the world rapid high-tech growth, it has become imperative to use technology in EFL classrooms to enhance language learning and to equip students with the necessary skills and competences. Although many researchers [1, 2, 3] recommended the use of computer-assisted language learning, little attention has been paid to how teachers perceive internet assisted language teaching (IALT) in EFL classrooms. In fact, without technologically qualified teachers able to integrate IALT in the classroom, the outcome will not improve students' learning skills. The current research aims to investigate Moroccan teachers' perception of and self-efficacy on IALT. A quantitative analysis was conducted, and a questionnaire was designed for the English department teachers at different Moroccan universities. The major finding indicates that most EFL teachers view IALT positively and believe in its role to promote English language learning; however, about one-third of the respondents are unsure about their ability to use it adequately in the classroom.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), internet Assisted language Teaching (IALT), Teachers' English perception, self-efficacy

1. Introduction

The interest in using the internet in the classroom has been growing in recent years because it offers language teachers and students a plethora of authentic resources (audio, video, and texts) that can be exploited inside and outside the classroom.

Teachers can use these resources to implement pedagogical approaches, techniques, and learning strategies that are likely to create a motivating learning and teaching environment [4]. It also allows them to share their teaching material, ideas, and experiences with other teachers all over the world. The internet enhances student-centered learning since it gives students the opportunity to take their learning in charge and boosts their motivation [5].

Therefore, teachers' implementation of internet assisted language teaching (IALT) depends significantly on their views about its utility, for they will probably translate these views and attitudes into teaching practices. So far only a few researchers have investigated the teachers' perceptions, perspectives, and self-efficacy on IALT [6, 7, 8, 9]; the current study will guide further research in this area in the Moroccan Higher education context. The objective of the present paper is therefore two-fold, first, to assess teachers' perception of internet assisted language teaching and to explore their self-efficacy in using it effectively in their classrooms. This research, therefore, is an attempt to address the following research questions:

- 1- What are the teacher's perceptions and attitudes towards the integration of IALT

in EFL classrooms?

2- What are the teachers' self-efficacy beliefs towards the implementation of IALT?

2. Review of the Lit

It is a general belief among many researchers [10, 11, 12] that teachers with positive teaching experience in using computers are more willing to implement technology in the classroom environment. This idea is in line with the argument which asserts that teachers' perceptions of the benefits of IALT and their confidence play a critical role in their decision about its use in the classroom [13]. Besides, teachers' views regarding the use of technology can be a facilitating or a debilitating factor, encouraging them to gain more confidence and motivation or creating a hindrance to its use [14].

Nevertheless, a positive attitude towards Web technology is not enough to guarantee teachers the ability to integrate it successfully in the classroom [15]. Based on empirical data analysis, it seems that teachers' use of technology is limited, usually avoided or delayed due to teachers' lack of sufficient knowledge and experience, computer anxiety, insufficient time, and lack of confidence [16]. More importantly, "teachers who have basic computer competencies are more confident in using computers and are more likely to integrate computers into their teaching than those who have not." [17] p. 19, and by implication, the integration of IALT in the classroom context.

3. Methodology

This study was carried in the Moroccan EFL context and with teachers of English at different Moroccan English departments. It aims at providing an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions about IALT.

3.1 Participants

The sample population under study consists of 42 higher education teachers. All the teachers are Arabic or Tamazight native speakers who teach English as a foreign language in different Moroccan universities. The data collection took place at the end of the spring session of 2019. The participants were contacted using convenience sampling and were asked to fill a Google-based questionnaire. The table below presents the background information of the respondents:

Table 1. Demographic profile of the participants

Number of respondents	Gender	Teaching Experience
42	Males: 73.8% Females: 26.2%	Less than 10: 26.2% 10-20: 28.6% More than 20: 45.2%

It is worth mentioning that the variables in the table above are beyond the scope of the current study.

3.2 Instrument

Because the current study is descriptive and exploratory in nature, the quantitative approach has been used to carry out this research. For this purpose, the questionnaire was developed by Shin 2007 [18], but it was adjusted to meet the purpose of the study and was later administered to the participants online. It is composed of 15 items,

consisting of three sections: In addition to the demographic background information of the participants, the questionnaire included two more sections to elicit the teachers' perceptions and beliefs of IALT (items 1-10) and their self-efficacy in integrating it in their classrooms (items 11-15).

Cronbach alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire, and it was 0.78. The questionnaire was on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). The items receiving mean scores higher than two would represent negative attitudes and perceptions. The data obtained from the questionnaire were subject to excel analysis where all the descriptive statistics were scored. The survey data were analysed using percentages, means, and standard deviations (SD).

4. Results and discussion

It is generally assumed that teachers' perceptions play a major role in how they teach, write lesson plans, organize the teaching material and tasks, and make pedagogical decisions. The data below display the teachers' perceptions about the use of the internet to teach a foreign language.

Table 2. Percentages of teachers' perception towards the integration of IALT

	SA	A	D	SDE	M	SD
1 – The internet can provide learners with a rich learning Environment	57.1%	35.7%	7.1%	0%	1.47	0.63
2 – Internet tools can be used for different teaching purposes	66.7%	33.3%	0%	0%	1.33	0.47
3 – Students can be motivated by the use of the internet in the classroom.	52.4%	38.1%	---	----	1.59	0.73
4 – Students can improve their English skills through the use of the internet.	52.4%	42.9%	4.6%	0%	1.52	0.59
5 – Students will be more attentive in IALT classes.	38.1%	47.6%	14.3%	0%	1.76	0.69
6 – IALT can enhance students' learning autonomy and self-directed learning	33.3%	59.5%	7.1%	0%	1.71	0.59
7 – IALT can promote teachers' satisfaction and confidence.	26.2%	57.1%	16.7%	0%	1.90	0.65
8 – IALT can make teachers knowledge facilitators	31%	59.5%	9.5%	0%	1.78	0.60
9 – I Would like to use the internet in my classroom	38.1%	45.2%	14.3%	2.3%	1.80	0.77

Note: SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; DA=Disagree; SDE= Strongly Disagree; M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation

Taking into consideration table 2, more than 92% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the internet could create a rich learning environment since it can be used for

different teaching purposes as all the teachers admitted (66.7%+33.3%). The vast majority of teachers confirm that the use of the internet can improve learners' skills (52.4%+42.9%), make them more motivated (52.4+38.1) attentive (38.1%+47.6%), and autonomous (33.3+59.5%). It seems that the use of the internet is also beneficial for teachers since it can boost their confidence as about 83% (26.2%+57.1%) of the participants corroborated. More than 90% of the respondents affirmed that the implementation of the internet in the classroom could make teachers knowledge facilitators instead of information providers. The last item elicits what seems already obvious from the data that the majority of teachers would like to utilize the internet to teach EFL classes.

However, unexpectedly, 14.3+2.3% of the participants still doubt the usefulness of this tool to teach English. This number is insignificant, yet it indicates that there are still some teachers who are reluctant to use the internet to teach in an EFL context. This reluctance may be due to their lack of confidence, institutional barriers, and/or lack of self-efficacy.

Results in table 2 and 3 indicated that the mean scores are lower than 2, which reflects the teachers' positive perception towards the implementation of the internet in their teaching strategies. This means that the absolute majority of teachers are willing to integrate the internet in their classes. The lowest mean score (1.33) was ascribed to item 2 related to the use of the internet for different teaching purposes. This score was obtained because all the participants opted for "agree" or "strongly agree". The highest mean score (1.90) was attributed to the association between IALT and Teachers' confidence. In fact, about 17% of teachers believe that the application of the internet does not boost their confidence.

Table 3. Teachers' perception of IALT

	Number	M	SD
Teachers' perception	42	1.76	0.74

The statistics of this study provided a response regarding the first research question "What are the teacher's perceptions and attitudes towards the integration of IALT in EFL classrooms?"

The general mean score (1.76) of this variable indicates the positive attitude of the sample population towards the implementation of the internet in teaching English. This means that the participants believe in the unparalleled opportunities the internet offers for teachers and students to explore and use inside and outside the classroom. They also consider IALT to be an unavoidable approach in the teaching-learning process.

According to the survey, the respondents perceive IALT as interesting and motivational; they believe that IALT can create a student-centered environment that promotes attention, autonomy, and communication and eventually leads to improving students' level and teachers' confidence. Our results are consistent with previous research [1, 16, 6]. In fact, the traditional approach on its own is no longer enough to motivate students and make them autonomous learners.

However, a small number of teachers are not confident enough to use IALT inside the classroom. This may reveal that there is a gap between their beliefs and their teaching practices. This is in agreement with the claim that a positive attitude towards the application of IALT does not necessarily guarantee its integration in the classroom.

Such reluctant teachers should be continuously exposed to a rich Internet learning environment in order to observe the benefits of IALT in action [15].

Table 4. percentages of teachers' self-efficacy on IALT

	SA	A	D	SDE	M	SD
11 – I am competent to use internet-based material in the classroom	28.6%	42.9%	28.6%	0%	2	0.76
12 – I know how to integrate Internet resources into curricula	23.8%	61.9%	14.3%	0%	1.90	0.61
13 – I need the training to improve my internet literacy skills	28.6%	40.5%	21.4%	9.5%	2.11	0.94
14 – I successfully use IALA with my students	9.5%	52.4%	38.1%	0%	2.28	0.36
15 – It's easy for me to find EFL materials	31%	54.8%	9.5%	0%	1.88	0.77

Although more than two thirds (28.6%+42.9%) of the participants believe that they are competent in using the internet and they (85%=23.8%+61.9%) can integrate its resources in the curricula, about 70% of the sample population confirmed their need of training to improve their internet teaching skills. It is also worth mentioning that about 40% of teachers felt that they are ill-prepared to integrate the internet; whereas, most teachers (31%+54%) thought that they could use it successfully inside the classroom with their students and outside it to find and evaluate the adequate internet resources.

Table 5 shows that items 11, 13, and 14 received the highest mean scores that exceed 2. These findings reveal that the Moroccan EFL teachers included in the study tend to perceive themselves as less efficacious as required. The lowest mean score can be attributed to item 15, which is related to the selection of authentic materials and resources that can be used in the teaching process.

The statistics in tables 4 and 5 indicate that most teachers of the sample population are eager to know more about the use of IALT in their EFL classes in order to enhance their internet literacy skills. As the general mean score (2.03) in the table below displays, teachers have a moderately low sense of self-efficacy. In fact, they are not efficacious enough regarding their sense of mastery of internet-related skills that teachers usually need to find, evaluate and integrate useful resources in EFL classes.

Table 5. Teachers' self-efficacy on IALT

	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Teachers self-efficacy	42	2.03	0.63

As an answer to the second research question “What are teachers’ perceptions of their self-efficacy in the implementation of IALT?” it seems that this group of teachers possess positive perceptions towards the internet, yet they face some limitations they would like to overcome via training. “language teachers need to be aware of technology integration and the possibilities it holds for ESL classes” [6] p. 70. This highlights the teachers’ need to broaden their horizons of understanding and using IALT since about 39% of the participants cannot use it successfully with their students. This shows the modest integration of the internet in the classroom teaching. This highlights the necessity of providing teachers with regular training to sharpen their skills and enable them to choose the most efficient materials that would fit the curricula, the level of students and the cultural context.

5. Implications and limitations

On the basis of the study findings, it is highly recommended that teachers should actively and autonomously engage in their professional improvement by looking for productive ways to learn and boost their internet literacy skills and abilities from the internet itself. Additionally, teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are vital constructs to take into account in trying to understand the technical problems some teachers face. Accordingly, it is essential and indispensable that universities and policymakers attend to the teachers' needs and provide them with regular training so that they can be equipped with the necessary competencies to integrate IALT successfully in their classrooms.

It is plausible to admit that our research may have two main limitations: first, the sample of the study is too small to make any generalizations about the teachers' perceptions and self-efficacy about the use of the internet in teaching. Given that the data of the analysis was only quantitative, it is not inconceivable that dissimilar findings would have arisen if the focus had been on qualitative analysis as well.

6. Conclusion

As this paper has stressed, higher education teachers perceive IALT in a positive way and believe in its advantages, yet its application in the classroom is still a challenging issue that teachers and policymakers should address. It is high time to get along the facilitating and debilitating features of the internet to enhance the internet enhanced environment. The current study, therefore, endorses a call for change by suggesting the necessity for teachers to adapt and adopt the Internet material and resources to use them "within the classroom, at the institutional level, and at the broader level of inter-institutional collaboration" [6] p. 71.

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From CALL to MALL in the Context of the Internet of Things

Cristina Turcu¹, Cornel Turcu²
Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania^{1,2}

Abstract

Over the years, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has provided teachers with various tools to be used in the educational process, thus leading to major changes in the learning and teaching methods. Lately, the emergence of the Internet of Things (IoT) technologies has brought new insights into the use of various devices, such as computers, mobile devices, wearable sensors, etc. in educational settings. Taking into account that mobile devices (i.e., smartphones, tablets, laptops) have become near-ubiquitous, the education stakeholders have noticed the potential of these mobile devices for improving teaching and learning. Nowadays, there are various free, readily available tools for using mobile devices in the education field, some of them being geared towards language learning. In order to better understand the way language learning classes could benefit from the use of mobile technology, we focus on providing an overview of the mobile technology, its use and advantages for the language learning environments. However, at the same time, the continuous development of technology poses complex challenges for teachers, some of them being revealed in this presentation. We believe that the findings highlighted in this presentation can have important implications both for foreign language teachers as well as for teacher trainers, for the improvement of the teaching process.

Keywords: Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Internet of Things (IoT), mobile technology/applications

1. Introduction

Although in time, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has provided teachers with various tools to be applied in the educational process, at present, the education activities do not fully benefit from new innovative technologies. For example, in [1] authors argue that “there is a need to re-conceptualize learning for the mobile age, to recognize the essential role of mobility and communication in the process of learning”.

Mobile devices, usual possessions of almost every student nowadays, can have a positive impact on the efficiency of education methods. However, the use of mobile devices has both pros and cons. Due to the fact that today’s university students use mobile devices anywhere, even in the classroom, despite the rules, they must learn to use them responsibly in the educational process.

Lately, the emergence of Internet of Things (IoT) technologies has brought new insights into the use of various devices, such as mobile devices, wearable sensors, etc. in educational settings, with high potential for improving teaching and learning.

According to various researchers, advances in emerging technology could reshape education in unprecedented ways and teachers need to be prepared to face new challenges.

1.2 Paper Contributions

This paper aims to answer the following research questions:

- What is MALL concept?
- How can mobile technology help language learning?
- What is the Internet of Things (IoT)?
- How could we adopt IoT in the process of language learning and teaching?
- What impact will all this have on the foreign language class?
- To adopt mobile technology in teaching and learning activities, do teachers and students need additional knowledge and skills other than the ones they use in everyday life?

In order to answer the above questions, the paper continues with presenting some definitions of CALL, MALL, and Internet of Things concepts. Next, examples of mobile technology application in the teaching and learning of foreign languages, in the context of Internet of Things, are highlighted. Also, we consider some of the benefits and challenges that come with the adopting of new technologies in the educational process.

Finally, we draw future work and conclusions.

2. Application of mobile technology in foreign language learning in the context of Internet of Things

2.1 Definitions

In order to discuss impact of MALL and IoT on language learning activities, we need to understand what these concepts mean. Concepts such as Internet of Things, CALL and MALL have no precise and widely accepted definitions. The literature in the field proposed some, but we have selected those presented in the following paragraphs, that allow the reader to get an overall view of these concepts.

CALL, the acronym for Computer-Assisted Language Learning is “any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language” [2].

Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) represents “the use of smartphones and other mobile technologies in language learning, especially in situations where portability and situated learning offer specific advantages” [3]. “MALL differs from computer-assisted language learning in its use of personal, portable devices that enable new ways of learning, emphasizing continuity or spontaneity of access and interaction across different contexts of use” [4].

“The Internet of Things (IoT) is the network of physical objects that contain embedded technology to communicate and sense or interact with their internal states or the external environment” [5]. Internet of Things is “enabling advanced services by interconnecting (physical and virtual) things based on existing and evolving interoperable information and communication technologies” [6]. “From anytime, anyplace connectivity for anyone, we will now have connectivity for anything” [7].

2.2 Uses of mobile technology in the foreign language class

Next, we try to present various ways of using mobile devices as learning tools in foreign language classes, considering the context of the Internet of Things.

Use the group chat and online discussion forum features. Currently, there are many online discussion forums and group chats around the world, such as WhatsApp.

Teachers can encourage student participation in one of these forums or groups in order to determine them to participate in conversations and to gain the ability to communicate in the foreign language. More than that, teachers can also create an online discussion forum specific to their classes, in order to increase understanding of various

notions.

Create video or audio recording. In order to promote oral communication, teachers could ask students to use audio and video recording features provided by most mobile phone and record short videos or audios with their homework solutions. Also, teachers can use these features to offer assignment solutions and their feedback to students.

Use quizzes. In order to adapt the teaching activities to their students, teachers need to evaluate the students' understanding of the concepts newly taught. Thus, for example, at the end of the course, teachers may ask students to use their mobile phones in order to take an online quiz.

Use of QR codes. Quick response (QR) codes can be used by the teacher to provide students with fast links to further resources, quizzes, solutions to quizzes or homework, etc. Students can access all these by using an app on their mobile phone that scans the QR code.

Use speech recognition apps. In order to practise speaking and accurate pronunciation, students could use various apps with speech recognition features. Thus, for example, there are apps that give instant feedback on user speaking and pronunciation skills. Also, students can use assistants such as Siri (Apple), Galaxy (Samsung), Alexa (Amazon), that already allow users to give commands to various devices (e.g., things in IoT) via language recognition and synthesis software.

Monitor student's attendance. This is another great way to use mobile technology in the classroom. The teacher can easily take real-time attendance, using specific apps.

Perform various education-related tasks. Various studies reveal that students were keen at the possibility of checking grades and news, accessing course contents, performing assessments, taking quizzes, contributing to classroom, scheduling, emailing, etc., some of which could be performed even outside the classroom, using only their mobile device.

Help students with disabilities. Modern mobile devices can contribute to a better inclusion of students with disabilities in the language learning class. Thus, an increasing number of new services and apps offer various solutions for this special category of students, such as accessibility features and services already integrated in mobile devices, (i.e., screen readers, screen magnifier, audible or tactile feedback, voice recognition, etc.) or apps (e.g., text to speech, object recognition, etc.).

Use wearable devices. The development of sensors, various intelligent devices, etc. that can be viewed as things in Internet of Things, can communicate with apps with little or no human interference, thus offering new and innovative facilities. For example, using wearable technologies, such as smart glasses, one could develop very interesting augmented reality apps for language learning classes.

But how mobile technology can be used in the classroom and what can be done also depends very much on the user's creativity.

2.3 Benefits

The findings revealed that the use of these technologies brings various benefits that allow students and teachers to ease the learning and teaching process.

We can highlight some benefits for students:

- easier and faster communication, allowing easy interaction with teachers and fellow students
- immediate and portable access to information, for example, students can access their course materials at almost any time and any place
- better and more comfortable studying
- improved learning process.

The powerful features of the mobile technology could be creatively used by teachers to achieve greater results in their work. Some of the benefits that teachers could have are the following:

- faster access to information
- engaging a larger audience to the topic being learned by including into their classes various exciting, motivating and interactive activities, such as games or other fun activities
- the opportunity to integrate, as a part of language teaching classes, various tools (many of which are free) in order to improve students' language acquisition and their communicative skills
- the possibility of relieving teachers from various tasks, such as administrative tasks, time-consuming tasks
- improved teaching process.

2.4 Challenges

But, for the IoT to become truly transformative in the language teaching and learning process, a technical as well as a pedagogical shift is needed. Teachers face a series of complex challenges related to the continuous development of technology. Thus, according to [8], “teachers (even digital natives) need to be trained and shown how to use the technology they are so used to in order to teach... Our students likewise must be shown how to use technology to support their learning. The fact that they ordinarily use smartphones and other tech gadgets does not mean they know how to use them to learn. Teachers should be available to show their learners how to engage with these technology tools and devices for learning purposes”.

Although mobile devices are seen as a supportive tool in education, conversely, various studies examine whether mobile devices can be considered disruptive technology. Research investigating the relationship between mobile device use and academic performance is limited. However, some researchers draw attention to this link, suggesting that high level of mobile devices use has a negative effect on students' academic performance. On the other hand, they also admit that even in the classrooms where the mobile devices are not allowed, younger generations use mobile devices anyway. Apart from these facts, some propose to go with the flow, but make proper use of mobile devices in order to contribute to student learning and improved academic performance.

3. Future work

Future MALL systems could benefit from the new development in the Internet of Things, and also, in machine learning and artificial intelligence. For example, the rapid emergence of augmented reality presents very interesting potential applications for foreign language learning, and not only.

In what concerns the future directions for research and development related to MALL, the following questions could be considered.

- How are we preparing for the impact of new innovative technologies on foreign language learning?
- What additional skills will need to be developed?
- What impact will all this have on the roles of teachers?

4. Conclusion

With the increasing popularity of mobile devices among teachers and learners, there are new opportunities for foreign language teaching and learning in a different way. We provided some insights into various ways by which both teachers and students can creatively use new technologies in the language learning activities, even outside the classroom.

According to the results of various researches conducted worldwide, highlighting that the adoption of new available technologies could bring uncountable possibilities in foreign languages learning and teaching for students and teachers, stakeholders in education should analyse the adoption of these technologies as soon as possible in the educational process.

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ICT Learning Advantages for English Language Learners

Nodira Mukhitdinova¹, Nasiba Valieva²

Republican Graduate School of Business and Management, Uzbekistan^{1,2}

Abstract

Innovation should now be viewed as a necessary and positive change. Human activity whether it is industry, business or education needs for constant change and innovation to be sustainable. The general perception has been that they would increase levels of educational attainment by introducing changes in teaching and learning processes and strategies, adapting them to the needs of the individual student (Sunkel, 2006).

Everything that is new today is getting obsolete tomorrow and becoming an old trend. Due to these changes, the demand for modern information and communication technologies is increasing day by day. In particular, the demand for these technologies is growing in the education system (in our case teaching foreign languages as a second language), and the interest of the humanity to information and communication technologies in the education system is increasing. In the period of intensive development of information technology, especially computer, the relevance of this topic is the comparison of traditional textbooks with new types of textbooks of the new generation, which are displayed on the computer monitor.

The development of mankind depends on inventions created in its history. The more significant the invention, the more it affects the development of society. During a relatively short period of development of oral based, written based and printed based didactic texts civilization has reached such horizons that are incomparable with achievements in dozens, and perhaps hundreds of thousands of years of mankind development. Each of these didactic texts at the same time with its unique opportunities to reflect the thoughts of a person has a number of shortcomings too.

Now we have the opportunity to use the new big invention in the field of information technology – a computer, E-mail, Internet, etc. Thanks to computer technology, which provides with enormous speed the transfer of huge volumes of information from one point of the globe to any other, today's civilized humanity enters a new, information era. Research shows that the text displayed on computer monitor is neither a written speech nor an oral means of communication but it involves interactive features of all types of didactic texts. It embraces both the features of oral means of communication and a written speech.

According to the results of conducted interviews toward learning English using available online resources were very positive. Moreover, this allowed them to work independently, without the teacher being involved. This result has been reinforced by the online use of the English language course that is useful for language learning and independent online learning resources as an additional component of the English language course.

Keywords: IT, computer, paradigmatic and syntagmatic nature of the text, written, oral speech and computer-based didactic texts

Introduction

Language is the most important asset of human society. No wonder they say that the main difference between human society and any other community of living organisms is the ability of individuals to communicate with each other. Human communication is both social and cognitive because it is a process by which individuals exchange information and influence one another through a common system of symbols and signs. And it is not only an essential condition of human existence; it is also a means of forming and developing social experience and restraint, which may be felt by the individual even outside the field of immediate communication. Even when isolated, he considers his thoughts and actions from the standpoint of what reaction they may evoke in others. [4]

Everyone knows the importance of information technology to the development of civilization. Therefore, it is important to take into account the high technologies that come into our modern life. Information technology plays a big role. However, if you're not in the field of information technology yourself, you might not know just how information technology touches your life.

Thanks to computer technologies that provide with enormous speed the transfer of vast amounts of information from one point of the globe to any other, today's civilized humanity is entering a new, information age. The Information Age, also called the Computer Age, the Digital Age and the New Media Age, is coupled tightly with the advent of personal computers. And today it is hardly possible to find a topic that is more fashionable and widely discussed than the current global information revolution and the changes to which it led and will lead in the future both in society as a whole and for each person in particular. And these changes are entering educational sphere day by day which makes it more developed and improved. It is clear that yesterday's innovation has become today's **obstacle** to change. [7] Proceeding from this, it is natural that there are no indifferent to these changes. Some of them praise and announce the beginning and the main content of the new era in the history of mankind, the approval of the information society. Others treat them with caution, noting that these changes complicate a person's life and lead people into a virtual world that is far from reality. Still others recognize both the new opportunities and perspectives that information technologies offer, and the dangers that need to be realized and warned in time. [8]

The development of humanity depends on the inventions created in its history. The more significant the invention, the more it affects the development of society. From the history we can conclude that the invention of writing was one of the most significant inventions.

The invention of the second signalling system – the writing – was an essential step in the development of communication capabilities in addition to the already existing means of communication – oral speech. Some scientists even associate the invention of writing with the advent of civilization. In their opinion, the civilization depends not least on the type of writing. We know from the history that after the invention of a written speech a civilization has achieved for a very short period of some several thousand years the level which it had not achieved for a period of hundred thousand years of its development. [2]

Oral speech, along with the unique ability to reflect the thoughts of a person, has several disadvantages. The most important of these shortcomings were the limitedness of the oral speech in space and in time. With the advent of writing, these restrictions on oral speech were lifted. Humanity was able to not only transmit thoughts at a distance, but also in time [1].

The invention of printing was another important invention in the field of information

technology. It first appeared in Europe [2]. Perhaps for this reason, Europe has begun to grow faster than any other part of the world in the new history.

Now we are facing a new big invention in the sphere of information technologies, a new means of communication different from both oral and written speech – computer, E-mail, internet ... Thanks to computer technologies that provide with enormous speed the transfer of vast amounts of information from one point of the globe to any other, today's civilized humanity is entering a new, information age.

The process of society informatization originates in the 60s of the last centuries. And today it is hardly possible to find a topic more fashionable and widely discussed than the modern global information revolution and the changes that it has led and will lead in the future, both in society as a whole and for each person in particular [8, pp. 256-266]. In this report we'll try to reveal that the text displayed on computer monitor is neither a written speech nor an oral means of communication. It embraces both the features of oral means of communication and a written speech [9]. We'll try to show it by comparing the characteristics of traditional textbooks to the electronic ones [3].

A written speech-based didactic texts have both negative and positive sides

Here are the main characteristics of written speech-based didactic texts:

- It is unlimited in space;
- It is unlimited in time;
- Paper fixed and can be reproduced at any time and at any place;
- Presented material is of a syntagmatic nature;
- The amount of text is measured by the number of pages;
- Feedback cannot be achieved in the process of text delivery or at the end of it – the presence

of a lecturer in this case is obligatory;

- In order to make corrections, the text can be reproduced anytime and anywhere
- The measurements of a text are fixed.

Positive sides of written speech-based didactic texts:

- It is unlimited in space;
- It is unlimited in time;
- Paper fixed and can be reproduced at any time and at any place;
- In order to make corrections, the text can be reproduced anytime and anywhere

Negative sides of written speech-based didactic texts:

- Presented material is of a syntagmatic nature;
- The amount of text is measured by the number of pages;
- Feedback cannot be achieved in the process of text delivery or at the end of it – the presence of a lecturer in this case is obligatory;
- The measurements of a text are fixed.

Didactic text “(information)” based on high technology

The development of modern information technologies presents its requirements for creating a new type of textbook that takes into account not only the capabilities of a printed sheet of paper, but also the capabilities of a display screen that allows you to concentrate not only on printed products on the monitor, but also sound, animation in

combination with a printed product, colour, graphics, etc., while focusing the learner's attention exclusively on this piece of information. With the advent of a computer – a new subject of writing (a monitor screen) and a tool of writing – a keyboard, great opportunities are discovered for organizing a teaching material [3]. One of the signs of this change is the emergence of a new type of exercise in the form of test tasks, which were first used exclusively to control knowledge and now they are increasingly used to transfer knowledge in the learning process. With regard to teaching a foreign language, this type of assignment allows you to attach each assignment (up to a single word, letter) to a specific rule that provides comprehensive instructions for the correct use of this phenomenon in the language. In general, the presentation of the material on the monitor display is fundamentally different from the organization of material on paper. As in oral speech, the material on paper is lined up in a line, a chain, that is, in fact, it is. Unlike paper, the presentation of the material on the monitor is paradigmatic, that is, the material here is arranged in the form of tree branches in the system. Thanks to a more effective presentation of the material, a new type of teaching material allows conducting the training process with great potential.

As a result of analyses conducted when comparing oral based and written speech based didactic texts with the didactic texts created using high technologies, we can notice that there are fewer shortcomings in the texts created by using high technologies.

The main characteristics of a high technology-based didactic text

- It consists of two parts – the first is displayed on the monitor for the student, the second is the text of the software itself, i.e., an algorithm, a set of instructions for the computer without which the first text cannot be displayed on the monitor.
- The text displayed on the computer monitor is also divided into two parts: the first is not related to the algorithm and can be displayed on the monitor without its help, and the second can only be transmitted in accordance with the instructions of the algorithm.
- The text displayed on the computer monitor without the help of the algorithm is essentially the text that was usually displayed on a piece of paper with the only difference being that it is now displayed on the monitor screen.
- The text displayed on the computer monitor in accordance with the commands of the algorithm is the main part of the didactic text and can be shown in printed form or in the form of graphs, drawings, presented in the form of audio or video accompaniment.
- The text of the algorithm itself will never be shown. The main task of this text is to monitor the execution of commands specified by the algorithm.
- The nature of the text is of paradigmatic character; its volume is not limited: the more text is shown on the monitor screen, the easier it is to understand and the larger a group of information recipients are involved in the educational process.
- This text is permanent.
- There are no restrictions on the place and time – in other words, it can be transferred anywhere in the world and at any time.
- Text volumes are measured by the amount of information displayed (in other words, the number of topics, tasks, solutions, etc.).
- Information on the computer monitor can be presented in a combination of written texts with a video image, oral text, graphs, drawings, diagrams, etc. The information in these texts can be found with ease and speed (the

possibilities for finding information are unlimited).

- Comments on informative material (rules) are not provided in a distinct generalized form (as, for example, in the case of printing text), the form that they are able to meet any requirements of the task separately.
- A computer monitor can demonstrate an unlimited amount of didactic material without affecting its interactivity, which can meet the requirements of the learner (regardless of his level of knowledge).
- Feedback on the text can be received during or after the presentation of the text. There is no need to meet with a lecturer about this.

Positive sides of high technology-based didactic text

- The nature of the text is of paradigmatic character; its volume is not limited: the more text is shown on the monitor screen, the easier it is to understand and the larger a group of information recipients are involved in the educational process.
- This text is permanent.
- There are no restrictions on the place and time - in other words, it can be transferred anywhere in the world and at any time.
- Text volumes are measured by the amount of information displayed (in other words, the number of topics, tasks, solutions, etc.)
- Information on the computer monitor can be presented in a combination of written texts with a video image, oral text, graphs, drawings, diagrams, etc. The information in these texts can be found with ease and speed (the possibilities for finding information are unlimited).
- Comments on informative material (rules) are not provided in a distinct generalized form (as, for example, in the case of printing text), the form that they are able to meet any requirements of the task separately.
- A computer monitor can demonstrate an unlimited amount of didactic material without affecting its interactivity, which can meet the requirements of the learner (regardless of his level of knowledge).
- Feedback on the text can be received during or after the presentation of the text. There is no need to meet with a lecturer about this.

Negative sides of high technology-based didactic text

- Not any

Taking all this into account we have to conclude that the mankind is facing a very big invention which is equal and even more important than the inventions of a written speech and later on printing. We know how fast the nations that used these inventions in everyday life moved forward. High technologies are developing much faster and our nation should take this fact into consideration and do its best to fully use it in all spheres of life including education. Now it is important for all teachers of foreign languages, that is philologists explore all the possibilities of creation of electronic textbooks, without referring to programmers, which will provide an opportunity not only for students but also people to learn languages on their own at any time and in any place.

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Inclusive Foreign Language Learning through Digital Tools

Emanuela Leto¹
Freelance, Italy¹

Abstract

Learning foreign languages, in particular English nowadays is a necessity for individuals as our world citizens. Although a wide variety of languages spoken in Europe, and around 7000 in the world, only a few of these are studied in schools as foreign languages due to the role they have in our daily professional, cultural, social and political life. “English is unquestionably the main foreign language learnt in Europe” as stated in Eurydice Key-Data-on-Teaching-Languages (2017). Acquiring a new language can be somehow difficult for any student, further more for students with peculiar learning difficulties. The students, who can be classified as Special or Different needs, cannot be set apart in a world pushed towards change by constant varying emigrational streams. A global education in a multilingual world requires a quest for the most effective and “different” methodologies to overcome the learning gap each student, facing a particular learning situation, can go through. In this sense, digital instruments offer a variety of methodological approaches, which can help them to acquire a proper level of competence in foreign language. According to this, I have been experiencing 10 years of teaching English as a foreign language, using mainly digital tools to create personalized contents in order to break away from the one-size-fits-all models and meeting the student’s “unique” special needs.

Keywords: ICT Based Language Teaching, Learning Approaches, Language Learning, International Mobility

1. Introduction

Learning foreign languages, in particular English is thoroughly a necessity for any individual living in our contemporary world. Although a wide variety of languages are spoken in Europe, and around 7000 in the world, only a few of these are studied in schools as foreign languages due to the role they have in our daily professional, cultural, social and political life.

The society is more and more globalized around a main language, which, nonetheless, remains English. In an era dominated by the web, this is utmost true and although the increasing role of other languages, which are commonly spoken all around the world, Chinese or Spanish, commercial, financial, diplomatic, technical language is an Anglo-monopoly and it is unquestionable. Therefore, any individual in order to live actively nowadays needs to reach a good level of competences in a second language at least, English in this case. It is, in this way, mandatory to acquire a proper level of language skills, skills that can be, further on, along the educational path, refined and improved through a specialization on the field, which can be the most proficient for the placement of students as workers in the economic world. A good ground on which to establish further language competence, nonetheless, should be granted to all students even those with learning disorders or different learning needs, according to their own abilities.

1.1 Different levels of learning require flexible tools

Each student as each individual owns different learning styles; it can be auditory, visual or kinaesthetic. Even in the common practice of teaching foreign languages the differences have to matter, moreover in cases such as students with Special Learning disorders (Dyslexia or Dysgraphia for instance) or students with Different Learning needs due to their disabilities. In the lower grades of education, and in particular in Italy, where a thorough inclusive Educational approach is established, it is one of the main issues to find methodologies and tools which can provide the acquisition of foreign language skills to the widest target of students. In my experience based on a flexible methodology built up on digital tools, software and devices in a laboratorial asset (M&ICT LAB-methodologies and Information Communication Technology) [Fig. 1], teaching foreign language has been the most inclusive and adaptive one in order to promote in each student, one at his or her own path, the acquisition of a basic competence in foreign language, whatever the starting level, the learning style, or difficulties could be.



Fig. 1: ICT Foreign Language Lab

In the last years, this methodology proved to be particular effective on students with specific learning disorders, SLD or slight learning difficulties. The common feature among these students was strong issues in reading and writing, some of them even in handling pens or pencils, lack of concentration and a really slight attention time. This implied that lesson time should not be too long, and should not be based on traditional practices such as writing or reading aloud. In foreign languages teaching, actually, the use of audio or video support has been fostered for many years giving foreign language teachers a more advantaged methodological ground rather than teachers of other disciplines. The idea was that to focus learning on digital devices and learning by doing strategies. All this could be realized building up an ICT based Language Lab within the school, provided of laptops for each student, laptops connected to a central unit run by the teacher, of an Interactive board, and an efficient internet connection. My first approach was so based on audio and visual learning styles, using for instance movies and cartoons in order to focus the students' attention, sometimes both in native and second language, small clips and songs with subtitles, thus implementing reading and listening skills. In this sense the employ of YouTube supported by comprehension exercises to acquire vocabulary, correct spelling and pronounce using specific software

and digital tools is really effective. Some of the most valuable free software in my experience proved to be the following ones: – to create “fill in the gap” or matching vocabulary word exercise, *Hot Potatoes* (<https://hotpot.uvic.ca>) or *Learning Apps* (<https://learningapps.org>), – for online tests, *Edmodo* (www.edmodo.com, a virtual class platform allowing the creation of quizzes) and *Kahoot* (www.kahoot.com).

They all provide a light, inclusive methodology, a flexible and game-based approach.

Students with learning issues can more easily type on a laptop rather than write on a paper, in particular the ones suffering Dysgraphia, and can be helped by digital tools to match sounds and images in order to acquire lexicon. Moreover, these methodologies allow creating unique materials, different items according to each student’s own path.

Learning becomes easier, possible and fun; students learn with pleasure and become aware of their progressions, avoiding frustration or that sense of being “different” from the others or “not capable”. All of them can acquire, in particular, a basic vocabulary and a basic language structure necessary to communicate in foreign language. Moreover, the digital tools allow the teacher to provide different types of approach to cope with the different skills and different styles or languages they students can have. For SLD students the use of the following tools has been very effective: word text writing with spellchecker, text to speech, audios and videos which fostered the abilities of communication. In addition to that, adopting the PBL (Project Based Learning) approach with a twin path together with other schools and foreign students (such as in an eTwinning project www.eTwinning.net) it was possible to increase the level of oral skills through a real communicative task. Adapting the abilities young people nowadays have deeply acquired in the management of online chats to the requirements of a foreign language communicative exercise with foreign students, plays a significant role in acquiring a proper level of language skills. Moreover, the spell checker has proven to be very useful to improve writing and reading skills in students with reading and writing disorders as well as a strong visual approach through images (Fig. 2). Obviously, this has required a solid attention to the students, testing and experiencing how their attitudes and their different styles, visual, auditory or practical, could require a different adaptation of the learning strategies to be combined in order to promote school success in any of them. In 19 years of experience the use of practical exercises helped me a lot in order to promote and maintain attention, increase motivation and provide equal access to learning materials for any of them.



Fig. 2: *Learning Apps* matching exercise

1.2 Digital storytelling

Another tool, which revealed to be effective in inclusive learning, is digital storytelling, a tool that is affordable and expendable with students with learning disorders. It mixes, actually, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic practical learning styles. An example is the following didactic plan, an activity carried on in a class of 20 students in grade sixth among which 6 students with cognitive difficulties, in particular, slight retardation in language speaking and certified Dyslexia. All students working in pair or in groups were able to follow the steps of the plan:

Steps:

- The teacher chooses a text, a text already known by the students as related to their Educational path in Native language, a legend which is very common among young students and also part of their childish culture. (“King Arthur and the Sword on the Stone”)
- Pre reading activities. The teacher introduces the main characters and the main story reading the title and locating the events on a map in the interactive board (use of digital software www.zeemaps.com)
- Step one: The teachers read the story aloud.
- Step two: The students, to reinforce reading watch the Disney’s cartoon movie “The Sword in The Stone”, in second language (English) with subtitles in Native Language to facilitate the global comprehension.
- Step three: A digital multiple questionnaire based on matching images and sentences describing events and characters is proposed to the students to reinforce their retained memory on topics, events and characters of the story read (www.kahoot.com). This tool is very effective if used in a proper way, as to answer the question it is necessary to choose the right colour matched to the sentences. The teacher use images and short clear sentences.
- Step four: The students are divided into groups and create in a cooperative way a storyboard for storytelling. Each student can produce both captions and images to reproduce what they learnt about the story. The teacher revise the work and collect in a proper way the sentences.
- Step five: The students put in order the images with their captions and prepare the storyboard on paper guided by the teacher
- Step six: The students in group retell the story orally following the storyboard reading short sentences.
- Step seven: The students take picture or scan the images and prepare the digital storyboard in a collaborative book using a digital tool to produce their eBook (www.storyjumper.com), rewrite the captions and read them recording their voice. The eBook is ready. It can be read, seen and listened to.
- Step eight: Final multiple-choice comprehension questionnaire on the text (www.kahoot.com)

Conclusion

Digital tools allow the most inclusive approach in order to foster and promote skills in students for whom sometimes a traditional approach can represent an issue. As educators, we are claimed not to leave anyone behind and it is still an open question which kind of educational opportunities individuals with different abilities do really have

within the Global school system and which ones they really can have. Italian educational system promotes inclusion and, in order to fulfil it in the most effective way, teachers in every field need to find proper strategies to promote school success for all their students.

The acquisition of equal educational opportunities and in particular Second Language as well as Digital Competences is a right for everyone in order to be an Active Citizen of this world.

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Learning Languages via Telecollaboration: “Variation on the Theme”

Alla Nazarenko¹
Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia¹

Abstract

The Teletandem method of learning languages is a kind of telecollaboration of two native speakers, agreed to help each other in reciprocal learning of their mother tongues. In the course of their tandem interaction they constantly rotate their functions of teacher and learner. Their collaboration is autonomous, they are equal and equally interested in learning their partner’s language (principles of reciprocity and parity of languages). MSU (Russia) and VCU (USA) adapted the Teletandem method to enhance their students’ mandatory foreign language learning (English and Russian, accordingly). Tandem partners communicate via Internet video services. A free independent tandem is transformed into an institutional one (i.e., included into the students’ curricula as an elective learning activity). The article discusses the results obtained from students’ feedback, suggesting possible objective and subjective causes of advantages and limitations of the Teletandem project and also some ideas how to increase the efficacy of the method.

Keywords: Teletandem, telecollaboration, online learning, distance learning

1. Introduction

In Western tradition the notion of Telecollaboration have been known to FLT specialists since the early 1990s and the approach has been widely used, though under various names. O’Dowd [1] cites several variants of this phenomenon and explains this variability by an astonishingly low level of academic community awareness about what is going on in FLT as far as the language exchange method is concerned. Other researchers [2] distinguish two main categories of telecollaboration: t-Tandem (Teletandem) and the Cultura model. It is noteworthy, that telecollaboration developed mostly in the field of linguistic education. However, there are quite a few cases of successful multidisciplinary application of this method (the X-Culture and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)). It is also worth mentioning, that although the variability was quite large, with more or less the same goals and objectives, the telecollaboration method survived in all its forms thanks to the sustainability provided by the preservation of its fundamental didactic principles, as well as the extraordinary flexibility and adaptability to different learning contexts.

2. Methodology

This article considers (from the Russian side) one specific version of “telecollaboration”: the Teletandem language exchange project of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Area Studies of Moscow State University (FFLAS LMSU) and the World

Studies Media Center at Virginia Commonwealth University (WSMC VCU). The project has existed for only a few years, but its specificity has already been determined, interesting results have been obtained, the analysis of which will help work out recommendations for improving this particular cooperation with, perhaps, some more global perspective. It is based on most common form of institutionalized online tandem, in which students from universities around the world are paired and collaborate to learn each other's native languages [3, 4]. Institutionalized tandem learning is included one way or another in a university official curriculum. Thus, at VCU the Teletandem project with Russian students is an extension of the learning environment of their compulsory Russian language course. At FFLAS, it is included in the program of an optional special course. In this case, one of the core principles of the Tandem method – its *autonomy* (complete independence from external factors, apart from the agreement of two individuals) is violated. But *autonomy* as an absolute non-interference of an educational institution in the process of language exchange, is fully preserved. In addition to autonomy, *equality/parity of languages* and *reciprocity* [5] are also backbone didactic principles. The first assumes that tandem classes must have two parts, each taking place exclusively in one of the studied languages, which should never be mixed. Thus, learners are encouraged to use their target languages, and difficulties, that might arise in communication, can be removed when they switch to their native language. This, in turn, increases students' motivation and involvement in the learning process. The second one provides for a change in the roles of participants: they act alternately as students (pupils) of their target language and instructors (teachers) of their native language and speak equal time in their L2. This, according to the researchers [5] increases their self-esteem and puts them in equal conditions. Implementation of the core tandem principles is a powerful motivation factor and must be observed in all types of teletandems.

The functioning structure of the discussed teletandem is simple. At the joint introductory videoconference Russian and American students present themselves, tell (in their L2) about their studies, academic and extracurricular activities. Also, Russian-American tandems are formed and a topic for a joint discussion is proposed. At the final videoconference, the tandem's presentations are introduced for general discussing in (students' L2) [6].

During the autonomous online collaboration, the tandem partners work on the language material found in the Internet, preparing for a presentation: discuss and clarify cultural peculiarities, write texts in their target language, provide them for commenting on to their native speaker partner, engage in practicing their L2. The contact time should be divided equally between the two languages ("language parity"), so that both partners could practice their target languages, get help from the "teacher" – partners and also act as teachers.

To monitor autonomous collaborative learning of the tandems in the period between introductory and final videoconferences in order to obtain data on its effectiveness, the "Teletandem-Project" site on the Power School Learning platform was created for FFLAS students. The site has pages for announcements of the project leader, for reference materials on the history and theory of the tandem method and personal pages of each tandem for brief regular "reports" on each communication "session". This is meant to help the project leader assess student progress, and collect data for analysing and improving the project methodology. The report includes the following information:

1. date and time of online partners' meeting;
2. how the collaboration went on (reading, writing, speaking);
3. what material was used to discuss the topic and prepare the presentation;
4. what difficulties (of linguistic or sociocultural character) were encountered during

communication with your partner;

5. what, to your mind, was successful in this «class»;
6. what new language phenomena you learned;
7. what linguistic difficulties you explained to your partner.

Another source of feedback from the students is a survey to find out their opinion of the project [7]. The questionnaire included the following questions:

1. What did the participation in the project give you (new skills)?
2. What have you learned (cultural characteristics of your partner's country? new linguistic means? other?)?
3. What are you especially pleased with about the project?
4. What was unfortunate about your participation in the project?
5. Possible suggestions for improving the project
6. Other things not covered by the questionnaire.

3. Findings and discussion of outcomes

Analysis of personal “reports” on the website and student reviews showed the following:

1. Participants unanimously appreciated the didactic and cognitive potential of the Teletandem method for the opportunity:
 - to get acquainted with their American counterparts, to learn directly from them about the life of young people in the country of their L2, the culture of the country and the mentality of its people;
 - to learn about their L2 culture not from books presenting information in a generalized way, but from natives of the same social status and age;
 - to improve their target language through direct communication with a native speaker.
2. Of their “achievements” there were mentioned:
 - the opportunity to meet with a representative of a foreign culture, to establish long-term contact;
 - continued communication outside the project and even visiting each other during the holidays;
 - overcoming the language barrier;
 - overcoming their stereotypes about American culture;
 - the opportunity to get to know their own culture better by looking at it “through the eyes of an alien”;
 - getting their first experience in the role of teacher.
3. New “discoveries” of students:
 - ideas about the national character of Americans, obtained from personal communication, are not consistent with those obtained from textbooks on intercultural communication;
 - differences in the organization of certain aspects of social life and cultural phenomena in Russian and American cultures.

At the same time, many critical reviews were received, indicating both objective and subjective difficulties in effectively conducting the Teletandem project. The *objective* difficulties include the following:

- time difference between Moscow and Richmond, USA (7-8 hours);
- different levels of knowledge of target languages: Russian students' proficiency in English is as a rule, higher than that of American students in Russian. So,

sometimes the communication (for convenience) took place in English. Russian students were upset by the minimal practice in English they could have;

- heavy workload of American students (due to the specifics of the American education system) prevented them from communicating regularly with their partners;
- the availability of Teletandem learning for a very limited number of FFLAS students despite a large demand: a rather small number of American students (7-10 people) register for their optional Russian course, which determines the number of Russian partners.
- Institutionalization of a free tandem may cause difficulties of a *subjective* nature:
- The students do not choose their partners, they are assigned randomly, might have different temperaments and not feel psychologically comfortable in communication;
- lack of psychological compatibility provokes attempts to avoid cooperation, which gives both tandem participants a feeling of frustration.

All this has a detrimental effect on motivation – the true driving force of Teletandem learning.

4. Conclusion

With all the complexity of achieving the optimal organization and functioning, the Teletandem method has a powerful didactic and motivating potential which is worth trying to realize. From the beginnings of the Internet, foreign language educators have seen the great benefit in connecting language learners with their counterparts in other countries in order to give them unique experiences of authentic communication in other languages [1]. In addition, each participant in Teletandem learning gets an experience of teaching his/her mother tongue, which is especially valuable for FFLAS students as future teachers of FL.

Another positive tendency, which is observed in this Teletandem experience, is an increased emphasis on studying the partner's culture, although the initial purpose of the tandem method, as was indicated, is language exchange. In their reviews, all the participants emphasized as an advantage of the method the opportunity to get acquainted with the culture of their L2. Apparently, the statement, that the development of intercultural competence is inseparable from the language development and occurs parallel to it [8], can be extended by adding that the development of linguistic and communicative competences is inseparable from the development of intercultural competence, as through communication with a representative of another culture one cannot but get in touch with it.

Therefore, FFLAS and VCU intend to try to refine and optimize the Teletandem implementation process via:

- carrying out preliminary orientation of students regarding the specifics of the Teletandem method and to tune them in to a creative and initiative approach;
- selecting groups that will match in terms of foreign language proficiency.

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Mobile Applications in the Russian Language Class: Revisions and Reflections

Varvara Golovatina¹, Polina Golováina-Mora²
University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic¹
Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Colombia²

Abstract

The use of mobile technologies becomes a common part of the Second Language Curriculum and learning-teaching activities. It can facilitate the teaching process, increase general motivation and attention of students, expand their contact with the language outwards the classroom among other advantages. Based on the authors' teaching experience, interviews with colleagues and students, the paper revises the potential of the popular applications for Russian Language Acquisition, in the non-Russian speaking environment.

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Keywords: ICT in Language Learning, m-learning, MALL, Russian Language Learning and Teaching

Introduction

Mobile technologies gradually become a part of the formal, non-formal and informal learning and teaching process [1], [2], [3], [4]. The potential of MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) to encourage and stimulate informal and out-of-classroom learning [5] is especially important for Russian Language Learning and Teaching (RLLT). In the non-Russian speaking environment, such as the Czech Republic and Colombia, which are in the focus of this study, Russian is more difficult to come by outside the classroom.

Based on our personal teaching experience, and interviews with students and colleagues, we revise the potential of mobile technologies for RLLT in the non-Russian speaking environment and discuss their strengths and shortcomings. For the purpose of this paper, we understand mobile technology as any technology with “flexible access” ([1], p. 345). The study focuses on mobile applications for Android (free or trial versions) with or without computer assistance, designed or suitable for RLLT. All the discussed applications can be found in Google Play Store. We believe this paper can be interesting for Russian teachers, students or designers of mobile learning applications or other electronic teaching materials.

1. General Revision

While the offer of applications for RLLT is quite limited [6], we believe, it is a matter of time till it gets broader. Many applications are available for a trial version with a further necessity of purchase or have a limited number of free elements, some free applications

are to be used with grammar and exercise books. For example, several publishing houses already provide mobile support for their Russian textbooks (the content or services are to be purchased): the e-book reader FlexiBooks by Fraus Media s.r.o. for the textbooks published by Fraus and mLibro by Learn etic for the interactive materials of the Russian textbooks published by Klett.

Educational and non-educational applications for Russian speakers (games, videos, business, lifestyle, entertainment apps, etc.) can be also used for the purpose of RLLT.

For example, the Yandex's virtual assistant 'Alice' can be used as a simulator of short Russian conversations. Sharing materials developed by Russian teachers from all over the world can expand the RLLT offer with the help of applications such as Quizlet, Memrise, Kahoot! Google Classroom, etc. However, developing the materials that would reflect the complex reality of the Russian language and culture and consider the diverse needs of the learners, changing dynamics of the learning group is time consuming. It also depends on the will and skills of teachers and learners, as well as technical characteristics and accessibility of the available devices.

The applications, discussed in this paper, include the pre-packaged materials, which can be used as complementary teaching-learning materials for in- and out-of-class activities and for the BYOD (bring your own device) class management.

The existing applications are mostly designed for voluntary self-learning that requires a significant level of self-regulation and scaffolding [2]. The majority of popular applications are English based and carry mistakes [6] in translation, grammar, pronunciation, collocations, etc., which should be kept in mind when included in one's language teaching-learning practice. A possibility for the users' feedback or some form of control over the content of applications are necessary for the further development of such applications. The option for using one's mother tongue (Czech or Spanish in our case) or at least the target language (Russian) as the application's language of instruction is another recommendation.

2. Alphabet trainers

The available Russian alphabet trainers such as Interaktivní ruská písanka (Interactive Russian writing book) by Reinto s.r.o. Russian Alphabet, Russian Letters Writing by Learning & Writing Studio, or Write It! Russian by Jernung, provide a range of services, which can be used by beginners to train Russian letters writing and reading in the classroom or for self-learning.

3. Dictionaries and translators

The most demanded category of applications among students, according to the survey we conducted for this study, is dictionaries and translators. Their offer is quite broad and they can be used instead of paper-based dictionaries. An important requirement, we believe, for a mobile dictionary is its offline accessibility, availability of the Russian-Czech/Spanish vocabulary and an indication of gender and declination patterns. For example, Google and Yandex Translator applications have Russian-Czech/Spanish vocabulary and have both on- and offline availability. Created for Russian users, Yandex has Russian as its source language, and its Russian-Czech/Spanish vocabulary is better developed than that of Google. The advantages of these applications is the regular improvement of the quality of translation and of the services they offer: Google (online only), for example, offers translation of a hand-written word; both Google and Yandex offer voice translation (online), audio pronunciation

(available offline), and personal vocabulary building (offline); Yandex has the 'learn these words' option: the words/phrases marked by a user form a block of flashcards can be shared with other students.

The latter three options are especially useful for language learning. While reading a text, for example, a student makes a personal list of new words/phrases, that he or she finds in the text. Students compare and complement their lists in small groups, and make a shared common list. They can also continue working with new vocabulary by explaining the meaning of some words to their classmates, checking each other's knowledge, finding the contexts of some words in the text; prepare a vocabulary quiz with the help of other appropriate applications (Quizlet, Memrise, Kanoot!), crosswords, and develop a mind map (miMind, SimpleMind). Individual or shared lists can be collected during the course for the future learning activities.

4. Vocabulary trainers

The next most demanded group of applications among the students according to our survey is vocabulary trainers or activators. There is a broad offer of such applications, but only some applications offer Czech or Spanish as the language of instruction: *Учите русский* (Learn Russian) – Fabulo by Hallberg Ryman AB, *Learn Russian Words* by Egemen Can Uze, or *Учим русские слова со Смарт-Учителем* (Learn Russian words with Smart-Teacher) by DEVINCO.ME.

Such applications usually come in the form of electronic flashcards divided into thematic groups (an audio pronunciation accompanies each word or phrase) and imply drilling, repeating and memorising. Some of them also offer games or simple tests. The method of learning is an important criterion for choosing a proper application. The "Learn Russian Words" application (by Egemen Can Uze), for instance, has an option of printing a word/phrase letter by letter in addition to repetition; Duolingo by Duolingo and Fabulo offer learning words in the context of short sentences.

A possible disadvantage of generic mobile vocabulary trainers, besides occasional mistakes including swapping word categories, is that the vocabulary would not always fit the curriculum. The special vocabulary trainers provided by publishing houses can be more useful. For example, Czech publishing house Fraus provides the free application *WordTrainer Fraus* by Fraus Media, s.r.o. that includes flashcards for single units of its Russian textbooks.

The applications can be used for a warming-up or a closing-up activity or as a more extended class-work: students memorise a group of the words/phrases with the help of the application chosen for the class. They make a list of the words that were the most difficult from their point of view and prepare a vocabulary quiz, a mind map or a crossword, including using other appropriate applications (Quizlet, miMind, etc.).

Besides learning the vocabulary, students reflexively participate in the learning-teaching process and choose the learning material according to their own needs.

5. Grammar applications

The offer of Russian grammar training applications is more limited than that of vocabulary trainers. Some of them combine grammar explanation and training: *Russian Made Easy* by Unique Digital Publishing, *Russian Cases* by Anastasia Kabalina, *Russian Grammar Practice* by Russian Language Software, or *Learn & Go* by Olga Plotnikova. Others provide the samples of tests: *TORFL Go* by MAPRYAL, *Russian Practice* by Quizworld, or *Симулятор ТРКИ* (Russian exam simulator) by Zhdanov & Makarov.

Some applications are handbooks of word forms: Склонение существительных (Declension of nouns), Спряжение глаголов (Conjugation of verbs) by Yakov Pchelintsev, Русские глаголы Про (Демо) (Russian Verbs Pro (Demo) by Perraco Labs.

The limited offer of the language of instruction, user services and the fact that they are not designed for the specific context of a particular user are the downsides of the revised applications. For example, TORFL Go is designed to prepare for the state tests in Russian as a foreign language (ТЭУ, ТБУ, ТРКИ I and ТРКИ II), but there is no option to choose and pass only one of the subtests.

The available grammar applications can be used for preparation for tests, students' self-control, the source material for learning activities, etc. The applications that accompany the paper-based textbooks, we believe, are more convenient for the purposes of the grammar m-learning.

6. Conversation trainers

Some vocabulary trainers that include conversation phrases can help in conversation training. Russian Language – Learn Russian by Go Learn French, for example, includes texts of short Russian dialogues with audio recordings and can be used for a recap and role-playing. A broad offer of the language exchange application (Tandem by Tripod Technology GmbH, HelloTalk by HelloTalk Learn Languages App, etc.) can be used for the students' self-learning and conversation training or teachers' communication with students outside the classroom. Students, teachers and parents should remember the basic safety rules for online communication.

Conclusions

It is important to remember that technologies augment the mobility of the learners and “contribute to the process of gaining new knowledge, skills and experience” ([7], p. 235). The role of will, learning predisposition, self-regulation and scaffolding skills are indispensable conditions in the language learning success [1], [2], together with the necessity of combining different media, especially in the case of the Russian language in the non-Russian speaking environment, and with very limited contact with the language. While rapidly developing [5], applications still require more variety in their services and content, especially for languages in less demand. We believe that collaborative, interactive and decentralized designs can improve such shortcomings and make learning more accessible and productive.

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New Opportunities for Young People to Fight Unemployment: The “Digital Competences for New Jobs” Project

**Anca Colibaba¹, Irina Gheorghiu², Cintia Colibaba³,
Ovidiu Ursa⁴, Anais Colibaba⁵**

Grigore T.Popa University Iasi/EuroEd Foundationm, Romania¹

Albert Ludwigs University Freiburg, Germany²

Ion Ionescu de la Brad University Iasi, Romania³

Iuliu Hatieganu University Cluj-Napoca, Romania⁴

Trinity College Dublin, Ireland⁵

Abstract

The article is based on the European DC4JOBS project (under the Erasmus + programme – 2017-1-DE04-KA205-015273), which joins the efforts of the European Union to promote digital literacy among young people and fight skills mismatches and young unemployment. The project introduces its interactive and dynamic platform for young people with fewer opportunities in order to up-grade, up-skill or re-skill their digital competences to meet the needs of the labour market. The paper presents a summary of the project's objectives, activities and outputs. It also gives insights into its six learning modules and into an ICT training course aimed at facilitating young people's transition from school to work as well as re-skilling and up-skilling their digital skills and career guidance. The modules enable young people to improve information and skills in information and data literacy, digital communication, digital content creation, safety, soft skills and problem solving. The paper centres on the analysis of the feedback received from participants in the training course and aims at exploring their views on the content of the course and the project's platform. The feedback shows clear strengths of the DC4JOBS training course and platform which were appreciated by participants as opportunities to exercise their independence in learning and to use state-of-the-art technology.

Keywords: ICT training course, digital literacy, communication, young people, jobs

1. European context

Considering the challenges education faces today the European Commission has repeatedly asked all its member states to join their efforts and harmonize their educational strategies with the unprecedented development of technology, which will facilitate young people's transition from schools to work. Introducing programmes meant to develop and improve young people's digital skills required on the market would undoubtedly enhance their chances to find a job and have a decent life [1, 2].

2. The DC4JOBS project: objectives, partnership, target groups and main activities

The DC4JOBS project promotes digital literacy among young people and gives solutions to the existing skills mismatches between education, training and the world of work. Its main output is an interactive and dynamic platform, which enables young people with fewer opportunities to upgrade, upskill or reskill their digital competences. The project directly addresses young people aged 16-24 years, with fewer opportunities such as NEETs (young people who are not included in education, employment or training), young people from a migrant background, newly arrived immigrants, young refugees, early school leavers etc. The indirect target group is the labour market: employers and organizations.

The project consortium consists of organizations (NGO, NPO, SME in ICT, VET Provider) from six European countries with diverse expertise and sharing a special interest in the European initiatives in the field of youth and education. The DC4JOBS partners achieved the project's objectives through a range of activities, outputs and results, including research through a desktop survey, an interactive training platform as well as an online and offline training course on digital skills acquisition [3].

3. The project's main outputs

The research which investigated young people's current digital skills acquisition for employment as well as their digital employability needs helped the partnership design the Digital and Employability Competence Charter and the corresponding Open Badges system. The Digital and Employability Competence Charter and the Open Badges system defined the standards against which young people's digital competences were to be evaluated and enabled partners to devise a plan of intervention meant to meet young people's digital needs as identified by the research.

The plan of intervention centred round an online training course. Its five modules are organised in accordance with the indicators established in the Digital and Employability Competence Charter: Module 1, Information: identifying, locating, retrieving, storing, organising and analysing digital information, helps participants to use the internet browser and effective search techniques correctly online, to evaluate received information and to use web tools to organise and store online information. It also helps young people to develop search skills on the internet. Module 2, Communication: communication, sharing resources through online tools, linking with other online users, collaborating through digital tools, provides information on different aspects of digital communication. Young people get information as to how to share resources through online tools, link with other online users, collaborate through digital tools, interact with and participate in communities and networks etc. Module 3, Content-creation: creating and editing new content (from word processing to images and video). The module provides information on different digital contents (text, graphic, video, audio, more), their elements and structure and also supplies tools to create appropriate visual content for the digital field. Module 4, Safety: personal and data protection, security measures, safe and sustainable use. It provides information on different aspects of safety with regard to risks, measures, copyright and social media security. Module 5, Problem-solving, helps students to develop the competence of identifying needs and problems and solve abstract problems in digital environments. It also helps them build interpersonal skills to improve the ability to work with others.

The training course is provided with assessment tools. Thus, participants can validate

their learning process by having badges issued corresponding to their level of digital skills acquisition. The Digital Badges, an automatic certification system, are indicators of one's accomplishment, skills, qualities or status. Badges can serve different functions depending on the activities with which they are associated. These badges have been used for setting goals, motivating behaviours, and representing and communicating achievements in many different contexts, education being one of them.

The platform is completed by an e-Manual with instructions and guidelines for the implementation of the platform.

4. Piloting the training course

There were 21 participants, aged between 17-30, who came from disadvantaged environments (rural areas, disadvantaged social background, low level of education, unemployed etc). In recruiting the group, the following aspects were taken into consideration: the specific target group of the project (young people); the specific characteristics of the target group (fewer opportunities); a homogeneous group for a better interaction.

The participants were told that it would be a professional ICT training for young people aimed at facilitating the transition from school to work and focused on re-skilling and up-skilling of their digital skills and career guidance. They were also given the outline of the guide and asked if they had any preferences. They replied that all five modules were interesting and agreed that they would like to go through them all. During the pilot testing, each day started with the introduction of each module and students gave feedback at the end of each day. The training course was organised in 5 days, 6 hours per day, 30 hours in all. Each module had an initial self-evaluation test which raised trainees' awareness about their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, participants took a final evaluation test on whose completion they were awarded a badge as evidence of their successful performance.

4.1 The questionnaires

The questionnaire for participants (Table 1) assessed their perception and feelings about the training by asking them to grade using a scale 1-4 (4 – the highest).

Table 1. Participants' questionnaire

1. The quality of the overall training	1	2	3	4
2. The training was helpful and informative.	1	2	3	4
3. The DC4JOBS Moodle Platform	1	2	3	4
4. The trainer's knowledge and expertise	1	2	3	4
Communication with the trainer				
Trainer's support, guidance and encouragement				
5. Trainer's support, guidance and encouragement	1	2	3	4
6. Methodology	1	2	3	4
7. Training facilities – equipment	1	2	3	4
8. Internet access	1	2	3	4
9. Suitability of venue room; safe and hospitable environment	1	2	3	4
10. Support materials, printouts	1	2	3	4

11. Training session Overall training, organization and logistics The length of the sessions The structure of the session The interaction between the trainer and the trainees	1	2	3	4
12. Impact of training Did you improve your digital competences? Did this training help you to improve your professional effectiveness? What did you like most about the training? What did you like least about the training?	1	2	3	4
Please share any suggestions you might have for improving the next training				

Participants were also asked to answer open ended questions about suggestions they may have for improving the next training.

4.2 Questionnaire results and analysis

The participants' feedback shows clear strengths of the DC4JOBS course. 95.5% of the participants found the course clear and easy to understand, grading it highly (scores of 4); they appreciated the quality of the training as being helpful, informative and engaging their interest. Some of them (3%) said that even if some content was well-known, they had the opportunity to perceive it from another perspective or to explain it to their peers, which was a good way to revise. As for the platform most of them (81%) graded it highly whereas 19% complained about the long time needed to approve their requests to log in.

As regards the trainer the participants highly appreciated his knowledge and expertise, his support, guidance and encouragement as well as the open interaction between the trainer and the trainees. An important feature that stands out from students' feedback is how much they appreciated the dynamism, the interactive nature of the course, having to work in teams, collaborating, which helped them learn from each other and also made learning fun. All students appreciated the opportunity to exercise their independence in learning and to use state-of-the-art technology. The participants agreed that although the content was quite basic there were still lots of things they learned (e.g., they created their LinkedIn account, which may be useful when looking for a job). They suggested the course be held during the school year and address a greater number of trainees. Some of them held that the course needs more practical tips and tasks related to daily work.

The training was particularly important for all participants involved in the project in terms of their professional development. The transnational learning mobility helped them broaden their horizons and extent their capabilities. All participants stated that they felt comfortable during the course having access to excellent equipment and being provided with useful materials; they appreciated the pleasant, collaborative atmosphere of the course. They all agreed that the course offered positive learning experiences in improving their digital competences and could help them find jobs online.

5. Conclusions

The DC4JOBS project offers participants plenty of opportunities to upgrade their ICT skills in new areas. The training also encourages the exchange of good practices, new synergies, new ideas etc. The young people acquire or improved their digital and employability skills in order to meet the needs of the labour market. Their career orientation can be improved and the skills gap (economy, market, education) can be bridged, as they will be more aware of the current and future needs of the economy [4].

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Effects of Using the Google Search Engine, the Trello Learning Management System (TLMS), and Classroom Form-Focused Instruction on Developing EFL Learners' Grammatical Knowledge

Roya Khoii¹, Atefeh Gharibshah²

Islamic Azad University, Tehran North Branch, Islamic Republic of Iran¹

Islamic Azad University, Tehran North Branch, Islamic Republic of Iran²

Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the effects of employing the Google Search Engine, the Trello Learning Management System, and classroom form-focused instruction on developing EFL learners' knowledge of simple past and present perfect tenses. The participants consisted of 45 pre-intermediate level female language learners within the age range of 19-35, randomly assigned to three experimental groups. Before the treatment, a PET and a teacher-made grammar pre-test were administered to the three groups to homogenize them in terms of language proficiency and knowledge of the target tenses. In the course of treatment, the first group (EXI) received form-focused instruction; the second group (EXII) searched for the target tenses in the related texts in Google and performed the required activities to learn the tenses, and the third group (EXIII) worked with the uploaded grammar lessons and tips in the Trello forum. At the end of the experiment, a post-test similar to the pre-test was administered to all the three groups to check the effectiveness of the treatment. The findings indicated that, although all the three groups had improved their knowledge of simple past and present perfect tenses, the form-focused group (EXI) had significantly outperformed the other two groups on the post-test, thus raising some doubt regarding the efficiency of using technology in teaching L2 grammar.

Keywords: FLL, Form-focused Instruction, Google, Grammar, LMS, Trello

1. Background

There is no doubt that technology has noticeably influenced our lives and created numerous changes in the past few decades. Language teaching/learning is one of the areas that have been feeling the impact of the changes made by technology. Advanced technologies, such as laptops and internet access, have become nearly ubiquitous in foreign language learning in many developed and developing countries; therefore, it is not surprising to find that the majority of these technologies have been co-opted by the field of education, in general, and TESOL, in particular. In the field of teaching English, technology has provided an "adaptive learning" environment, which is defined as a strategy in bringing materials online [1].

Moreover, technology can help with making teaching materials more personalized, which can assist both learners and instructors in learning and teaching more effectively.

According to Duncan-Howell [2], language teachers should "personalize instruction

and make sure that the educational environments we offer to all students keep pace with the 21st century”. Personalization, especially in teaching grammar, can provide the learners with an opportunity to learn in an authentic environment

Teaching grammar has been greatly facilitated by using computers because computer-based instruction is capable of providing an optimal context for performing the related tasks and activities [3]. Nevertheless, providing a desirable context for grammar acquisition is “an idea that researchers and teachers ignore at their peril” [4]. Moreover, newly advanced technologies enable language teachers to design their teaching methods based on the learners’ needs and develop a variety of pedagogical methods for teaching grammar.

Undoubtedly, grammar forms a basis for building a language, enables language users to convey a message, and is the central part of any language around which other parts such as pronunciation and vocabulary revolve [5]. However, it does not seem to be an enjoyable part of language education for either students or teachers [6]. Therefore, many language scholars and practitioners have tried to introduce some innovative learning strategies and pedagogical techniques to make the process of learning L2 grammar more interesting for the learners.

It is generally observed that students, particularly at the higher education level, use the Google search engine to collect the information required for their projects. Thus, it seems to be a familiar tool to the majority of students. It is also believed that Google enables language learners to “discover patterns in their authentic contexts” [7]. Using a search engine results in a kind of incidental authentic learning, which helps learners acquire knowledge in authentic ways.

A useful technology which has not been given due attention in the realm of L2 grammar teaching is the Trello Learning Management System (TLMS). A language management system (LMS) is a software application or web-based technology which aims at improving learners’ interactions by providing a collaborative environment for both learners and the teacher [8]. An LMS is not only advantageous in managing the curriculum and training materials but also provides certain evaluation tools to gauge learners’ progress [9].

However, it seems that the most familiar and common approach to grammar teaching adopted by many teachers in most L2 educational contexts is form-focused instruction.

The concept of form is expanded “to include not only grammatical or syntactic forms but also vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatics” [10]. In form-focused instruction, L2 learners learn the language features systematically according to a structural syllabus which determines which features should be taught, and in which sequence they should be presented [11].

2. Method

2.1 Research Question

This study targeted the following question:

How do the Trello LMS, the Google search engine, and classroom form-focused instruction compare in improving Iranian EFL learners’ knowledge of present perfect and simple past tenses?

2.2 Instruments

The following instruments were used to achieve the purposes of this study:

- PET exam
- A 30-item teacher-made grammar test used both as a pretest and post-test

2.3 Participants

45 Iranian pre-intermediate female EFL learners between 19 and 35 years of age in three intact classes at a language institute in Semnan participated in this study. They were randomly assigned to three form-focused (EXI), Google (EXII), and Trello (EXIII) experimental groups, using the same teacher as their instructor.

2.4 Procedure

At the outset of the six-week treatment period, a Cambridge PET test and a grammar pretest were administered to check the homogeneity of the students in terms of language proficiency and knowledge of simple past and present tenses. The results of two ANOVAs confirmed that there were no significant differences among the three groups' mean scores on the tests.

In the course of the treatment, all the three groups studied *Touchstone 3* (2014) as their course book with a focus on units 3 and 4, which dealt with present perfect and simple past tenses. However, they were involved in different activities. In the form-focused group, the teacher used a set of flashcards and diagrams downloaded from the Internet to clarify the concepts of the tenses. Moreover, all the students were supposed to study a storybook (*Three Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*) and highlight the sentences including the target tenses of the study. They were also required to write them down and reflect in small groups on some of the verb aspects such as the question, negative, and passive forms in order to expand their understanding of the tenses.

The students in EXII group used the Google search engine and the Internet to search for some sentences or texts including the target structures of the study. After highlighting the examples, they emailed the screenshots of the related sentences and texts to their teacher. The teacher collected all the highlighted examples and shared them in the class with all the students through the overhead projector. This was followed by some questions and answers on the part of students.

In EXIII, the teacher used the Trello Management System to establish a forum for grammar instruction. She also used a set of PowerPoint and PDF files including grammar lessons on simple past and present perfect tenses. Initially, she introduced the LMS, explained how to work with it, and asked the participants to join the forum. The students received the pdf and PowerPoint files in the LMS. The files included grammar lessons and tips as well as exercises for students to complete. The administrator answered the students' questions and provided them with constructive corrective feedback in the 'making comments' section of Trello.

3. Results

At the end of the treatment, a post-test similar to the pre-test was administered to all the three groups to examine the effects of the treatment. The descriptive statistics of the post-test scores of the three experimental groups are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Descriptive Statistics of the Post-test of the Three Groups

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Error	Mean	SD	Skewness Statistic	Std. Error
form-focused	15	22.20	0.7185		2.783	-0.375	0.580
Google	15	18.867	0.477		1.846	-0.954	0.580
Trello	15	19.20	0.603		2.336	0.770	0.580

The Threshold Loss Agreement reliability of the post-test was equal to 0.83, which was desirable. Finally, a one-way analysis of variance was run to compare the means of the three groups on the post-test (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. ANOVA for the Post-test

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	101.111	2	50.556	9.131	0.001
Within Groups	232.533	42	5.537		

With $F(2,42) = 9.131$, $P = 0.001 < 0.05$ (two-tailed), it was decided that the mean scores of the participants in the three experimental groups were significantly different from each other after the treatment. To identify the exact location of the differences, a post-hoc Tukey test was conducted. The results of the test are summarized in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Post Hoc Test for the Three Experimental Groups

(I) groups (J) groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
				Upper	Lower
form-focused Google	3.3333*	0.85919	0.001	1.2459	5.4207
Trello	3.0000*	0.85919	0.003	0.9126	5.0874
Google form-focused	-3.3333*	0.85919	0.001	-5.4207	-1.2459
Trello	-0.3333	0.85919	0.921	-2.4207	1.7541
Trello form-focused	-3.0000*	0.85919	0.003	-5.0847	-0.9126
Google	0.3333	0.85919	0.921	-1.7541	2.4207

*. *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level*

Post-hoc comparisons indicated that the mean of EXI ($M=22.20$, $SD=2.783$) was significantly higher than those of EXII ($M=18.867$, $SD=1.846$) and EXIII ($M=19.20$, $SD = 2.336$) on the post-test.

7. Conclusions and Discussion

The findings of the study demonstrated that the participants of the form-focused group had significantly outperformed the Google and Trello groups regarding the knowledge of the target tenses of the study. There might be at least three main reasons for this finding. First, the negative attitude of the learners, teachers, and institutions towards using technology does not encourage students in their quest for language learning. Second, the findings can be attributed to the extraneous processing overload i.e., a situation in which the cognitive processing of extraneous material in the lesson is so challenging that there remains little or no cognitive capacity to perform key or generative processing. Third, the students' poor e-literacy might have functioned as an obstacle to better learning. In this study, the participants found the Trello LMS too unfamiliar and too difficult to handle. Nevertheless, the findings of this study do not mean that the application of technology in teaching grammar should be limited. Rather, they demonstrate that teachers need to guide the students by providing more instructional

support in order to minimize the chances of technological challenges which the learners might have to deal with. In addition, teachers need to know that their students possess enough e-literacy and enthusiasm to embrace technology so as to choose more user-friendly and appropriate websites and educational technologies.

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The Success and Challenges of ICT Utilization in Armenia

Armine Vahanyan¹

Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan, Armenia¹

Abstract

The paper touches upon the implementation of ICT tools in Armenian education centers, in particular, the utilization of Google Classroom in language courses at the Armenian State Pedagogical University (ASPU), the challenges that have been identified during this experiment.

The global digitization influenced all spheres of our life. And nowadays, education in Armenia has been gradually tailored due to this significant impact.

Armenia has recently stepped into the era of digital education. Yet in 2015 ARMAZEG report (“State of The Art Regarding E-Learning and ICT for Lifelong Learning”) stated that “E-learning as an official learning form cannot be considered as conventional in Armenia.” However, the issues specified in the very report have been considered, and certain steps have been taken in this respect. Thus, the ASPU after Kh. Abovyan was one of the pioneers in the country to acknowledge the necessity to embrace the digital turn by implementing Google Classroom initially as a pilot program (2015-2016) and then as a mandatory component of all courses.

The contemporary European approach of student mobility and its major requirements of language and ICT competencies present substantial challenges for a vast number of students in Armenia.

The added value of Google Classroom is in the flexible management and pedagogical design of the education process. The platform turned to be quite efficient for language education, which had been manifested by many professionals too. The platform which was initially used for full-time education, recently, namely from the fall semester of 2018, was launched for distance education and extension department and in general, turned to be applicable and efficient.

However, the following issues have been identified:

- 1. Lack of relevant infrastructure and lack of ICT literacy.*
- 2. Insufficient information mining and analytical skills at the students’ end.*
- 3. Legal issues in terms of copyright and plagiarism.*

We think that exploration of the best practices of the European countries in terms of digital literacy initiatives will further help to fix and overcome the specified issues.

Keywords: ICT, education, e-learning, digitization, Google Classroom

The modern quality education is undeniably interconnected and is contingent on e-learning status and the level of digital competencies which are equally important to all stakeholders of education

Armenia historically has profound education traditions starting from the early medieval period (schools and universities in Armenia, e.g., Tatev Academy, Gladzor

University). Later on, starting from the 18th century, the education centers had been formed mainly in major Armenian diaspora spots (Georgia, Russia, Italy, India). The beginning of the 20th century heralded the Soviet era (1923-1991). And Armenia, as a part of the USSR, adopted the Soviet education system. The Soviet system, like any other education system, had its advantages and disadvantages. It focused mainly on the scientific and technical training and proved to be very successful. The high quality of Soviet Education was acknowledged by many foreign scientists and experts. However, the ideology greatly affected the education process and resulted in censorship, selective choice of material as well as propaganda of the Soviet ideology, especially in the humanitarian field. With the dissolution of the Soviet Empire, Armenia appeared in a new socio-economic and cultural situation. The unique situation raised many issues not only in the social and psychological respect but also in education. Nowadays, freedom of speech and lack of censorship allows providing better education services.

However, the ideology greatly affected the education process and science, especially in the humanitarian field. Furthermore, even in the field of sciences, due to ideological domination, genetics and cybernetics were almost banned for an extended period.

The XXI century, which has been declared as the time of information technologies irreversibly penetrated in the field of education, thus shaping new teaching and learning environment and resulting in the overall quality of education. The newly formed communication established a “*digiculture*.”

While many education centers/schools, colleges and universities/outside the former USSR have substantive experience of ICT utilization and Learning Management System, Armenia has recently stepped into the era of digital education. To be more precise, according to the statistical data, the IT users in Armenia in 2000 comprised only 0.1% of the entire population vs. 72.4% in 2019 [1]. And today, when many experts name Yerevan (the capital of Armenia) the Silicon Valley of Transcaucasia [2] the education leads have been facing issues with ICT implementation in the education process and its management.

In recent years, specific steps have been taken both by the Armenian Government and the Ministry of Education and Science, and individual universities, in particular.

Armenia is a member of several international organizations which guide and support the Ministry of Education and Science on its mission of popularization of e-learning. In particular, GIZ, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*) has a significant contribution to the implementation of e-learning into the educational system of Armenia.

However, yet in 2015 ARMAZEG report (“*State of The Art Regarding E-Learning and ICT for Lifelong Learning*”) stated that “*E-learning as an official learning form cannot be considered as conventional in Armenia*” [3, p. 11]. The aim of the ARMAZEG project is to stimulate educational reform in Armenian and Georgian universities by means of developing lifelong learning methodologies, implementation strategy, teacher training, and setting up of e-learning centers.

Nowadays many Higher Education Centers such as the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovyan, Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences, the Public Administration Academy, State Engineering University of Armenia, Gavar State University, the American University of Armenia, the French University have been using various components of e-learning (student-teacher communication, distribution of the learning material, assessment and grading, assignments). The higher education leads acknowledge the necessity of technology-enhanced learning in their education system.

It is worth mentioning that the American University of Armenia is a private university and has more funding sources, and therefore the campus is well-equipped with the necessary devices and has a stable and fast network connection. Besides, the AUA has been using the best practices of the US education system. The American University of Armenia has been using Moodle as the Learning Management System. Students and faculty have training opportunities on a regular basis. Both faculty members and students are aware of a variety of ICT tools which they are willing to use for classes. The AUA may be considered to be the leader in terms of ICT utilization and e-learning experience.

The majority of the Armenian universities mentioned above have also been using the Moodle platform; whilst not mandatory. The teachers are recommended to use Moodle as the primary means of communication with students; however, this is not a general practice.

It should be noted that the level of ICT utilization among Armenian universities is diverse. Some of them use specific software for general administration purposes (e.g., e-deanery, curriculum management, admissions, testing). The diversity depends on the available infrastructure, lack of trained staff, as well as low level of e-literacy on the students' end. Some teachers are enthusiastic; however, the others do not yet feel quite comfortable in the virtual space. A successful sample of the E-learning implementation has been recently carried out at the Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences by developing an electronic course titled "Practical Russian Language" [4].

As for the Armenian State Pedagogical University, much has been changed since the aforementioned ARMAZEG report. The University had been demonstrating a strong commitment to the implementation of e-learning which is declared in the strategic plan of the University [5]. After having tested an ICT software which was developed by the university software engineers the ASPU after Kh. Abovyan decided to implement the Google Classroom platform initially as a pilot program (2015-2016) and then as a mandatory component for all courses. As with anything new, the introduction of the new platform was not smooth and easy. The usage revealed issues which may not be addressed at once. One of the problems derived from lack of e-literacy on both ends, i.e., the teachers and students. In order to address this issue, relevant training for the staff was conducted on a regular basis. Such training, however, didn't involve the entire staff but only representatives from every department or chair. Ideally, it was intended to spread and share the knowledge and skills with colleagues; however, this step was not sufficiently monitored.

The students, on the other hand, have also been briefly trained. Nevertheless, many students have still a vague understanding of the tool and do not skilfully work in the virtual environment. It should be noted that students face technical problems mostly during the first academic year. The university administration fully acknowledges the social roots of the lack of computer skills, which is why the seven university libraries have been equipped with necessary devices and network to support students and enable their use of Google Classroom.

Having adopted the path of digitization of education process, the ASPU has been encouraging webinars and other events which may be conducted in the online format.

After using Google Classroom for full-time education for three years, the platform was launched for the distance education department. The use of this platform minimizes the necessity to meet with teachers in person and enables online interaction. In terms of the constant teacher-student communication, material distribution and assignments, no significant issues had been reported. However, the students' code of conduct and integrity is rather questioned. The evaluation of the assignments is of major concern as

faculty members may not be sure if the assignment was done by the student and not another person. This is an issue which has culture-related roots.

Apart from the technical issues, other significant problems had been identified:

1. Lack of relevant infrastructure and therefore, lack of ICT literacy.
2. Insufficient information mining and analytical skills at the students' end.
3. Legal issues in terms of copyright and plagiarism.

The ARMAZEG report of 2015 summarizes the study results in a SWOT analysis, which was relevant for the period of the study [3, p. 17]. As for the strengths, less has been changed. To the given list, we may add the improvement of the infrastructure, increase of technical devices, and broadening the scope of activities carried out via Google Classroom (webinars and online conferences with partner universities). For the current situation, the primary threat is still the low utilization by students of e-learning materials.

The issues specified above need day-to-day work and proper steps to minimize and further avoid them. It is evident that development training, continuous infrastructure improvement, and legislative initiatives may increase the level of e-competencies.

Another efficient method is cooperation with the experts in this field and partner universities via conferences, workshops, and consultations. Time will fix the current issues with the help of proper guidance, and the number of IT users in the country will generate qualitative changes.

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Transforming the ICT Learning Environment for English Language Learners

Diane Boothe¹

Boise State University, United States of America¹

Abstract

English Language Learners (ELLs) enter online or hybrid classrooms endeavouring to unlock the mysteries of learning English. These students are in search of a quality learning experience leading to English language acquisition defined by new opportunities that will transform their lives and open doors for future accomplishments. In order to meet their needs, a variety of educational strategies and considerations are required that extend beyond traditional expectations. Reading, writing, speaking and comprehension expanded to connect the classroom with the global learning environment is essential. A key component of these endeavours is developing and utilizing state of the art technology and coursework, while incorporating outstanding resources and methods to positively impact educators and students.

Keywords: Environment, ICT, Online, Hybrid, Transformational

1. Introduction

This discussion and accompanying study examine the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) learning environment for English learners and focuses on the following four essential aspects of English learning that are tantamount for success:

1. Leveraging technology in the online classroom
2. Incorporation of ICT innovations and best practices
3. Strengthening a complex culture for learning
4. Facilitating and contextualizing pivotal learning

Each of these key concepts is investigated and discussed as it pertains to the ICT learning environment and influences quality educational experiences. Specific activities and examples of curriculum and teaching strategies will be outlined along with the measurable attainment of goals and objectives. “Skilful facilitation allows students to interact with one another and the instructor at a higher level” [1], and interactive learning constitutes a core concept in defining a community of inquiry [2] and is crucial when developing online courses for students. The study will explore the role of each essential aspect in a multicultural ICT online learning situation. It is being developed with the purpose and objectives of including an overview of the key strategies for success in language acquisition focusing on ICT, and outlining exemplary pedagogy that can actively engage learners in defined subject-matter contexts. This topic will be approached utilizing examples appropriate for a variety of cultures and content areas including English in an interdisciplinary setting. It also can be expanded to include English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum and methodology. Reading, writing, speaking and comprehension expanded

to connect the classroom with the global learning environment is crucial, however these key aspects of English language learning can only be accomplished when innovative curriculum is designed that will stimulate learning and make it relevant and connected to real world experiences and essential requirements that will tie all of the coursework and language learning objectives together. Significant and engaging connections leading to successful language learning will be presented to contextualize and look more deeply at each strategy in terms of documenting its impact and the opportunity for teaching and learning. This discussion and study will culminate in recommendations for future expanded studies and investigation to support students and facilitate their journey for English learning.

2. Leveraging technology in the online classroom

Successful implementation of technology will enable educators and students to realize numerous benefits and ensure the value of ICT for language learning. In order to achieve optimum success in the ICT online classroom, it is essential to leverage technology in the best interest of each individual learner. Technology has the advantage of being able to engage students with diverse learning styles and surpass traditional passive instruction [3]. While some learners may have a better command of English and be interested in exploring content or subject-specific academic interests, others will be simultaneously engaged in language-dependent activities. Technology designed to meet the needs of these students in the online classroom will allow students to acquire language through active engagement rather than direct didactic instruction. Open-ended activities and flexibility will encourage students to explore and branch out on their own resulting in student focused growth and stimulation of interest. Additionally, technology that will support contextualized learning where useful language is taught that is embedded within relevant ICT contexts rather than in isolated language fragments is beneficial. Technology that will allow students to make greater connections among the language and relate to fellow students will strengthen the knowledge that they have already gained. Once students are confident and continue to build upon previous knowledge i.e., vocabulary, comprehension, reading and speaking, technology can be incorporated to deliver more complicated materials. When students can relate to real life contexts and grasp the essential aspects of ICT online learning, this will lead to intrinsic motivation and independently continue the language learning process. It is also important to realize that students have different levels of technological expertise. A student's technical skills and ability may be impacted by age, resources, geographical access to the internet, or financial situation. In addition to content knowledge and online course requirements, it is important to provide support to strengthen technology expertise for struggling students who may be experiencing multiple difficulties and attempting to acquire the knowledge essential for all students.

3. Incorporation of ICT innovations and best practices

Engaging students and keeping them on task and enthusiastic regarding the learning progress is tantamount to their success. Innovations and best practices that focus on digital transformation, actively engaging learners and challenging them to excel, will empower students and ignite a culture that will enhance learning and enable students to reach their full potential. Innovations that are amenable to active learning modalities such as design learning, task-based learning, gaming, project based or problem-based learning inspire current teaching and learning methods. Students benefit when educators

provide substantial flexibility and adaptability in an online curricular setting that is tailored to students' demonstrated interests while achieving specific curriculum outcomes. Global ICT education that addresses best practices in technology across nations and integrates ICT in numerous aspects of teaching has the power to positively impact numerous teachers and students [4]. There are lists of technology teacher tools and activities designed to enhance learning and strengthen the online classroom curriculum. Most of these can be accessed according to subject and grade level and address pedagogical practices for teachers using ICT. Other authors delve more deeply into the effectiveness of ICT integration in schools as it relates to increased student achievement [5]. The cognitive development of learners and measurable attainment of goals and objectives is essential for ensuring that students continue to achieve and realize success.

4. Strengthening a complex culture for learning

Due to the multiplicity of educational opportunities and settings for learning, students are faced with myriad decisions regarding the best way to pursue a quality education and realize their goals. The outcome of these decisions is to pursue educational endeavours that fit with their unique learning style and allow them to thrive in their environment. For numerous reasons including flexibility, transportation, choices, and networking, students choose online learning programs that allow them to keep pace, retain their current employment and advance in their career path. In an ICT setting, the goal is for students particularly in the English language virtual classroom to gain the knowledge and expertise required to excel and outperform students in a traditional classroom setting. The online setting provides a complex culture for learning in an innovative environment that can transform the educational experience. By working online with fellow students in discussion groups, community activities, reflective journaling, shared responses and receiving positive feedback, an atmosphere of learning is established that reflects a quality educational experience for both students and teachers with positive interactions for all students regardless of their intellectual abilities.

Struggling students may need additional motivation and guidance to encourage them.

The culture for learning is strengthened and students are challenged to excel as interactive activities and positive reinforcement combine to create impressive outcomes.

5. Facilitating and contextualizing pivotal learning

Educators are certainly sincere in their efforts to build innovative and engaging online course activities designed with high expectations for learning. However, it is crucial to build context that will relate to students' interests in addition to the nuts and bolts of online course design with top-notch technology features. It is essential for educators to analyse the needs and abilities of their students, build context and focus on making connections that will challenge and engage students. Revitalizing old routines will prove beneficial for both students and educators. Online learner feedback throughout the course is valuable for making adjustments and ensuring that students are progressing well and objectives are being met. Self-guided study is another way to help online learners understand the context for their journey including forums with fellow students and questions focusing on key concepts. Real world examples and simulations are valuable when it comes to putting knowledge into practice [6]. Pedagogical approaches that facilitate contextualized pivotal learning and encourage ongoing change and growth provide the innovative and analytical capacity for students and educators to explore new opportunities and open windows for further learning, particularly in the online setting.

In an interview with leading business leaders in the construction industry, the concept of product and outcome was emphasized. The aspects of trial and error are often incorporated in knowing what one wants to achieve and the steps required to reach the point of successful accomplishment. When the results are not sufficient, changes are made and adjustments required to achieve the desired product. The example was provided of an inventor experimenting and taking steps to put together the right parts in order to achieve the desired results. Once the knowledge base continues to expand, this knowledge can be applied to other areas [7]. In the ICT online setting, activities should be included to support and encourage trial and error, experimentation, and positive reinforcement to expand the knowledge base through actively engaged learning.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Globalization and technology have substantially changed the ways that we work, teach and learn. Interactive online coursework is at the forefront of educational innovation and creative endeavours, and increased numbers of students are choosing online education courses. As we continue to promote technology enhanced educational ICT innovations, our students will benefit and learning will be accelerated. Educators who communicate passion for their work in an online setting have the capability to inspire and motivate their students to high ideals celebrating their accomplishments. As the process of transforming the ICT learning environment strengthens and evolves, learners will have even more opportunities for growth and the realization of their aspirations. State of the art technology coupled with powerful pedagogical innovation and active learning opportunities will make a significant difference in the virtual classrooms of the future.

Future expanded studies are recommended that address each of the four areas outlined above in depth and illustrate concrete examples relating to the ICT learning environment that can be adapted to a variety of ability, age, and online classroom settings.

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Using Modern Technology to Improve English Teaching and Learning

Xiaojun Wang¹, Jiří Dostál², Avan Kamal Aziz³
Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic^{1,2,3}

Abstract

The advance of modern technology has unprecedentedly changed every aspect of our life, including education. Governments from all over the world have attached much importance to technology implementation in education, investing substantial funds in education to improve information technology infrastructure and systems and support increased access to educational technology. It has become an irresistible trend to integrate modern technology in education. Teachers at different teaching levels are demanded to be competent in using modern technology in teaching [1]. However, research has indicated that classroom technology integration is not satisfactory [2], [3]. This paper analyses the theoretical aspects of using modern technology in English education, the shortcomings of the traditional teaching methods, and the advantages of using modern technology in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The previous studies published in journals and conference proceedings included in Web of Science and SCOPUS, regarding the benefits of using modern technology for English education, are discussed as references for integrating modern technology in teaching for English teachers. The aim of this paper is to provide English teachers and educators with a better understanding of the scientific aspects and the benefits of using modern technology in English education and encourage English teachers and educators to integrate modern technology in teaching practice. In addition, this paper also addresses the factors affecting the effective integration of modern technology in educational settings, giving educational policy-makers enlightenment as to the effective integration of modern technology in education.

Keywords: English; technology; teaching; learning

1. Introduction

The development of modern technology has brought about great changes in education, evidenced by the changes in the teaching environment, teaching content, learning form, etc. Many studies have shown that modern technology can improve the outcomes of education. Due to this, governments from all over the world have attached much importance to the integration of modern technology into education. For instance, the U.S. Department of Education issued “National Education Technology Plan 2010 (NETP2010)”, aiming to apply the advanced technologies used in our daily personal and professional lives to our entire education system to improve students’ learning; the UK launched the “Harnessing Technology Strategy and the Next Generation Learning Campaign” to raise people’s awareness of the benefit of the use of technology in education; China also has issued the “Ten-Year Plan of Educational Digitalization (2011-2020)” in order to enhance the integration of technology into education. Under the current

educational policy, many educational technologies have been introduced into classrooms and teachers are encouraged to integrate technology in teaching to achieve the improvement of their students' academic performance and technological literacy.

This paper aims to suggest using modern technology to improve English education.

The coming of modern technology and the studies that proved the benefits of modern technology bringing to education suggest us using modern technology in English education to achieve a more effective way of English teaching and learning. This paper highlights the theoretical aspects of integrating technology into English education and the advantages of using modern technology in English teaching and learning. In addition, suggestions for the effective use of modern technology in education are also presented.

2. Methodology

Qualitative methodology is adopted in the study, mainly by analysing the theoretical basis of integrating modern technology into English education, the shortcomings of the traditional teaching methods, and the advantages of using modern technology for English teaching and learning. The previous research published in journals and conference proceedings included in Web of Science and SCOPUS, regarding the use of modern technology for English education, is used as a support.

3. Theoretical basis

3.1 Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory of knowledge and learning. The earliest proponent of constructivism can be traced back to Swiss psychologist J. Piaget, who is an influential psychologist in the field of cognitive development. Constructivism believes that knowledge is not obtained by learners through teachers' instruction but through the construction of meaning which is achieved by collaborating with others in a certain context [4]. Constructivism considers "context", "collaboration", "conversation" and "meaning construction" as four essential elements in the learning environment. The "context" refers to creating a learning environment conducive to the meaning construction of the learned knowledge. "Collaboration" takes place throughout the learning process. Collaboration plays an important role in the collection and analysis of learning materials, the evaluation of learning outcomes, and the final construction of meaning. The "conversation" is an indispensable part of the collaboration process. The members of the group must discuss how to complete the learning tasks. The "meaning construction" is the ultimate goal of the entire learning process. The meaning to be constructed refers to the nature, laws, and intrinsic connections between things. Helping students to construct meaning in the process of learning is to help students to get a deeper understanding of the nature and laws of things reflected in the current learning content and the internal relationship between the things and other things. With the aid of modern technology, the teacher can use multimedia resources to create excellent learning contexts based on the teaching themes. The fusion of text, sound, images, videos, and animations provides students with a sound learning context. In addition, the rich teaching resources enable teachers to carry out classroom activities through which the communication and collaboration between the teacher and the students and amongst students will increase.

3.2 Theory of Second Language Acquisition

American linguist Stephen. D. Krashen proposed the famous second language acquisition theory in the early 1980s – “monitor theory”, which includes five hypotheses, namely the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the Affective Filtering hypothesis. The input hypothesis deals with how humans acquire the second language. It says that learners acquire the second language through the comprehensible input. Only when the input is comprehensible, can it have a positive impact on second language acquisition. And the incomprehensible input is only noise for learners. Therefore, making input vivid and relevant is beneficial to language acquisition. The “Affective Filter hypothesis” explains why learners have different learning speeds and achieve different levels of language.

This hypothesis holds the view that access to comprehensive input does not ensure that students can master the target language. The process of second language acquisition is subject to affective factors. Krashen believed that the affective factors are: 1) motivation. The students’ motivation for learning will directly affect the outcomes of learning. If motivation is explicit, the progress will be evident. 2) Personality. Learners who are self-confident, out-going, optimistic tend to gain more improvement in learning. 3) affective state. The affective state mainly refers to anxiety or relaxation. Those with higher anxiety will have higher affective barriers and less input [5]. With the help of modern technology, the integration of text, sound, videos, pictures, and animations in teaching materials not only helps students understand knowledge better but also makes learning more enjoyable. In other words, the use of modern technology can enhance the comprehensible input and reduce the anxiety of learning.

4. The advantages of using modern technology in teaching English

For many years, English teaching methods in many countries are characterised by the traditional one-way teaching mode, known as test-oriented teaching methods.

Words, expressions, and collocations are learned by memorization, which constitutes a heavy burden for learning [6]. In addition, under the traditional teaching mode, there is a lack of authentic English-speaking environment which is important to language learning. Nowadays, teachers use modern technology to assist English teaching, enabling students to reach rich resources and have more opportunities for exposure to a foreign culture, which will improve students’ interest in learning and in turn change students’ attitudes towards English learning.

Modern technology refers to any technologies that use computers and modern communication means to obtain, transfer, restore, process and allocate information. As for English education, modern technologies such as computers and networks are now being used in classrooms for instruction in composition, literature, decoding, reading comprehension, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, usage, punctuation, capitalization, brainstorming, planning, reasoning, outlining, reference use, study skills, rhetoric, handwriting, drama, in short, for every area of language arts [7]. Many studies conducted in recent years have indicated that modern technology can improve English teaching and learning [8]-[10]. In general, modern technology can benefit English teaching and learning in several ways.

4.1 Enabling access to rich resources from the internet

The development of modern technology enables teachers and students to access many online materials for English teaching and learning. There are many websites for English education, such as BBC English, VOA English, Ke Ke English, etc, and the

websites will be updated each day. Teachers can use the information from them as valuable teaching materials. With the help of the internet, teachers can also download or find teaching materials from the technological device directly. For example, interactive whiteboards include various kinds of digital teaching materials, teachers can directly use these resources or utilize the materials to make individual teaching plans and courseware and most interactive whiteboards contain interactive textbooks containing videos, audio, hyperlinks and extra materials, helping teachers save time for preparing lessons [11]. Additionally, there are many online courses in MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), YouTube, TEDx Talks, iTunes U, etc. Students not only can use them to broaden their vision, such as experiencing language culture which is important for language study, but also can use them to enhance English listening skills.

4.2 Increasing participation and motivation in English learning

Many teachers and educators try hard to figure out a way that can help to increase learners' interest in learning. Modern technology can make this idea true. With the aid of modern technology, teachers can integrate pictures, images, animations, and videos into teaching materials, making learning more interesting. Hence, it can attract students' attention and increase students' participation in English learning. Liu and Chu [12] investigated a case study about the differences between the experimental group who used ubiquitous games to learn English and the control group who used a non-gaming method. The participants included 64 seventh grade students aged 13 or 14 years old and three high school teachers. The results demonstrated that the ubiquitous games affected the learning outcomes and students' motivation in English learning. The experimental group stated that they enjoyed the ubiquitous game because the game provides opportunities for practicing speaking in an actual environment.

4.3 Creating an authentic learning experience

Studies have indicated that modern technology is an effective teaching tool.

Integrating modern technology in the process of teaching and learning helps students experience things virtually. For example, if teachers want to lecture a topic about Disneyland, they can display the scene of Disneyland through a video as not all the students have the opportunity to go there before the lecture. The simulated environment gives students an experience similar to the real experience, in which traditional teaching modes cannot match [13]. On top of this, by modern technology, students can listen to native speakers' spoken English or they can communicate with native speakers directly.

For example, students can watch English movies on YouTube and experience native speakers' English. Teachers can use Facebook as an instructional tool in classroom teaching, helping non-native English-speaking students to communicate with native speakers.

4.4 Supporting individual learning

Modern technology enables individual learning. Teachers can send videos or teaching materials to students, which often happens in a flipped class. Students can watch the videos and learn the teaching materials at their own pace. They can fast-forward, rewind, or replay the videos whenever they require [3]. This is helpful for the less informed students. They can listen to a teacher's lecture again and again, which cannot be realized in a traditional class. Particularly, for those students who cannot attend the class, technology-assisted learning is an aid. Furthermore, there are various kinds of Apps that can be downloaded onto phones. Students can use them, based on their needs, for learning English vocabulary or grammar. Some Apps may provide e-

books, which are useful for the improvement of reading and listening skills. Only if there is internet, students can study without time and place limits.

4.5 Increasing Interaction and Cooperation in the teaching process

Modern technology can help increase the interaction in the teaching process, which is important for the development of communicative competence in a language. For example, interactive whiteboards can increase interactions between teachers and students and among the students as the main function of an interactive whiteboard is its interactivity [9]. Luo and Yang [14] researched the effect of the interactive functions of whiteboards on elementary students' learning. The findings showed that teachers' use of the interactive whiteboard's basic interactive function helps to enhance students' willingness to learn and enjoyment of learning. It is an undeniable fact that through active involvement in instruction pupils learn more effectively [15].

4.6 Improving the outcomes of learning

Whether the use of modern technology is to increase students' motivation of learning, or to make learning more interesting, or to increase the interactions in classroom teaching, the final goal of integrating technology in teaching is to improve the outcomes of learning. Numerous studies have indicated that modern technology can improve the outcomes of education. Ebrahimzadeh and Alavi [16] studied the educational potential of a digital video game to see if it can facilitate students' vocabulary learning. The participants of the study were 136 male EFL (English Foreign Language) students aged from 12 to 18. Pre- and post-test were used to examine students' performance in learning vocabulary. The result indicated that there was a significant difference in scores from pre-test to post-test. In other words, digital video games can help language learners with vocabulary learning. Couvaneiro and Pedro [17] researched the use of tablets in teaching English as a foreign language. 53 Portuguese 8th-grade students and two teachers were involved in the study. The result indicated the positive effects of the tablets on the teaching-learning process, which were proved by the development of English oral competence of students. Likewise, a study by Bitter and Meylani [18] on the effects of a mobile English-speaking software app called "Qooco Kids English" on children's spoken English. In the research, the Qooco Kids English was used to teach children aged from 10 to 12 years to speak English. The pre-and post-tests indicated that the "Qooco Kids English" software can improve students' achievement in both spoken and written English.

5. How to integrate modern technology effectively

The use of modern technology can greatly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of English teaching and learning, which has been proven by many studies. Integrating modern technology in education has become a national strategy of education worldwide.

However, the effective use of modern technology is more than the introduction of technology in the classroom. That is to say, gaining access to technology does not mean the successful integration of technology in teaching. Studies showed that although schools are rich with technology, classroom teaching in many countries is still dominated by traditional teaching modes. It is like wearing new shoes, but walking in an old way.

For example, in many countries, classrooms have been equipped with interactive whiteboards. However, many teachers just take them as simple presentation tools used for presenting courseware. In this case, classroom teaching is still teacher-centered instead of student-centered.

The research found out that teachers' technological competence is the main factor affecting the effective use of technology in classroom teaching because technology itself cannot bring effect to education, and its impact on education can only exert through the teacher who is the direct practitioner of using technology. Therefore, importance should be attached to teachers' technological competence in order that technology can be used effectively for active classroom teaching. Emphasis should be placed on training teaching staff to be competent in using modern technology. This needs joint efforts from educational policymakers, school leaders, teachers, and educators, etc. Educational policymakers and school leaders should carry out plans to train teachers on how to use technology to improve teaching instead of only the knowledge of technology software and hardware. Teachers should be aware of the effectiveness and efficiency that technology can bring to teaching and learning and actively integrate it into teaching practice. It is worth mentioning that teachers use technology to bring pictures, images, audio, video, animations, etc., to the teaching process, making classroom teaching more interesting and enjoyable, the aim of which is to serve the needs of teaching, i.e., for improving the outcomes of learning, not just for fun. One must understand the instructional purpose and how the technology might be utilized best to accomplish that purpose.

6. Conclusion

This paper discusses the theoretical basis of the integration of technology and the advantages of using modern technology in English teaching and learning. As modern technology can benefit English education in many ways, it is important to reform the traditional teaching modes by integrating modern technology into English teaching and learning. Although it is an undeniable fact that technology can significantly enhance the effectiveness of English education if it is used properly, the effective use of modern technology involves teachers' knowledge of how to use modern technology for teaching purposes. Therefore, attention should be paid to improve teachers' technological competence in teaching. In the meantime, with the help of modern technology, information is easily reachable. However, not all the information is good for students, even some of them are harmful. Teachers have responsibility to help students identify and choose valuable information.

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Language and Identity

Breaking the “Cultural Bubble” through the Immersive Model

Nicoletta Peluffo¹
Kent State University Florence Center, Italy¹

Abstract

This paper is based on an observation conducted on a population of around 700+ US students (yearly) in some study abroad programs based in Florence, mainly Kent State University Florence Center (KSUF). KSUF is the program abroad of Kent State University whose central campus is in Kent, Ohio. Observing KSUF students for over a decade has allowed to conduct some reflections about their way of reacting when they enter the host culture and activate immersive strategies. Approximately 70% of these students have never travelled outside the United States. Some have not experienced significant cultural differences and most have not studied Italian prior to their arrival in Italy. The official language of the program is English, and students share apartments and courses for the entire semester. The result is that students tend to reproduce their original framework of reference in a sort of “cultural bubble” which functions as a transitional setting. In order to help students, abandon the “bubble” KSUF has developed a model based on the idea of immersion focused on the city of Florence as academic, cultural and social context. The immersive model is centered on two different perspectives: using the city as a learning framework and connecting students to local institutions following their request to act as volunteers. This paper describes the model used by KSUF to bridge the inside of the program to the outside, guiding students towards adaptation using the language as a tool to penetrate the new context.

Keywords: cultural bubble, immersive model, volunteer, language

1. Introduction

The “study abroad bubble” is a widespread phenomenon among International students who decide to study in a different country for one semester or more. Typically, the idea of “filter socio-cultural bubble” (Holliday, 1999) refers to the tendency to create a socio-cultural and linguistic context in which an individual builds relationships and networks. This phenomenon mainly involves mono-cultural and mono-linguistic groups that share the same background and it coincides with the first phases of transition into a new environment. In the study abroad system a “cultural bubble” generally refers to a physical or ideal place where students replicate their original framework of reference. It is a space where they feel protected and try to reconstruct a comfortable situation with someone of their age who shares the same values and, in particular, speaks the same language. The metaphor of the “bubble” details the environment that students try to reproduce at the beginning of their experience in a phase where they begin to develop intercultural sensitivity moving from an ethnocentric outlook to an ethnorelative one (Bennett, 1977). A bubble inflates slowly during the first weeks of stay and then it pops abruptly when students realize that they can actively impact on the host culture. Despite

the many challenges that students decide to take by studying abroad, the intercultural adjustment remains a controversial aspect of the experience that requires a shift toward a new mindset and a higher level of self-efficacy. From their arrival in the host country students are exposed to new stimuli that must be processed in a very short time. This process generates from improved coping strategies and greater empathy towards the new experience.

1.1 Study Abroad from U.S. university students' perspective

While college or university students engaged in the Erasmus project experience a more rapid transition into the host culture due to their need to cope in the new study and living context, for Northern American college and university students the transitioning phase requires more time. At their arrival in the host country, U.S. students typically spend most of their time in the same environment and travel together during field trips or independent trips with few possibilities of interaction with locals and native speakers.

Despite the difficulties, students show a strong desire to partake in the host country and have positive reactions. However, the initial enthusiasm turns into a defensive recoil as soon as they realize that their cultural competence is not developed enough to be effective outside the school. This is a very delicate phase and in this specific moment the “bubble” represents a shelter where they can interact with compatriots-protected by the wall of their school. In semester students, this shift is registered towards the third week of their stay: their defensive approach is a reaction to an invisible threat that is the generated by their perception of being threatened by “competing” cultures (Bennett, 1977). In the case of students spending a semester in Florence the “bubble” is reinforced by the massive presence of many U.S. study abroad programs. In this specific phase, the school has the opportunity of helping students in breaking the bubble and stepping outside in a positive, guided way.

1.2 Breaking the bubble through the immersive model

Recent literature review shows that students benefit from their experiences abroad in terms of personal and professional growth, increased autonomy, openness to otherness and diversity. While at the end of semester every student can perceive the beneficial and positive impact of the overall experience, the steps towards adaptation and immersion while the semester progresses can be, sometimes, very intense. As students consider the school the center of their “bubble,” the school is often expected to provide students with the tools and the framework toward adaptation. In this regard, KSUF has developed a model based on the idea of immersion and flipped classroom focused on the city of Florence with all its multifaceted aspects that encompass art, history, language and social dimension. Syllabi and course materials emphasize the role of the student as the center of the learning process in an immersive setting, which is represented by the city considered as a context. One of the core objectives of this method is to move students from passive to active learning based on some common, shared objectives: learning the culture, earn flexibility, enhance critical approach. The “immersive model” goes beyond the students' academic life: it entails a number of different initiatives, such as social activities and volunteer/service work.

1.3 “Florence as Classroom”

The expression is an homage to Marshall McLuhan theory of “city as classroom”, in which the author underlines the importance of knowledge acquired outside the classroom exploring a wide range of characteristics of the cultural and social environment (McLuhan, Hutchon, McLuhan, 1977). The city of Florence, conceived as a

living-learning community, is the theatre of the immersive model proposed by KSUF.

Florence represents an extraordinary cultural and artistic resource but also a model of complexity, negotiation, growth and innovation. A number of contextualized activities are offered to the learners in order to exploit the properties of the city in the courses and for extra-class activities. In particular, some activities foster a predisposition of some students to volunteer in multiple institutions in the city. Volunteer/service learning can be framed variously in study abroad: it can be offered as part of the study abroad program or can be offered separately as Service Learning (Doerr, 2019; Plater, 2011). The two possibilities are offered through different channels: Service Learning is an experience that students conduct as part of their study process and it is focused on specific elements of the host culture. Volunteer/service work is embedded in the semester and it is not offered for credits: it is based on the student self-involvement in activities organised and promoted by the school and participation is based on a genuine, spontaneous initiative.

1.4 Volunteer/Service Learning and intrinsic motivation

The most popular volunteering activity is the service offered to public schools and public institutions, a project based on language teaching. KSUF students offer to cooperate with English teacher as language experts and in turn they have the opportunity of penetrating authentic Italian environments and interacting with Italian students of their age whom offers their availability in speaking Italian. Volunteer activities are not credit-bearing, nor do they fulfil graduation requirements: they are grounded in an intrinsic motivation that students show toward an opportunity to immerse in the service of others.

Volunteer activities are prepared through a series of meetings and encounters where students are informed about the expectations of the host institutions. Successively, they visit the host institutions and they meet the reference person who introduces them to all the participants. Students receive information and guidance in order to adequately develop the expected activities. Every three meetings they have debrief sessions with the school tutor in order to adjust the activities and process the information obtained.

1.5 Italian language: a tool toward socio-linguistic competence

While at the very beginning of semester students feel encouraged to participate in the volunteer project because they can use their own language, one of the first results of their experience is that they understand the importance of learning and improving Italian in order to function at a higher level of participation. On the one hand the Italian language courses serve as a framework of the immersive project and the language class represents an important extension toward the host culture; on the other hand, final feedbacks and weekly reports show a significant improvement in Italian language proficiency and a change in their communicative language skills. Moreover, the opportunity to speak Italian with native speakers and the process of preparation to enter a different environment progressively reduces their L2 anxiety. In this scenario students enhance different forms of motivation for the study of Italian language: from an intrinsic motivation, which at the beginning refers to the satisfaction of learning for personal fulfilments, they transition to an extrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 1998; Gardner, 2010) related to external regulations or opportunities. This shift in motivation corresponds to their progressive desire and need of breaking the cultural bubble and immerse in the host socio-cultural environment, a process that is accompanied by the building of a socio-linguistic competence.

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Ethnosemiometric Parameterization of Diachronic Core of the Concept TRUTH and its Profiles In the British Axioconceptosphere

Nataliia Stefanova¹

Dragomanov National Pedagogical University, Ukraine¹

Abstract

The article deals with the diachronic core of the value concept TRUTH, which is a mental construct, a model with a complex network of conceptual and motivational features demonstrating a variety of primary semantic features of the designated concepts firstly for a person of pagan consciousness and later for a Christian one. These signs are detected by ethnosemiometric parameterization of the internal form of the name of the concept which holds their primary origins. This objectifies the concept in the value dimension and reflects the collective archetype representation of the British about the concept. Also, the reconstruction of cognitive mechanisms of transfer of its diachronic conceptual features from one sphere to another (established order – faith) is carried out. Therefore, the value is always the center of the concept, since the concept is a “bundle of culture”, which is based on a value and significance principle. There are grounds to assert that the axioconceptosphere of each ethnic group is ontological and epistemological synergetic-evolutionary entity, in which their archetypal signs are transformed as historically and evolutionarily, as culturally, socially, spiritually, individually. Depending on the type of values that the concept TRUTH objectifies, some of its features become central, while others are marginalized. To verify this assumption, we propose the 2-stage algorithm of ethnosemiometric parameterization of the value concept TRUTH: the first stage – the analysis of Indo-European and Proto Germanic forms and meanings of its name – the lexeme truth with their semantic transitions, and the second stage – analysis of etymological and semantic profiles of the lexeme truth with the words trust, belief, faith, which have the meaning of faith in the English language. We have made a preliminary conclusion that in the long search of an answer to “What is the truth?” the researchers assert that mentalizing of this concept in consciousness is determined by the peculiarity of national worldview and axioconceptosphere where primary senses of the value concept TRUTH were formed in ontogenesis as its diachronic core. The conceptual and content features are best realized within the framework of separate models of the world: scientific, naive, religious.

Keywords: concept Truth, axioconceptosphere, ethnosemiometry, diachronic core

1. Introduction

The concept of the interdependence of the transcendent and the existential (biological, psychological, social, cultural, etc.) ways of human Genesis, according to L. Vikolova and K. Serebrennikova, is based primarily on such phenomenon as identity [8].

We believe this notion began to form first in the sphere of initial (syncretic) consciousness of ancient ethnic groups who at that stage unconsciously felt the

difference between “friends” and “foe”.

This articulation of issue requires a more detailed explanation of the concept “ethnic and cultural identity”, which was realized by the British gradually in different evolutionary periods of their development. The focus should be on the disclosure of relationships between the key dichotomy of language and ethnicity that remains central in the ethnography (A. Baiburin), sociology (A. Maimakova) and ethnolinguistics (W. von Humboldt) and the discussion around which has exacerbated by modern geopolitical, territorial, intercultural contacts and even conflicts.

Indo-European (I.-E.) ethnic group should be considered in the context of the search of their homeland (territory of residence and further migration), which became the main theme in Indo-European (L. Zalizniak) and predominantly linguistic research (T. Gamkrelidze).

L. Gumilev asserted natural character of ethnic formations and noted that at the time of the occurrence a single ethnic group got a boost of single energy charge and, having exhausted it, passed either to the bifurcation state with the environment or broke up into parts. According to L. Gumilev, in the biosphere there are natural groups of people with a common stereotype of behaviour, a kind of internal structure, which oppose themselves to all other similar groups [2]. This implies the assumption that the ethnic group is an organic social structure, which is based on the system of ethnic and cultural information and the translator of which is the language. Each language stands as a productive system of symbols and reflects the experience of the people. People unconsciously transfer the norms established by the language into the sphere of experience. These statements relate to the ethnic constants formed and preserved in the consciousness of certain groups of people. These constants are inherited by the next generations in the form of values, meanings, norms and rules and become mental formations – concepts.

The key value concept of the British culture, which origin dates back to the Indo-European period, is the concept TRUTH.

2. Research methodology

Study of understanding and evaluation of the self in relation to the “other/others” and toward the world in general can be effective with the method of ethnosemiometry, which relies on the assumption that the processes of world conceptualization in semiosis are accompanied by the process of evaluation [6].

We consider the term ethno-semio-metry, after Vikulova and Serebrennikova [8], in two standpoints: firstly as a measurement procedure (which is incorporated in the final component of the term – “metry”) of the two aspects (form and content) fixed (reflected) in the language of values (indicated in the initial component “ethno” and the central one – “semio”). The initial component provides the analysis of a specific linguistic symbolic form in a particular cultural chronotype and cultural deixis while the component “semio” requires to reconstruct the meaning of this form. Thus, semantically loaded signs reveal significant senses correlated with the **sphere of values**. By the chronotype we mean diachronic and synchronic period in the evolution of the British society: from the Indo-European ethnic community through Proto Germanic periods of linguistic unity and the periods of the English language development – anchors of correlation of time (divergent) and space (convergent) relations with the specific ways and means of the world reflection at different stages of consciousness development of its carriers: from mythological and syncretic to the modern differential one. The richness of each national language is determined not only by the vocabulary and broad grammatical possibilities but also by

the richness of the conceptual sphere, which reflects the character of the speech personality of a certain ethnic group. The diachronic core of the value concept TRUTH was formulated in mythological and pagan Indo-European consciousness as one of the ethnic archetype constants (V. Karasik) in axioconceptosphere.

3. Results of the research

Previous observations on the symbolism of the primary meanings of the lexeme *truth* suggest that its internal form was formed on the basis of ideas about the image of a tree, because a well-rooted tree is strong, unshakable, stable and powerful. When this word entered old English, it had acquired the meaning “honest, pure”, “persistent, strong, solid” or “trustworthy”, “strong in faith”, “real, true” in proto Germanic period. All these first meanings reach above-mentioned I.-E. roots *deru-*, *dreu-* and became the basis of the internal word form of various Germanic languages: Germ. Treue “loyalty”, “devotion”, “precision and correctness”, Icel. tru “true”, Swed. tro, trygg, Old Scand. tryggr, Goth. trauains “trust, faith”, triggws “loyal, reliable”, and other Northern languages: Lith. drošs “reliable, trustworthy”, Est. truu. It is also appropriate to include the English phrase *true friend*.

It is possible to compare their reflexes and genetic ties with Engl. trust “trust”, **true** “genuine”, truce “armistice, treaty, union”, trust – “faith, reliance”, and truth – “right”, “law”.

Returning to the semantics of “hardness, strength” associated with a tree, we note that it is also symbolically connected with the original source of the birth of fire, because the friction of wood on wood gives results in fire. The ritual and sacral functions of fire symbolize the process of purification, and, therefore, fire is considered the source of any birth. It can be traced in semantics of “burn” in the I.-E. root **kel-* (this is typical of many other Indo-European roots) and in its English derivative *clean* which symbolizes **order** and harmony. Latest meanings are reconstructed in I.-E. root **dreu-*, corresponded with Old Ind. *dharmah-* “order, harmony”. These etymological hypotheses reflect the symbolism of the WORLD TREE as a visual image of the reflection of order and harmony, the key to which is **stability, firmness, honesty and faith**, and therefore, **truth** / verity. I.-E. root **tris* (triunity: the symbolic top/crown of the trees – the world of the gods, the kingdom of heaven – SKY; the trunk / rod – human and animal world – the EARTH; the roots / bottom – the underground world of gods and deceased ancestors, the underworld) is reconstructed in Old Engl. *drisn* “hair, rod”. A rod metaphorically represents the vertical (Top – Sky), World Axis which permeates and connects the worlds (heavenly and earthly).

The semantics of “order and harmony” is syncretically connected with the semantics “faith, trust”, which is reconstructed in the (I.-E. root **dreu*, which is the origin of Prus. *drumit* “to believe”, *drumi* “faith”, Latin. *credere* “to believe”. Same meaning may be connected with Sansk. *dhruva* “hard” (as wood), “permanent”, *dru, daru* “wood,” and with Engl. *tree*; Gr. *δρυς* “oak”.

Given semantic transitions of tree symbolism as the image of stability, firmness, harmony and order into the symbol of **faith** reflect the fact that faith, stability, hardness associated with wood in pre-Christian cultures, especially with such a holy relic for many pagan cultures, including Indo-European, as the oak, which was the place for sacrifice and holy magic rituals. The druid cult considered oak as the most important and sacred tree associated with the center. The name “druid” reaches I.-E. root **dru* “oak” (see **dreu* – “to be firm, resistant”). The oath on an oak as on the strongest tree in druidism ensured firmness and compliance with concluded agreement (hence Goth. *trausti* “agreement, alliance”).

The next stage of the analysis involves the study of etymological and semantic transitions of the lexeme *truth* with the words that in the English language have the semantics of faith: *trust*, *belief*, *faith*. Modern understanding of the lexeme *trust* is “strong faith based on logic and internal beliefs”. The Noun *belief* means “a weak faith, which accepts a truth based on logic without any real evidence and facts”. The lexeme *faith* is used to denote “reckless faith without the use of logic and reason”.

The genetic relationship mentioned above becomes evident from these three modern meanings of given lexemes because both lexemes **trust** and **truth** reach the same I.-E. root **deru-*. The semantic structure of the word *trust* mostly preserves the common primary meaning “persistent, firm faith”, and it enables to assert value sense of truth based on a firm belief in something.

We try to trace if there are semantic and genetic links between the three synonymous lexemes, which are all names of the concept TRUST.

In the English language, the lexeme *belief* came into use in the XII century in the Christian meaning as “faith in this religion”, replacing old English *geleafa*, which was also used as “faith, trust” but it was related to West Germanic form **ga-laubon* “respect and trust” (genetic derivatives of which is Old Sax. *gilobo*, Germ. *Glaube*) with the saved and reconstructed I.-E. prefix **ga-* and which was derived from I.-E. etymon **galaub-* “dear, respected”, formed by means of intensive prefix **ga-* + I.-E. root **leubh-* “to care for, desire, love”. Prefix **ga-* has been changed by analogy with the verb *believe*.

Since 1200 it has been used to denote “the basic religious or church doctrines according to which things are considered true as objects of religious significance” [5].

Therefore, semantic transitions of original meaning of faith were connected with “trust in God” and were expressed by the lexeme *belief*, whereas the original semantics of faith, marked by lexeme *trust*, meant a “solid devotion to a person, firm faith in existence as its truth”.

Following semantic ideas about faith can be traced from the middle of the XIII century in the word *faith* and its genetic derivatives *faith*, *feith*, *fei*, *fai* that meant “faithfulness to a promise (hence the religious concept vows)”; “loyalty to a person”; “honesty, veracity, truthfulness”, which was borrowed in English from Old French *feid*, *foi* “faith, trust, confidence” that comes from Lat. *fides* “trust, faith, confidence”, associated with the root of the verb *fidere* “to trust” which reaches I.-E. form **bheidh-* “trust, confide, persuade”. Since the XIV century, according to the etymological versions, the lexeme *faith* (Lat. *fides* – religious belief) has acquired a broad religious sense. And since the XVI century the use of the lexeme *trust* within the meaning of “logical mental perception of things in existence as true/truthful” and lexeme *belief* in the perception of “things to be true as the objects of religious doctrine” have become limited.

4. Summary

The value diachronic core of the concept TRUTH in the consciousness of British as the descendants of Indo-Europeans was formed by sequential formation of ideological and civilizational foundations of GENESIS on the basis of primitive notions about these concepts in three evolutionary stages: 1) pagan/cosmogonic, 2) Christian-biblical, 3) modern European (secular).

Pagan stage of value worldview cognition of truth is characterized by the combination of sacred and profane components. The sacral component is the order of the world, the establishment of the basic structures of existence at the cosmogonic, natural and cultural levels. In this period, the acts of gods founded the key archetypes (ethnic Indo-European constants), which were standard for all spheres of human life. Its profane component is

the everyday existence of the Indo-Europeans.

In the pagan model of the world the order and stability were provided by the ritual (as faith in its enforcement to ensure relations with the gods) and the cult of the tree as a visual-sensorial perception of the world, the crown of which metaphorically could be understood as symbolic top – sky, the trunk was conceived as firm and strong faith in the magical power of ritual, the roots – as the ancestors.

In the Germanic model of the world and the British as its descendants, the basis of stability and order of Genesis, i.e. truth, is the cult of the tree as a natural and at the same time cosmogonic object (artefact), metaphorically indicated as the name of the concept TRUTH even in Old English. During Christianization Indo-European value constants of the concept of TRUTH continue to encode the affirmations accepted as standard under the influence of the idea of transcendent God, God the Creator. However, the dominance of other constants can also be traced, in particular TRUST, BELIEF, FAITH.

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Graduate and International Students Explore Language and Identity within a Win-Win Learning Partnership

Anca Mihaela Dobrinescu¹, Ligia Sarivan²
Petroleum-Gas University, Ploiești, Romania¹
Institute for Educational Sciences, Bucharest, Romania²

Abstract

Our paper documents three years of learning partnerships that involve two groups of participants: 1) international students enrolled in the preparatory year and 2) language graduate students enrolled in an Intercultural Studies Master programme at the University of Ploiesti. The first have an overall objective of obtaining the B2 level in Romanian for the certification exam allowing admission for any academic programme in Romania; the second are to explore identity and otherness while developing a cultural project focused on supporting the international students' language acquisition and integration in their new community. For both groups there is an opportunity to meet learning needs in meaningful contexts and to offer support to one another in order to attain their respective academic goals. The design of this approach originates in identifying solutions to the various learning problems of the two groups, namely the cultural shock and the effort to build the progression from scratch to B2 in only two semesters of intensive study (group 1) and the overcoming of cultural stereotypes beyond the knowledge sanctioned in the classic exams (group 2). The project-based design relies on team teaching and the community of practice among faculty members who work with the two groups and who jointly organize learning situations as part of the academic curriculum and in outdoors and extracurricular activities. On the other hand, the graduate students in group 2 are invited to further extend their autonomy as they connect via social media to discuss, plan and develop their project and make decisions about teaming with international students in group 1. After three years of monitoring, the results of the learning partnership are constantly win-win: 80% of the international students pass their exams; the language graduates develop good projects and are very satisfied with the outcomes; last but not least real friendships develop among the two groups and more innovative faculty members revise their methodology.

Keywords: cultural dialogue, student-centred approach, learning partnership, contextualized language acquisition

1. The context of a partnership: brief history

The idea of this partnership originates in the setting up of the MA programme "Concepts and Strategies of Intercultural Communication" at the Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti twelve years ago. The curriculum was designed to develop the students' intercultural competence. Considering now the initial steps in retrospect, we must admit that all courses had a clearly theoretical penchant, although the main declared goal was to raise the students' cultural awareness and make them competent

intercultural communicators. Too little, if any, real exposure to cultural difference there was at the time. Issues of identity were exclusively addressed by case studies in diverse media [5]. The programme is still running nowadays, but the approach has changed substantially.

The same faculty which coordinates the MA programme organizes the activity of the preparatory year attended by international students from more than fifteen countries, which represent as many culturally diverse environments, involved in the intensive study of Romanian language with the overall objective of obtaining the B2 level.

Judging by the way the Romanian academic system is tailored, these two programmes are not supposed to have too much in common other than being administratively hosted by the same faculty.

In 2012, a project-based design of certain modules of the MA programme was applied, which presupposed, on the one hand, team teaching and a community of practice among faculty members and, on the other hand, the involvement of MA students in projects with relevance for the problematics of intercultural communication. The same year, the students have identified “the need of a strategic change regarding our University’s library in order to develop a better environment in which both professors and students are able to interact, expand learning activities, discuss research issues and become partakers in cultural exchange.” [6]. The students’ project, presented in [6], served as a wake-up call to the university staff, but it would have been just wishful thinking, but for the involvement of the university management. It took five years and a competitive project to turn the 2012 imagined library into practice. The university now has a learning centre where students are able to genuinely take part in the cultural exchange.

The learning partnership has been seen as a solution to various learning and real-life challenges, such as acquiring Romanian while adapting to a new culture or overcoming stereotypes and becoming sensitive to difference [1], [2], [4]. The graduate students and the prep year international students were brought together and started working in projects in and outside the university, in the academic environment, as well as in real-life situations. Learning Romanian is no longer limited to the confines of the classroom, itself perceived, even by the Romanian students, as hostile. International students strive for B2. They do it in the academic environment, by formal activities, but they also do it because they feel the urge to communicate with their Romanian peers, because they want to make and keep friends, which helps them overcome the cultural shock. The Romanian graduates become sensitive to difference by being exposed to the foreign other, they become aware of their intercultural flaws, they develop a more in-depth understanding of stereotypes and clichés, and, very importantly, of their own identity and adaptation problems.

2. The project of a partnership: curriculum design and methodology

A learning partnership between two different groups from two different programmes is far from smooth but with focused planning the implementation comes into being! The academic curricula were revised to give more room to language practice for the international students in the prep year (G1) and to include learning by doing courses in project writing and project management for the grads (G2). Timetables of G1 and G2 are harmonized for Friday afternoon in order to allow a joint course once a month. The grads make the overture by preparing cultural project offers that aim at supporting G1 with language acquisition and cultural integration. These are presented in the first meeting with the international students. At that point, G2 had already been exposed to how to

write a project proposal and how to introduce it to a potential beneficiary. The “abc” of project writing is tested nevertheless with the real needs and profile of a culturally diverse group in a meaningful learning context where G1 and G2 engage in authentic dialogue.

Consequently, the project teams in G2 revise the initial proposals and discuss the details of a possible implementation. The steps of project writing are discovered, revisited and turned into action during the fall term when teams in G1 and G2 participate in at least one joint event outside the university. G2 have to document their event planning and outcomes for their exam in January. The spring term follows a similar design but with more complex learning: G1 are by then at A2 level and their communication and cultural needs are more demanding while G2 focus on project management. The second term joint meetings and outdoor planned events develop in a learning spiral on the basis of increasing better understanding among the project teams, which is sustained by their extensive use of social media [3]. G2 are given more autonomy in organizing the Friday joint meetings; they also explore project management concepts with selected feature films or documentaries on intercultural topics. Sometimes this gives them the idea to invite G1 to the movies!

The learning progress in G2 is monitored with project grids both in self-assessment and teacher-based assessment and is the object of the exams in January and June. The grads also fill in reflective essays at the end of each course. G1 take CEFRL-based tests, with a final assessment in June. A final questionnaire is filled by G2 at the end of the academic year.

3. Highlights of a partnership: main results

The methodology presented above has been implemented since October 2016. The three consecutive years highlight increased learning progress as well as popularity among students:

- The teaching staff observation documents improved quality in language learning, students' interaction and confidence: the international students pass their finals with the very few exceptions of G1 members who skip classes. The young people are always willing to participate in an exchange outside the class and some of them are confident enough to initiate a dialogue with teachers if they meet them in real life contexts (in town or during travels).
- The teachers who work with G1 have diversified their methodology: they constantly bring more cultural issues in their language class and mark the main Romanian holidays with practical traditional activities (e.g. painting eggs before Easter!)
- Throughout the academic year G2 evolve from stiff transmitters to communicators with versatile competences in interaction with G1. Their project work improves from one term to another and their presentation skills diversify in informal discussion with G1 and public speaking for the exams.
- G2's questionnaires also reveal interesting feedback: the use of cinematic material for the exploration of project management concepts is unanimously praised; more than 75% consider the learning partnership with G1 as a very valuable experience for life; more than two thirds consider teamwork an asset of the course and would like to have more opportunities of this kind during their higher education; their comments refer to the need for more courses like the project management one to involve them in critical thinking and discussion of the subject matter.

4. In search of meaning and relationship

Our new approach to the curriculum has led to a totally different approach to education, which has proved beneficial to all parties involved. The first and most palpable outcome is that both the graduates and the international students reached their learning goals. The projects in partnership gave them the opportunity to perform in meaningful contexts and to offer support to one another in order to attain their respective academic goals. Besides, the teaching staff have become part of this new learning partnership.

They had to perform beyond their comfort zone and design, themselves, courses whose focus no longer was knowledge about, but rather understanding of issues pertaining to intercultural communication.

The substantial benefit, then, resides in partakers developing a deeper understanding of otherness, becoming willing and able to deal with their own prejudice, to overcome stereotypical images and clichés. By the encounter with the other, issues of identity have begun to surface. Both students and teachers have acquired a more in-depth knowledge of themselves.

Learning Romanian, as well as learning intercultural communication have been achieved by interaction in meaningful real-life contexts. Academic relationships start being doubled by quality human relationships. The overarching benefit of this partnership is threefold. 1) The international students deal with the cultural shock more easily and are better equipped to adapt to the new culture. 2) The Romanian graduates develop awareness of the fact that identity and adaptation problems are likely to occur at home, as much as abroad. 3) The teaching staff start reconsidering their old approach to the curriculum and begin revising methodology.

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uugot.it: Solving Challenges of Integration with the Power of TV

Philipp Etzlinger¹, Francesca Sannazzaro¹
uugot.it, Austria^{1,2}

Abstract

uugot.it is solving the obstacles of language learning by giving people an innovative approach to access television. Students often find language courses dull as textbooks and learning videos are based on curated and not authentic content. At the same time course participants are being taught the standard language and cultural as well as societal peculiarities cannot be covered within language courses which leaves them with a stereotypical picture and often old-fashioned view of the country and its society. But language learning is more than just learning a language – it's about understanding the culture, it's about tearing down prejudices, and TV is the best source for that as it's a reflection of society. In fact, uugot.it is able to solve societal challenges through the medium of television. Highly acclaimed by experts uugot.it solves obstacles of integration of migrants with a low threshold in a fun and easy way: Instead of attending integration courses people watch TV and thereby learn about the values and traditions of the host society. uugot.it thereby overcomes language barriers: uugot.it is a smartphone/tablet application that streams TV-broadcasts and equips them with interactive intralingual subtitles. If the user comes across a word he or she does not understand, the user can click on it and a contextual translation of the word is being displayed. Each word clicked is stored in the user's personal word catalog and can be retrieved later for learning purposes. uugot.it is designed as well for autodidacts as well as for language courses. Educational institutions like Wiener Volkshochschulen, VHS Linz or bfi OÖ and universities like UNAM (MX), UFRP (BR) or UNRC (AR) already implemented uugot.it in their language courses or as a complementary source. In a meta-study on "Language Learning with Subtitles", the University of Vienna highlighted this approach as an essential tool for learning languages. Even today, 82% of those who learn English as a foreign language are also learning by means of TV and are using television as a medium of support. uugot.it optimizes this process.

Keywords: TV, interactive subtitles, integration, authentic content, broadcasts

Introduction

Since the latest migration wave, which flood over Europe, our systems and solidarity within the European Union member states have proved to be fragile. According to Eurostat, almost 4,3 million people applied for asylum within the EU-28 member states in the years 2014-2018 [1]. The majority comes from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, thus people from countries with different cultural backgrounds compared to the European hemisphere. Due to the political situation in the aforementioned countries, it is expected that a majority of the asylum seekers will get the possibility to stay in their host countries for a longer time, as it's likely that asylum will be granted to them. The endeavour of local

governments to integrate the vast number of refugees seems to be stretched to their limits – one of the biggest challenges is the limited number of language courses, and – therefore – a long waiting period. In Germany and Austria, the number of German as a Foreign Language teachers couldn't cover the demand, that's why civil society jumped in and took over. This is a necessary step, as measures of integration need to start from day 1 on. The risk that these migrants could find themselves in a negative spiral triggered by non-allocation to language courses and the exclusion from the labour market leads to demotivation and breaks the positive momentum to start over and become part of the new society [2]. Furthermore, migrants who pass the required language and integration exams are far from being integrated into the society, but further integration efforts are not available as too costly [3].

The stated challenges make clear – scalable solutions are needed.

This paper displays the results of the pilot phases we have run in Austria and Latin America and it shows how uugot.it can solve language and integration challenges on a large scale.

1. General

At peak times of the so-called refugee crisis, which took place in the years 2015-2017, people who were assigned to a German as a foreign language course needed to wait for more than 6-8 months, in some cases the waiting period exceeded 12 months.

This was not a reason of slow public authorities, but it had to do with the high influx of people who were trying to attend those courses. The number of course participants quintupled, while in less populated regions no infrastructure was available. At the main reception camp in Traiskirchen civil society – who helped out with German teaching – had to hold German-lessons in parks due to the lack of classrooms. In the meantime, the situation has improved especially as the number of incoming migrants has been dropping dramatically by the end of 2017.

Still, challenges exist. Asylum seekers who achieve B1 level – the threshold level to be reached in order to get a residency permit and full financial support – acquire the language basics, but they are far from being integrated into the host society. Fluency in a language is key to successful integration, together with involvement within the society.

Integration courses, which every asylum seeker needs to attend, are seen as the solution. In the past, these courses consisted in one 8-hour block in which traditions, manners, values and equal rights of men and women were addressed. These courses have been introduced in the aftermath to the 2016 Cologne attacks [4] and should provide an orientation of how coexistence in European societies work. Within a few years after their introduction, some changes were applied as it turned out that these courses didn't lead to the expected effects. Parts of those courses were integrated into the curriculum of other courses in order to make participants familiar with these topics on a frequent basis. Still, relying on a course to convey values and traditions may not be a sustainable option for everyone. Paired with the fact that further integration efforts are not being provided as they would require high costs, different solutions need to be crafted in order to remedy shortcomings in integration.

The solution we are looking for should be scalable, low-threshold and ubiquitous.

Soon we stumbled over a study conducted by Kaplan International, stating that 82% of English as a Foreign Language learners use TV as a source [5]. One of the co-founders at uugot.it had the same experience while studying in France in 2003.

Compared to 2003, new and more technologically advanced devices such as smartphones and tablets are now available, enabling the development of uugot.it.

2. The solution

With uugot.it we have developed an innovative service that transforms every TV-broadcast or video into a language course. As social entrepreneurs, our goal is helping immigrants to access public discourse and, thereby, boost the integration process.

uugot.it is connected to TV-broadcasters and streams their video content to smartphones or tablets, adding interactive intralingual subtitles so this means that German broadcasts are equipped with German subtitles. When a user comes across a word, he/she doesn't understand, he/she can click on that term and it will immediately be translated and stored within the learning section of the uugot.it app.



Fig. 1: uugot.it application in use

Language learning is only one side of uugot.it, but the app also helps broadcasters offer their viewers a mirror of society. By making TV-broadcasts accessible to people who have difficulties understanding the language, thanks to uugot.it the challenges of the local culture, its values and traditions become understandable. Via news, documentaries, talk-shows, uugot.it users learn about the host society, its emotional world and its mentality. Also, the possibility to watch broadcasts about migrants' countries of origin in a foreign language leads to a different point of view.

A central question that needed to be answered was whether subtitles improve language learning. The positive effects of the acquisition of the English language when consuming English content are well-known and backed by the results of Scandinavian countries, where Anglo-American films and series are not dubbed. This is reinforced by the observations of Dr. Krashen in the field of second language acquisition: people with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition [6]. People who want to learn while doing something they love, are higher motivated than those who only have the possibility to study on a textbook. The research study "UNTIS – Untertitel als Sprachlernwerkzeug" (Subtitles as tool for language learning) [7] – conducted by the University of Vienna –

dedicated themselves to this topic. The conclusion of the meta-study – which included about 50 research studies and a test group of 4.540 people – was that the potential of subtitles for language learning is generally high.

3. Outcomes of uugot.it pilot phases

Description of the test environment

During the different development stages, uugot.it ran several pilot phases with a total number of 623 pilot users. The aim was to get immediate feedback from the users, in order to allow the development team to react and adapt future developments. Each phase was limited to 5 weeks and covered two different target-groups: German as a Foreign Language Learners (= users from Latin America) and German as a second language learners (= users from Austria).

The pilot phases took place at adult education institutions and universities:

In Austria:

- VHS Linz (from March 2017 on)
- bfi OÖ (two pilot phases in November 2017 and March 2018)
- VHS Wien (in October 2018)
- Flüchtlingsverein Ute Bock (in October 2018)

In Latin America:

- UNRC in Rio Cuarto in Argentina (from May 2017 on)
- UNAM in Mexico City in Mexico (from October 2017 on)
- UFPR in Curitiba in Brazil (from June 2018 on).

Whereas the participating universities in Latin America and VHS Wien used uugot.it sCOOLing, a version which had been especially designed for language courses, the other institutions didn't use uugot.it within their language courses but provided their course participants with uugot.it TV (without didactic material) as an additional language tool.

The pilot phases participants also differentiated in terms of educational background and language homogeneity – whereas students at the universities in Latin America all had the same L1 (Spanish or Portuguese), participants in Austria had a different L1. For data privacy reasons and the impossibility to verify the data, we did not ask the educational background of the participants, but as the majority of the course participants were unemployed refugees and migrants (a few expatriates were also participating), we can assume that the level of education of the Austrian group was lower compared to the one of the Latin American group, where all participants were in academic training.

We did not run placement tests at the pilot phases, as educational institutions and universities only assigned students who had reached a certain level in a German language course, and passed with a certificate. During the pilot phase, all participants covered the levels A1-C1.

4. The outcome

uugot.it uses machine translation algorithms to translate the subtitles. The quality varies depending on the language pairs. In the closing survey, which was held at the end of each pilot phase, 80% of all students stated the implementation of further broadcasters is the most important feature that uugot.it needs to develop. Only when the content is

attractive, users will use the application. 15% stated that translation quality should be improved, but only according to 5% learning games need to be implemented into the uugot.it app. Although this last statement would suggest that users do not see uugot.it so much as a language learning tool, 70% were confident that uugot.it helped them improve their overall German language skills and 81% reported that their receptive abilities improved. A majority of users, mostly those who were living in Austria, meant that uugot.it helped them with a better understanding of local dialects.

During the pilot phases we only had implemented English from June 2017 on, Spanish from October 2017 on and Arabic from November 2017 on as translation languages. In case someone had another L1 than one of the three languages the proband needed to use English as a translation language. This worked quite well with the students from UFPR in Curitiba, Brazil, but we saw difficulties in Austria with the test groups there as their educational background was lower. We also made an interesting observation: Some probands, in that case female refugees from Afghanistan with L1 Dari/Farsi but almost no English knowledge, used the feature of uugot.it to slow down the pitch level (speed) in order that broadcasts were played at a lower speed. These women reported in an interview that, although they couldn't make use of the implemented translation languages, watching broadcasts with a reduced speed and reading the intralingual subtitles at the same time helped them to follow the broadcasts dramatically and improving their receptive skills.

94% of the participants who used uugot.it sCOOLing, an adapted version for in-class use, found that uugot.it brushed up the language course. 8 out of 9 educators who taught with uugot.it found that pupils were much more motivated and interested in the topics than without. 3 of the educators criticized that using uugot.it in class as a BYOD solution led to some noise as not all students used headphones. All 9 educators stated that uugot.it is a perfect addition for learning languages, 7 out of 9 assigned homework with uugot.it, 4 out of 9 used uugot.it for team exercises, all educators recommended watching TV or listening to the radio as a helpful tool in order to learn languages.

Also interesting was the correlation between the educational background and the time spent on the app, as well as the means by which uugot.it was implemented. The usage by students of educational institutions, which only recommended uugot.it as an additive tool and who didn't use uugot.it in class nor for homework, was lower. Those institutions which used uugot.it in class and where users were embedded in an academic environment, had the highest usage. Still, implementing uugot.it in courses led to a higher usage than just recommending it.

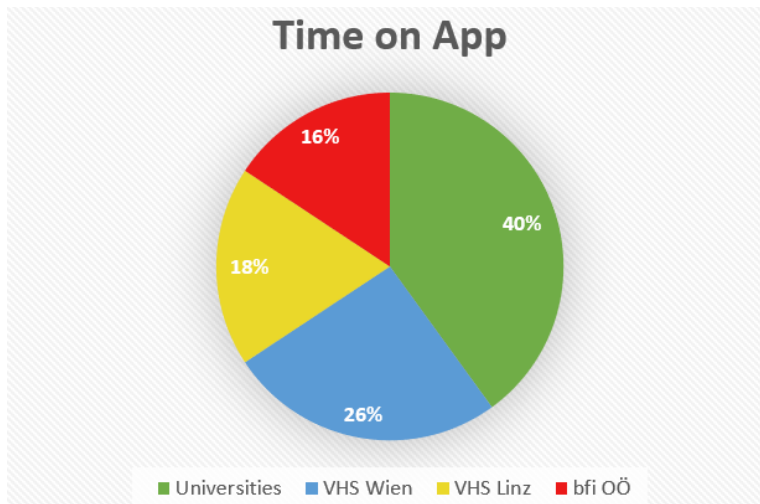


Fig. 2: uugot.it App usage. Universities (academic audience) as well as VHS Wien (non-academic audience) used uugot.it within class, VHS Linz and bfi OÖ only recommended uugot.it as an additional tool.

5. Imparting of cultural heritage

As there are around 8 times more Germans than people in other regions where German is spoken, the publishing market for educational material is much bigger.

Therefore, the German culture suppresses the Austrian, Swiss and South Tyrolean ones. By watching the Austrian National broadcaster (ORF), students from Mexico reported that they found it incredible to realize how Austrians differ in many ways from the Germans – they couldn't do these observations before. uugot.it also helped debunk some stereotypes – it is strongly believed that all Austrians can play the piano and ski at the same time, or that all of Austria is covered with mountains. uugot.it could enlighten people and convey Austrian cultural heritage as well. Michaela Höller, University lecturer at UNAM University in Mexico City, reported that her students (B1+, B2 and C1 level in German) were able to distinguish between the Austrian variety and the standard German and that they were sensitised to recognize the differences. All lecturers thought that uugot.it is helpful to impart local knowledge and therefore is suitable in terms of integration efforts.

6. Conclusion

The lessons we have learnt with the pilot phases is that a digital tool, like an application, gains much reputation when it is implemented and used within the language course -usage times are much higher. Another premise we made is that the educator as well needs to be confident and convinced that a tool like uugot.it improves language learning. The same stands for users: uugot.it can't reach everyone – users who were forced to attend the German courses and only participated because they would otherwise be sanctioned, had a much lower usage or didn't use uugot.it at all. The higher the variety of content, the higher and the more likely the target group will use the app.

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Language Learning to Support International Mobility

Foreign Language of Work: New Challenges for Serbian as a Foreign Language

Julijana Vučo¹
University of Belgrade, Serbia¹

Abstract

Being an alien in a country where one lives and works is a common phenomenon at the beginning of the 21st century. Apart from English as the language of global communication, to learn and work in a foreign language becomes a necessity. It is a phenomenon that has long been happening in most countries of the world. Based on data from the European Commission, 57 million Europeans reside in countries in which they were not born. The need for knowledge and learning of the language of the host country, different from the mother tongue, is one of the requirements for successful inclusion in the working world or for a shorter, longer or lasting residency. It should be standardized and matched with measurable requirements and offered under the language support program for work needs.

In Serbia, as a result of migrant movements from east to west, migration of highly qualified population of Serbia towards developed countries of Europe and the world, demographic crisis, but also European and other integration and work needs, labor mobility and the ability to function in a universal or domestic work environment is a clear need, and it is becoming an increasingly common reality. Within working frameworks, communication can take place in different languages, depending on the needs of employers, in English as lingua franca, or in some other foreign language, but also in Serbian as a foreign language of the environment. Serbian is used as the language of the environment, as well as a language of efficient integration into the working and other domains of everyday life.

Different models of language support are defined in the paper and encourage the need to create the Serbian Framework as the language of the environment for the needs of work.

Keywords: Language for work, Serbian L2, Serbian for work, framework of language support

1. Introduction

Dynamic and mass migrations have been one of the hallmarks of the modern age, and are closely connected to changes in the workplace for a number of reasons, from the search for better living conditions to satisfying the professional aspirations of the individual.

The migrant crisis that has also engulfed the territory of the Western Balkans since the spring of 2016, placing Serbia at the center of the transit migrant route at one point, has also brought a new attitude towards the temporary and lasting integration of migrants and the need to integrate them into the education system and the world of work.

Language learning issues are undoubtedly one of the decisive factors that enable

successful integration of a migrant population. Greater stability in mastering the language of the environment, leads to self-fulfilment, developing self-awareness and security in its contribution, and as a consequence achieves social and economic balance, as it gives the individual the opportunity to fulfil personal ambitions in the field of education and work necessary for his integration into the new environment.

Knowledge of language implies not only knowledge of linguistic signs, but also the adoption of the socio-cultural relationships that languages imply (Filipović, Vučo, 2018: 16), while in the field of education, language knowledge is directly related to the quality of the academic language spoken (Short & Spanos, 1989, Cummins 1991, Di Perna & Eliot 1999, Cummins 2008).

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) is starting point for all linguistic definitions in Europe, and thus for defining languages for work purposes. Bonvino defines this document as a descriptive and flexible, by no means prescriptive instrument describing the scales and levels of linguistic competence intended for linguistic educational policies of different European nations, linking the theoretical foundations of the plurilingual type, marking a clear break from traditional language teaching understood as a monolithic and centralized entity, a homogeneous system as measured against an imagined, ideal native speaker (Little, Bonvino *et al.*, 2017: 2). This approach to language learning, teaching and use has become a reference in the 21st century in all domains of language education policies and language use in the world.

2. Foreign Language for Work

The quality of the language for work needs has the characteristics necessary for speakers to make a positive contribution in the work environment (Elaborated in the project of the European Center for Modern Languages Language for work-Tools for professional development, 2016-2019, <http://languageforwork.ecml.at>).

There are different ways to help migrants develop language skills relevant to work needs, from formal education, individual, guided assistance, group support to the production of adequate and accessible language support tools and resources, etc. There are a number of obstacles that commonly occur as a lack of confidence to interact in a foreign language, as a result of poor contact with native speakers, limited literacy, lack of time, lack of financial resources to learn; difficulty in engaging in appropriate language teaching for work needs, lack of support for on-the-job learning, or lack of meaningful or complete absence of learning strategies, as not all migrants are literate and educated in the same way. As a consequence of all these disadvantages, there is also low motivation to learn or to continue learning the language (Braddell, Grünhage-Monetti, *et al.*, 2018a: 10).

Language skills required for all forms of language communication for work purposes can be defined as reflecting the requirement to first find suitable employment and, accordingly, master job search skills, writing a CV, applying for a job, interviewing for a job, etc. Also included are skills to perform work activities, knowledge of the language of the profession, i.e. appropriate communication models and terminology, as well as their functional applications that, in addition to those directly related to the subject matter, include the skills necessary to accomplish individual tasks, health and other insurance and entitlements, teamwork skills, leadership, labor law, responsibilities and obligations that the job requires. Language for work needs is necessary for career advancement in the field of vocational and formal education, non-formal learning and on-the-job training, vocational training through work practice and out of employment, etc. (Braddell,

Grünhage-Monetti, *et al.*, 2018a: 4).

3. Serbian as a Foreign Language for Work

The need to integrate the migrant population into the world of work and to enter the labor market in Serbia, in linguistic terms, poses a new challenge, on the one hand, for labor market actors (Latkovic, Grujicic, 2018: 5), but also for experts in the field of Serbian as a foreign language (detailing the measures taken and models of educational linguistic support for the migrant crisis in Serbia in Vučo, 2018; Vučo *et al.*, 2018, whose experiences so far was mainly geared towards language for school purposes.

It is a fortunate circumstance that the new demands placed on the Serbian language come across existing solutions offered in responsible professional and political-administrative European circles gathered around the Council of Europe (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy/adult-migrants>, <http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants>), as well as the legal provisions and guidelines of individual countries, e.g., Germany, Norway, Italy, Spain, etc. as well as those prepared in the Republic of Serbia for the inclusion of school-age migrants.

Support for learning Serbian as a foreign language for adults can be found in the documents and practices already mentioned. (Vučo *et al.*, 2018), hereinafter referred to as “the Framework”.

The Framework has established three modules, based on the Common Languages Reference Descriptors for Level A1: Module 1 for ages 6-10, Module 2 for ages 10-15, and Module 3 for ages 15 and up (detailing the modules in Vučo *et al.*, 2018: 40-41 and 43-96). It is this third module that can be used as a basis for defining language needs in order to meet the communicative needs of migrant adults in integrating into the labor market, to develop a Serbian language framework for work needs.

Such a linguistic instrument would be a basic document intended primarily for the teaching of Serbian language for adult foreigners for the needs of work, creation of integrative programs for adults, education and decisions related to the needs of the profession, adult education, needs related to staffing services for the selection of workers in appropriate jobs. , as well as all types of services and services related to labor market support.

In addition to the Serbian language classes, the Regulations governing this matter (Decree on the Method of Inclusion in the Social, Cultural and Economic Life of Persons Granted the Right to Asylum (“Official Gazette of RS” No. 101 of December 16, 2016, 56 of July 18, 2018). Decree amending the Decree on the method of inclusion in the social, cultural and economic life of persons who have been granted the right to refuge (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 56/2018) provide a person who has been granted the right to asylum to participate in a program of learning about Serbian culture, history and constitutional order for 30 hours a year. The program is proposed by associations and approved and funded by the Commissariat for Refugees of the Republic of Serbia. When designing the program, associations must take into account the mandatory content of the program, established by the commissioner in cooperation with the competent ministry for cultural affairs and the ministry responsible for public administration.

4. Conclusion

The learning and teaching of the host country's language and employment are basic conditions for the positive integration of adult aliens into the new environment. Particular attention is paid to the language of the work environment, which is imposed as a

condition for successful integration into the work environment. As a consequence of the migrant crisis in Europe, which has also engulfed Serbia, legal and by-law documents have been adopted indicating the obligation to learn the Serbian language and culture, history and social order. Although the legislation is favourably evaluated, we have noticed that adequate implementation of the legal provisions is accompanied by a number of ambiguities and inaccuracies, inconsistencies related to content, teaching, teacher qualifications, evaluation, etc. The need for the establishment of a Framework for Serbian as the language of the work environment is also emphasized, which would contribute to the quality affirmation of foreigners in the work environment.

The legal provisions obliging asylum seekers and asylum seekers to attend and take two courses, Serbian and Culture, History, Social Order, remain unclear. The ambiguities relate to the authorship of the content of the program, its uniqueness in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, the qualifications of the institutions of the contractor and the engaged teachers, teaching methods, evaluation problems, determining the level of competence, developing tests, defining certificates, etc. Each of these problems causes an uncertain and inconsistent quality of knowledge and results in an inadequate fit for the living and working environment.

Experts dealing with Serbian as a foreign language and the language of the environment should be included for the successful implementation of legal provisions relating to the development of teaching programs.

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Language Skills Development

Creativity of the Polish Students in Foreign Language Learning: The Benefits of English in the Process of Acquisition of German

Izabela Bawej¹, Agnieszka Kurzyńska²
*Institute of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics,
Kazimierz Wielki University, Poland^{1,2}*

Abstract

The authors present the results of their research done among the Polish students of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics who learn English as a first foreign language in addition to German as a second foreign language. The authors focus on the use of creativity in the process of the effective learning of foreign languages. The creative aspect of language use that can be observed in the foreign language acquisition is frequently limited to occasional playful activities with language and its structures. As the result, however, such an activity can support the process of acquisition as such, as could be recognized, for example, on the level of the pronunciation, the grammatical structures or the lexical structures. The point of departure here could be the confrontation between two parallel acquired foreign languages used by the students. The study shows through many examples e.g. how English can help and facilitate learning of German, how it can be an opportunity to enrich the knowledge of German, to succeed in learning it well, to use German grammar structures and vocabulary in appropriate contexts, to improve memorizing of taught material during German classes as well as be a source for positive transfer into German.

Keywords: creativity, similarities, benefits, English, German

The ongoing globalization in the cultural, economic and political life, mobility and continuous development of the Internet have made more and more people in Poland learn foreign languages. In Polish society, you can see a very strong increase in interest in learning English. Next, the German language is mastered due to the geopolitical situation of the country. That is why the offer of Polish universities has expanded to the possibility of simultaneous study of these two languages, for example in the field of applied linguistics. In the course of study, it is usually necessary not only to master the substantive content, but above all, to develop the ability to freely “switch” between two language systems, none of which is the mother tongue of students. In this context it is worth answering some questions. Is the study of closely related languages a facilitation for Poland’s students, or rather a full handicap? How do they deal with the difficulties encountered in the process of acquiring new codes of communication between people?

This article will be an attempt to answer such questions. The results of the survey conducted in June 2019 will be presented and analysed among first, second- and third-year students of the first degree of Applied Linguistics at Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Poland in groups studying English and German in parallel. 57 people participated in the study. The questionnaire contained 7 questions that concerned students’ experiences in the process of learning English as the first foreign language and

German as a second foreign language, and especially their ability to creatively compare both language systems. Particular attention was focused on the ability to look for analogies, but also on the perception of differences between languages on different levels of language.

Questionnaire

1. How long have you been studying English?
2. Where did you learn English?
3. How long have you been studying German?
4. Where did you learn German?
5. What similarities do you see between English and German? Please give 4-5 examples.
 - a. in terms of pronunciation
 - b. in the field of morphology
 - c. in the field of syntax
 - d. in the field of lexis
6. Do you think English can be useful in learning German? Please justify giving examples.
7. Do you think that learning English has a positive/negative effect on the learning process of another foreign language?

Table 1. Questionnaire

In foreign language teaching, one of the basic concepts is transfer. Language transfer is a diverse phenomenon. If the already developed habits and acquired skills transferred to the language that is being mastered are the source of language difficulties and errors, then the transfer is negative (the phenomenon of interference).

The positive transfer, which is the subject of these considerations, takes place where the similarities and associations of elements of one language, e.g., native language and/or the first foreign language, facilitate the process of acquiring and remembering selected elements of particular subsystems in the process of learning the second, third or even further a foreign language [cf. Kurcz 2000: 185; Harden 2006: 60].

It should also be noted that students (regardless of the kind of transfer) at some stage of the learning process become creative and innovative, which is reflected in their linguistic creativity [1]. It is obvious that this happens only at higher levels of learning, when the learners become more and more aware [2] of the rules governing language structures and have a richer vocabulary. Depending on their language skills, their creativity can be a kind of support for the learning process (e.g., by creating a loose sequence of associations that allow to remember new lexemes, word relationships or idioms). It can also lead to the creation of a specific “modern metalanguage [...], with the help of which young philologists designate the existing reality and comment on everyday events, getting into verbal contact with their interlocutors” [Kurzyńska 2010: 232]. The degree of creativity demonstrated by learners depends to a large extent on themselves, their linguistic potential or the tendencies to play with words.

According to the survey, students show a quite natural tendency to refer to what is already known to them. Therefore, they use the knowledge of an already acquired foreign language, which is English, which they learn on average for 16 years (Q1), to learn from selected words, forms, rules, structures and constructions in another language, such as German that they acquire from 3 to 12 years (Q3). Interestingly, English accompanies learners throughout their education from kindergarten, middle school, high school to university, which is declared by 56 people (Q2). In the case of

German, learning takes less time, the first contact with this language, the respondents usually had in junior high school or secondary school (32 people learned German in primary school). It was only during the studies that 12 people began to learn this language (Q4). Regardless of where and when the learning of a foreign language has taken place, one cannot eliminate what is in the consciousness of the learners. It is always a creative process [see Chomsky 1991], which means that students will sooner or later experiment with a given language. Therefore, if a learner knows more than one foreign language, he or she begins to look for similarities between languages in terms of pronunciation, spelling, grammatical structures or vocabulary. Such conscious linguistic behaviour is one of the manifestations of linguistic creativity on the part of the learner.

Its aim is to facilitate and accelerate the learning process and to obtain benefits, such as, for example, free and understandable communication with a native speaker of a given language.

To check how common this phenomenon is, students were asked to answer what similarities they see between English and German and to give examples (Q5). In the case of a phonic system, the respondents focused on sound similarities that greatly facilitate their pronunciation learning, e.g.: *fish – Fisch, house – Haus, person – Person*.

They also drew attention to a similar type of intonation in questions, i.e. rising intonation.

With regard to the morphological and syntactic system, students reported that convergences in English and German grammatical structures give them the opportunity to shorten and facilitate learning, e.g.: regular and irregular verbs: 3 verb forms: *begin-began-begun – beginnen-begann-begonnen*, forming auxiliaries *have* and *haben* in forming tenses, reaction: *thank for – sich bedanken für*, articles: *a new car – ein neues Auto*, forming comparatives and superlatives of an adjective: *long-longer-the longest – lang-länger, der/die/das längste/am längsten*, pronouns: *my – mein*, forming passives (*It was told – Es wurde gesagt*), forming infinitives with *to – zu* (*I try to learn – Ich versuche zu lernen*), forming tenses: Present Perfect – Perfekt, Past Perfect – Plusquamperfekt, Futur Simple – Futur I, word order in simple sentence: subject + verb + rest, inversion in questions: verb + subject + rest.

Noteworthy is the fact that they see a number of analogies in these languages and are able to use it in a practical way. In the questionnaires similar conclusions are repeated, e.g., regarding the rules of creating a passive voice: “auxiliary verb and third form of the verb”, its frequency of use, but also the statement explicitly: “Passive voice in English has helped me learn the passive voice in German”. Creativity of learner’s results, therefore, from the association of specific linguistic facts. The students’ creativity is also indicated by the fact that they try to transplant the syntax rules in English into the German syntax. An important point that is worth mentioning is the word formation. The respondents notice similarities among other things in the mechanisms of creating complex nouns, e.g.: *week-end – Wochen-ende, work-place – Arbeits-platz, snow-man – Schnee-mann*; derivation with suffix **-er** for the performer of an activity, e.g. *drive/driver – fahren/Fahrer* or in way of forming adjectives/adverbs with contrary meaning with prefixes **in-/im-/un-**, e.g.: *clear/unclear – klar/unklar, possible/ impossible – möglich/unmöglich*.

In the case of the lexical and semantic system, creative thinking of learners is even more transparent. The respondents wrote about graphical similarity, creating associations between languages and Anglicisms. The facilities that were mentioned by students and examples given by them are presented in the table below:

Spelling or phonetic similarity	<i>to find – finden, adjective – Adjektiv, family – Familie, mouse – Maus, emotional – emotional</i>
Associations	<i>book – Buch, milk – Milch, o tolerates – tolerieren, king – König</i>
Anglicisms	<i>T-Shirt, Party, Job, Interview</i>

Table 2. *Facilities in the lexicon*

They perceive many internationalisms in both languages, e.g., *theatre – Theater*, they can justify their presence, for example, originating from Latin or French. It is also worth emphasizing that the respondents use the knowledge of German according to their own abilities, needs and individual goals. It can therefore be assumed that previous linguistic experience gained from the learning process of the first and the next foreign language can have a positive effect on the learning of the next language when the student uses and activates the previously acquired knowledge, i.e., transfers educated habits and language skills, e.g. mastered patterns in the field of pronunciation, grammatical or semantic structures on currently acquired language material, to bypass difficulties while learning another language.

Recognizing the existing convergences between languages allows for greater creativity in learning a foreign language, but it helps also in the selection of methods for assimilating further linguistic issues. It is known that learning must be accompanied by the ability to consciously reflect on the language acquired. Thanks to it, the student can recall his own language and extra-linguistic experience [cf. Bawej 2013: 20]. That's why the answers to Q6 were important in the study. Most students answered that English can be useful in learning of German, e.g.: "Many grammatical structures are similar, and English pronunciation facilitates reading borrowed words from English in German", "It helps me a lot, because many words and grammatical constructions are similar in both languages".

It should be emphasized here that students also notice the negative impact of English when learning German in the form of interference errors. Respondents wrote, e.g.: "It helps, but you have to be careful because some of the structures may differ in spite of the similarities", "You have to watch out for 'false friends', e.g., *confident/Konfident, gift/das Gift*. This fact also confirmed the answers to (Q7): "The similarities in spelling and pronunciation may be confusing", "There are constructions similar but different", "It bothers if the words are formally similar, but different in meaning".

The answer to the seventh question indicates too that most linguistics students are of the opinion that previous experience in learning foreign languages may facilitate the learning of new languages. Facilitations concern learning in the scope of individual language subsystems, as well as the techniques of working on the language themselves.

Students justified this, among others in this way: "Language intuition develops, which can help in using a different language", "Thanks to the analysis of the similarities and differences we learn quickly other languages", "You can remember new words and structures on associations", "You can find analogies in vocabulary and grammar", "Yes, because there are Anglicism in many languages", "Because with each subsequent one it is easier to learn", "Because knowledge of one foreign language motivates to learn other languages".

The results of the survey show that knowledge of English can significantly facilitate the acquisition of another foreign language. Language creativity increases at further stages of learning, which is mainly the result of increasing awareness of a given language as a system and increasing knowledge of grammar and lexis. By comparing selected elements in languages, it is easier to see similar language mechanisms, which

in turn allows both efficient mastering of rules in another foreign language and creative play with words. The purpose of these activities is one – the all-embracing and habitual use of appropriate structures for the fluent use of languages without causing disruptions or misunderstandings. Does the first foreign language have to be English? Let us answer with the words of one of the respondents, who in reply to one of the questions, writes as follows: “I think that every new language is useful in learning the next one, it does not even have to be English”. Let this commentary, in our opinion, extremely accurate, be the summary of this analysis.

[1] Creativity as the mental process expresses by creating connections between languages structures, linking a new knowledge with the acquired knowledge, continuous searching for new ideas, which accelerate learning. In this sense creativity is a characteristic of a sociolect. More about sociolects – see Grabias 1994: 117-118.

[2] About language and linguistic awareness – see Bugajski 2007: 47-53.

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Enhancing Chinese Literacy Skills through Drama Activities: A Case Study of Mandarin Chinese for Beginners' Course at the University of Nottingham

Sujing Xu¹

The University of Nottingham, United Kingdom¹

Abstract

For many English-speaking learners studying Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language in the UK – due to its logographic Character writing system, which is very different from the Roman alphabetic system of English writing – it is more challenging to develop Chinese literacy skills. In order to address this challenge, I integrate drama activities in the curriculum of the course Mandarin for Beginners at the University of Nottingham by asking learners to complete a drama project. This assignment includes novel reading and discussion, as well as play scripts writing and performing. This paper discusses how to integrate drama activities in a language curriculum by sharing and reflecting my practice of implementing a drama project in the academic year 2018-19. Details such as specific scaffolding steps, the benefits of adopting a project-based learning approach are being discussed. My research follows a teacher action research paradigm, which according to O'Brien consists the cycle of diagnosing (identifying a problem), action planning (considering alternative courses of action), taking action (selecting a course of action), evaluating (studying the consequences of an action) and specifying learning (identifying general findings). Research data is drawn from a wide range of sources: class observations, students' reflective journals, student survey results and individual written feedback, as well as student writing samples all form part of the overall analysis.

Keywords: Chinese literacy skills, drama activities, project-based learning, action research

1. Introduction

In the past few years there has been a significant increase of students learning Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language in the UK. A wide range of British schools and universities now offer Chinese language courses (Tinsley and Board, 2014). Though Mandarin Chinese has become increasingly popular as a foreign language, pedagogical research on teaching and learning Chinese in the UK contexts is still in its infancy (Tinsley and Board, 2014 & Li, 2013). Tinsley and Board (2014) furtherly claim that more academic research should be carried out into the acquisition of Chinese characters by non-native language learners. Mastering Chinese writing and reading skills is the first step to develop comprehensive Chinese literacy skills. As a teacher and practitioner teaching Chinese to non-native speakers at a leading Russel-group university, based on my classroom observations over the past decade, I have noticed that for many learners at the beginners' level a big challenge to progress and develop their literacy skills is character acquisition and vocabulary size. This is primarily due to its logographic character writing system, which is very different from the Roman alphabetic system of English writing.

To address this challenge head on, I decided to incorporate drama activities in the curriculum and make it part of my daily teaching practice. Drama has the advantage of providing the context to improve writing skills, to develop realistic dialogue and to extend vocabulary (Farmer, 2012). Drama as an educational tool has been widely applied in school curricular. Studies indicate drama is an effective tool to develop language learners' literacy skills. Scholars such as McNamee, MaLane, Cooper & Kerwin (1985) have pointed out that drama immerses language learners in a meaningful communication process of reading and writing in a holistic way. Furthermore, Rieg & Paquette (2019) mention the benefits of using drama in language classroom, such as increased motivation and self-confidence, reduced anxiety and enhanced language acquisition.

While the benefits of integrating drama in the language classroom has been widely acknowledged by researchers and practitioners alike, most of the current findings are based on the experience of English language learning in schools. It is still a rather novel practice in Chinese classroom as a foreign language. Consequently, there are very few articles on how to implement drama activities in Chinese language learning. This paper aims to bridge the gap by sharing and reflecting on the case of implementing drama activities in my course Mandarin for Beginners at the University of Nottingham.

2. Methodology

My study followed a teacher action research paradigm, which according to O'Brien (2001) should be imagined as an iterative cycle of 1) diagnosing (identifying a problem), 2) action planning (considering alternative courses of action), 3) taking action (selecting a course of action), 4) evaluating (studying the consequences of an action) and 5) specifying learning (identifying general findings).

For the diagnosing stage, I consulted the available academic literature on the subject matters first. I then engaged in extensive classroom observation. In order to help my learners at beginners' level to enhance their Mandarin Chinese literacy skills, my action plan consisted of an integration of drama activities in my curriculum for Mandarin for Beginners course. The drama activities were carefully planned and presented as a reading and writing project to students at the beginning of semester B in the Autumn semester of the 2018-19 academic year. The project lasted throughout the whole semester and students were expected to produce their own play scripts and perform them in front of an audience. In terms of evaluation of the action taken, a survey was conducted to obtain students' feedback. Data had also been collected through class observation and samples of students' work. My analysis of this diverse set of data now informs my action plan for the coming academic year 2019-20.

3. The drama project

At the beginning of the project students had already learned the language for one semester and had built up basic knowledge and understanding in terms of the characteristics of Chinese characters and sentence structures. Students were introduced to the project at the beginning of semester B. They were asked to read a graded Chinese novel *Emma* (安末). This graded book is written using approximately 300 Chinese characters and intended for learners after one to two years of formal language training. It provides English translation of some of the key words. My students were asked to read one chapter of the book each week at home and complete reading comprehension tasks accordingly. There were in-class opportunities for learners to

discuss and share their understandings of the characters from the book and main ideas of the story. After reading the five out of ten chapters of the book, learners were tasked to write their own play scripts based on the characters from the book as a group of two or three. Consequently, students not only wrote their own scripts, but also performed them by the end of the semester to their classmates.

In order to assist students in the self-directed writing process of the scripts sufficient amount of scaffolding was provided. First, through novel reading, students' vocabulary gradually expanded. Such reading exercises also provided contexts and characters, which enabled students to build upon when writing their own scripts. In-class discussion helped enhancing their understandings of the main characters as well as consolidating the new words they learned through reading, as they were required to use them actively and repeatedly. Furthermore, students were asked to produce their play scripts collaboratively rather than individually. This process of co-creation allowed them to share their ideas and workload, thus creating stronger bonds among students. Acting out their scripts meant they had to remember their lines by heart. Memorizing key lines helped to reinforce the correct pronunciations of Chinese characters.

The project-based learning approach has the advantage of promoting learning by doing (John Dewey, 1938). Project-based learning is defined as “an instructional approach that contextualizes learning by presenting learners with problems to solve or products to develop” (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998). In this context, the product my learners were expected to produce was their own play scripts. The scripts laid the foundation for their end-of-year performances. The latter plays not only served as a summative test of their language proficiency but also had the additional benefit of taking place in a relaxed setting of an evening of cultural performances of students enrolled in the School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies.

4. Findings

All eight students in the class actively participated in the project from beginning to end. They produced three pieces of eight-minute play scripts. This meant that they achieved the basic goal of the project. The quality of their products was impressive, both in terms of the vocabulary and sentence structures they used in the scripts. Many words and some sentence structures actually were not taught by the tutor in class and they managed to use them correctly. Based on in my class participation records as well as survey results, students showed great enthusiasm for this project. Just one of the students commented: “The play script has also been very fun as we've worked in a team to create an original piece of work drawing on all our skills, we've learnt this year.”

Another student provided feedback saying “I thoroughly enjoyed reading the book ‘Emma’ and I believe that it has helped me recognize more characters and has also taught me new sentence structures. The project had clearly boosted learners' motivation to read and write Chinese characters, as script writing was experienced as ‘fun, creative’ and as a highly collaborative exercise.

Looking at the essay section of the written exam scripts – a two-hour timetabled exam and included reading comprehension, grammar and essay writing that required hand writing Chinese characters – the quality of overall essay performance seemed not to improve noticeably in comparison to students from previous years before implementing the drama project. That said, there was a noticeable improvement in the sections of reading comprehension and grammar. It can thus be concluded that students' writing skill did not enhance as much as their reading skill. However, it needs to be reiterated that this was a two-hour exam assignment, which means that students may not have

enough time to do the writing task well. Furthermore, if students were required to produce their writing task by hand writing Chinese characters, their resulting scripts could be rather different as if students were asked to type their essays on a computer. This raises the question that when measuring English-language learners' Mandarin Chinese literacy skills, should the writing skill should be restricted to hand writing? Or would it be acceptable to accept students typing Chinese characters with the help of a computer?

5. Conclusion

This paper is based on the action research I conducted in the academic year 2018-19, which was the first time that I implemented the drama project. Seen in its entirety the drama project was well designed and implementation was smooth. It also gained positive feedback from students. Regardless, there are still areas for future improvement. I would like to briefly reflect on my initial choice of the graded novel "Emma". The reason why I chose this book was that the story would be very interesting to students and able to make association with, as it was a love story set in modern-day Shanghai. I also thought that this short novel would help prepare my students for their year abroad in China. Initially I was slightly concerned whether the level was suitable for my Year 1 learners, since they had only learned one semester of Mandarin Chinese. Throughout the term, however, the good progress in class discussions showed me that most students had understood the gist of the story and managed to answer related comprehension questions. This is why I will continue to use this book. In future iterations of the project, however, I will also provide an audio recording of the book. As the publisher has just published the audio files of the book this will be possible. By listening and going through the book at the same time students can enforce pronunciation of specific Chinese characters. Secondly, as discussed in my findings section, in terms of the writing tasks in the written exam, a further measure to be taken in the future is to see if combining typing skills as well as handing writing skill in the writing tasks are likely to enhance students' writing performance. Finally, this action research should be considered a starting point of a long-term ambition to firmly integrate educational drama into our university's Chinese language curriculum.

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E-Sports in the ESL Classroom: Can they Help Students Overcome Language Transfer Issues?

Tatiana María Sánchez-Rodríguez¹, M. Victoria Domínguez-Rodríguez²
Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain¹
Instituto Universitario de Análisis y Aplicaciones Textuales (IATEXT),
Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain²

Abstract

The Government of the Canary Islands has recently passed a law to by which English is introduced in the curriculum of all the public university degrees in the autonomous region. This has evidenced even more the struggle Spanish students usually go through when expressing themselves in English. It is widely acknowledged that a learner's first language (L1) has a considerable influence on both the acquisition and use of the second language (L2) vocabulary. Yet there is not a very clear and definite relation between language transfer and the learner's age. However, adults seem to be more susceptible to transfer than children; whereas an adult learner will always have his/her first language structures internalized and then try to apply them in the L2, children are seldom conscious of using different languages, In this paper, we will focus on the use of e-Sports to help higher-education students overcome one of the most common struggles for Spanish learners of English: language transfer issues, particularly in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course.

Keywords: e-Sports, English for Specific Purposes, language transfer, methodology

1. Introduction

In 2008, the Government of the Canary Islands passed a law by which English was to be incorporated compulsorily into the public university curricula [1]; different subjects, in all official degrees, were to be taught in English, with instrumental purposes or to teach students technical and scientific vocabulary to face the upcoming changes in the professional world. The universities could adopt a dual approach to cover, at least, 6 ECTS in English: a) including language-specific subjects in their study plans (as in the case of the Degree in Modern Languages at the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria [ULPGC]); or) adopting a CLIL approach, in which non-linguistic subjects were taught in English and the students pre-require, at least, a B1-CEFR-level B1 level of English (as in the Degree in Labour Relations and Human Resources) [2].

Besides, in the case of the ULPGC, all students needed to present a B1-level certificate to graduate, either obtained during the university studies or issued by Cambridge English Qualifications or any Official School of Languages), but from 2018 onwards it is no longer necessary except when English-focused subjects are compulsory part of the curriculum [3]. This decision has somehow affected the students' instrumental motivation and influenced on their learning process and overall results in ESP subjects, especially when they are not able to see its real utility beyond the classroom. Not needing

a B1-level certificate in English to graduate implies a gradual isolation from the foreign language, which is not seen relevant in certain degrees and this collides with the intention of giving an integral formation to students and tools for long-life learning and insertion in the job market.

The incorporation of new English-based subjects into the university curricula, as well as the integration of CLIL into the classroom, has brought about a debate about the problems and drawbacks it may convey for teachers and students alike [4, 5, 6]. In our experience, the incorporation of specific subjects to teach technical and scientific vocabulary in public university degrees in the Canary Islands showed that most students at this formal education level often go through difficulties to acquire, develop and/or put into practice their communicative competence in L2. This is due, mainly, to the fact that they usually have very limited background language knowledge, so there is an urgent need to motivate them to help them overcome any obstacle when expressing themselves in English [7]. Intrinsic motivation, therefore, is a key aspect that must be taken as a priority in this context. As Ryan and Deci put it: “Intrinsic motivation has emerged as an important phenomenon for educators [...] Because intrinsic motivation results in high-quality learning and creativity, it is especially important to detail the factors and forces that engender versus undermine it” (2000: 55).

In this paper, we will focus on the use of e-Sports in an ESP course for Computer Engineering as a motivating asset to help tertiary-level students overcome one of the most common struggles for Spanish learners of English: language transfer issues.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Study group

The study group selected included 32 students taking “Técnicas de comunicación para la Ingeniería II” (“Communication techniques for Engineers”, TCI-II) during the academic year 2018/19. This is a compulsory subject in the Degree in Computer Engineering at the ULPGC. In particular, we focused on the students enrolled in TCI-II for the second time so we could compare the results they obtained the first time (year 2017/18) and their results the second time, when e-Sports were introduced in our TCI-II sessions as an innovative twist to achieve extra motivation.

Thus, our study group was further reduced to 10 students including 8 males and 2 females aged 19-25 years old. All were Spanish native speakers and they had a no higher A2-CEFRL-level of English. By the initial assessment at the beginning of the course to check their previous English language knowledge, we detected major problems with vocabulary affecting their productive and receptive skills, also showing demotivation and unwillingness to learn English.

2.2 Methods and instruments

The introduction of e-Sports in the classroom aims at involving students in the use of motivating authentic material that may be helpful to acquire and develop their communicative competence in English, as well as to effectively use a technical computer-engineering related vocabulary for tasks. A series of e-Sports can be used as a content resource from which the students create different types of written and oral texts related to the field of Computer Engineering, providing them with a specialized lexicon and samples of communicative discourse that may enhance their language skills [8].

TCI-II is taught weekly in 2-hour sessions divided into theory and practice. We adopted a communicative approach to introduce e-Sports in some sessions, thus focusing on how to use the language to communicate meaning and the deployment of

natural strategies for language acquisition. This allowed us achieving certain flexibility of learning goals and tasks since students could move at their own pace.

To measure the effectiveness of e-Sports to help students overcome the language transfer issues detected initially, we analysed the students' performance and to what extent they achieved the learning objectives stated during the course. For the purpose, we compared the results obtained in the initial reading test with those of the final exam.

2.3 Data collection

At the beginning of the course, we performed initial assessment through a reading test on graphic cards hierarchy that helped to check our students' understanding of technical vocabulary. The results indicated that 6 out of 10 in the study group had failed to find the corresponding term in English due to language interference with L1 (Spanish).

The main issue observed was negative lexical interference, that is, the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired by the learner [9, 10].

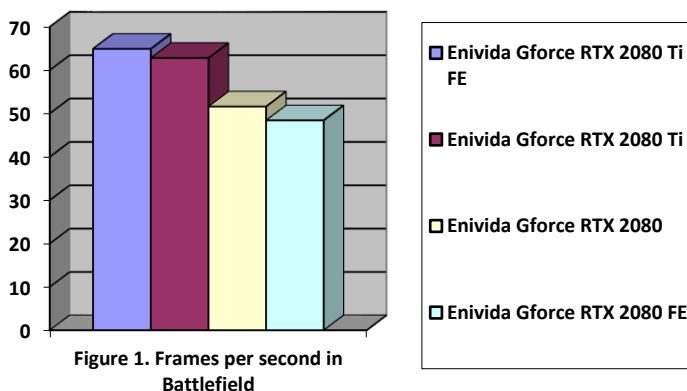
As a way to remedy this lack of technical vocabulary, we designed a task including the use of e-Sports as source material. The objective was to help students overcome the language transfer issues detected by working on exercises that facilitated the acquisition of specific technical vocabulary. In the final exam, we checked whether the study group had improved or not in their overall language skills and technical vocabulary.

3. Results

3.1 Task performance

The task designed consisted, firstly, on asking students to get information about the latest graphic cards in current use, and then gather descriptions of colours, shapes and brightness of characters and scenarios in the game *Battlefield*, which belongs to the e-Sports universe nowadays. That information was only accessible if the students actually played in a given scenario and choosing a specific character, so they had to get actively involved in the game. For the presentation of their findings, the students were allowed to deploy any means that could be used in the classroom.

As a case in point, Figure 1 shows one of the graphs created by one of the students from our study group:



To perform in front of his classmates, this student had to find out the specific vocabulary needed to describe graphic cards beforehand. During data presentation, he showed domain of technical words and expressions like *expansion ports, frames, multiple monitor connectivity, on-board, built-in*, etc. Compared to his initial reading test results, there was no L1 interference because he had looked for and understood the concepts to surf on the Internet and locate relevant information from specialized webpages and publications on the latest graphic cards. This skill is illustrated by the word *frame*, for instance. In the initial reading test, this student had mistaken *frame* for *marco*, which is one of its translations into Spanish (in the sense of “frame of a painting”), seemingly not being familiar with its specialized meaning in Computer Science (“data transmission unit”). This phenomenon is known as a “substitution error”, in which the learner uses a direct translation of a word or expression in L1 in a context which is not appropriate in English [11].

3.2 Outcomes

The evaluation criteria in this subject stipulate that the final exam carries a 60% of the total grade; the other 40% comes from oral presentations and class attendance. The final 2018/19 exam included three skill-based sections: a) Grammar/Use of English; b) Reading; and c) Writing. The Reading included a reading comprehension exercise about a research paper dealing with a topic that has been worked on during the course: “Voice Search for Development”. The students were instructed to read the text carefully and perform two exercises: first, to identify the different parts of a scientific paper (by labelling the sections) and, second, to find synonyms and antonyms for some words of the text.

The latter was included to specifically observe whether language transfer issues had been overcome or not by the end of the course.

Generally speaking, these 10 students showed greater understanding of the specialized text and could point out its different sections since they had read several articles while researching about graphic cards. It is interesting to note that 7 out of 10 students passed the second exercise without any problem, the other three just failing in one or two words. Besides, the actions of searching, reading and presenting orally information thematically related to the topics covered in our sessions also improved students’ performance in the Grammar/Use of English and Writing sections. Yet we may say that they showed difficulties in adjusting style and register to write a successful application letter for a company asking for a programmer position.

4. Conclusion

The inclusion of e-Sports in an ESP course for Computer Engineering can turn out a tool to enhance students’ motivation and involve them in a challenging teaching-learning process in higher-education contexts. In this sense, e-Sports can be exploited for controlled language acquisition, that is, having in mind which kind of information is going to be extracted from the gaming universe. However, given that our findings are based on a limited number of subjects, the results should be treated cautiously. We may state that tasks and exercises that draw on e-Sports may be motivating to our study group yet variables like age, interests or level of English are indeed relevant at this point and must be taken into account when saying that they may help to fix language transfer issues.

All in all, and as a consequence of using e-Sports as source material for their oral presentations, the students in our study group commonly self-corrected language transfer mistakes when speaking technically, probably in imitation of patterns and words they had come across in their search for information. Register and style mistakes in their

written productions could be partly due to the influence of e-Sports whose forums, live chats, live-streaming sessions... are all informal, getting students used to expressing themselves in informal register and style also by imitation. However, it seems that by exposing Computer Engineering students to authentic English via e-Sports we may ultimately correct language transfer issues like negative errors, especially if greater exposure and contact is promoted.

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How to Stage a Theatrical Production of a Spanish Play with 0 Prior Experience and Very Minimal Budget

Martha Alexander¹

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, United States of America¹

Abstract

In the Fall of 2018, I staged a production of Spanish playwrights Enrique García Álvarez and Celso Lucio's one-act farce "El palco del Real" in its original language on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for a cost of \$495. Prior to this, I had never acted, directed, stage-designed, costume-designed, or done anything of the sort. The intention of this paper and poster presentation is to describe the process as it unfolded to me, including its roadblocks and its happy accidents, in the hopes that anyone with a similar desire to bring theatre in Spanish (or in any foreign language, for that matter) to their college or university may see that in spite of the challenges that can crop up, it can be done and you don't have to be a professional actor or director to do it.

Keywords: Theatre, Comedy, Spanish, Amateur, Stage, Foreign Language

In the Fall of 2018, I staged a production of Spanish playwrights Enrique García Álvarez and Celso Lucio's one-act farce "El palco del Real" [1] in its original language on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for a cost of \$495. Prior to this, I had never acted, directed, stage-designed, costume-designed, or done anything of the sort. What follows is a description of the process as it unfolded to me, including its roadblocks and its happy accidents, in the hopes that anyone with a similar desire to bring theatre in Spanish (or in any foreign language, for that matter) to their college or university may see that in spite of the challenges that can crop up, it *can* be done and you don't have to be a professional actor or director to do it.

1. Step one: find a play

While re-reading an anthology of short Spanish theatrical pieces, I came across *El palco del Real*, and I thought: this play is actually kind of funny! As I kept reading it, I caught myself visualizing how one might stage it. Written and set in 1904, it took place in one location – a living room –, and I thought that it might be easy enough to evoke an early twentieth-century urban, middle-class living room with easily-procurable objects. I had a few items in my closet that would give the impression of historically-appropriate women's wardrobing. I could procure garments from a thrift store and use my novice sewing skills to doctor them up. As I continued imagining the visual elements, other practicalities came to mind: the humorous nature of the play might provide a better likelihood of attracting actors and retaining them throughout weeks of rehearsals. The visual nature of the play's humour would make it accessible to audiences of Spanish language learners of all levels *and* Spanish speakers. Plus, there were seven parts, so the burden of memorizing lines would be more spread out than in a play with less characters.

2. Step two: get a performance space and rehearsal space(s)

My campus has professional-quality spaces for performing arts, but these are for the exclusive use of entities with which I am not affiliated. There is a lovely historical playhouse that is available for rental, but it costs upwards of a thousand dollars, even for university departments.

A possible solution to this problem came to me unexpectedly. I am an advisor for an officially-recognized campus student organization, which also happens to be a chapter of a national Spanish honour society. While attending a lunchtime workshop for faculty advisors of student organizations, I learned that these can host events through the Events Services Office, which also rents ticketing services, security, and lighting services. I thought back to a performance of *The Vagina Monologues* by an amateur cast that I had seen a few years prior in an auditorium-style classroom, and I thought that this would be a logical route.

This route had its own set of problems. The auditorium that I wanted is also very popular for other student organizations' performances and rehearsals. I had to be somewhat flexible with the dates that I wanted for the performance weekend. This also meant that I had to seek other spaces for rehearsals. I obtained classrooms where we could move chairs around in a configuration roughly similar to the arrangement of the set items on our 'real' stage. I carried the more vital props to each rehearsal in tote bags.

Another challenge was posed by classroom reservations being managed by two separate entities: Student Organizations after 6pm and Classroom Scheduling from 8am to 5pm. This left a "no man's land" from 5-6. I reserved what I could and we stayed the extra hour before or after. Thankfully, I ran into few problems.

3. Step three: assemble a cast

I created a casting call and emailed it to the listservs of my colleagues, Spanish majors and minors, and Sigma Delta Pi; I emailed it to the Chair of the Department of Dramatic Arts and the president of a campus Latino/a student organization. I announced the opportunity to my classes. I visited one of my colleagues' classes. The email to the Chair of the Department of Dramatic Arts resulted in my lead male and one of my female actors. Thankfully, she had already been in a few shows, and so she served as my co-Director. These same actors later recruited two more. One more came from my Spanish Conversation class, and an adventurous colleague of mine volunteered.

This was not as easy as it sounds. I had to do a lot of persistent begging and pestering in multiple emails. I approached individual colleagues to no avail. A couple of actors dropped out and had to be replaced. After giving up on finding a leading lady, I decided to do it myself. The last role was not covered until three weeks away from the performance.

4. Step four: develop a rehearsal plan and get started!

For a one-act play with a one-hour runtime, we rehearsed twice a week for two hours each time for nine and a half weeks. Taking into account cancelations for a hurricane, fall break, and particularly exam-and-paper-heavy weeks, we held 16 meetings, plus one four-hour-long dress rehearsal. Each rehearsal had a different focus. In the first two or three meetings, I gave a summary of the play in English and a bit of background on the historical period and setting, we read through the entire script scene-by-scene, with me translating after each line.

After those initial meetings, we began to focus on groupings of about four scenes per meeting. The first time working with a group of scenes, we would sit down and do a read-through, then a quick translate-through, and then another read-through. These read-and-translate-throughs, even though time-consuming, were indispensable for understanding colloquialisms and allusions to current events, politics, and societal structure in Spain in the early 1900s, even with a cast who had already taken at least five semesters of Spanish. Then we would begin “blocking” the scenes; in other words, establishing the grouping and movement of characters about the stage. Afterward, we would read our parts off while moving around our designated positions. We would aim to have those scenes memorized by one week later.

After getting the smaller groupings of scenes to a reasonable level, we rehashed larger groups of scenes, eventually covering about one-fourth of the play at the time, then half each time, and finally, after seven weeks, rough run-throughs of the entire play.

We spent the last meetings fine-tuning.

5. Step five: find out how to pay for it

Luckily, my organization had some money saved up. This safety net allowed me to get started on recruiting actors and rehearsing. Meanwhile, I mentioned my project to my teaching supervisor, who suggested that I apply for monies that our department budgets for special events. After initially offering me \$290, eventually they awarded me \$800.

6. Step six: wardrobe and set

I needed a historically-appropriate set and wardrobe, and I needed it to be economical and easy to execute. Additionally, there was no storage at the venue, so everything would have to be portable and more-or-less easy to assemble and take down on the spot. I would have to get creative with items that I already had in my house and items already in the auditorium and supplement them with low-cost items. I would also have to consider lighting.

In the auditorium, there were folding chairs, a large whiteboard on rollers, an immovable podium, a piano, and a worktable. At my house, I had a card table and lightweight dining-room chairs. Never underestimate what you can do with large pieces of fabric (curtains, duvet covers, tablecloths, bedsheets) and big, metal clips from the office-supply store! To make a ‘sofa’, I draped and clamped fabric over three folding chairs arranged side-by-side. I draped my card table with a duvet cover and clamped it neatly around the sides to make a dining-room table. I draped a large tablecloth over the worktable and put a china hutch from my local Habitat for Humanity Re-Store on top to make a cupboard. I clamped curtains over the whiteboard and used it to hide the piano and the podium. To make a working balcony door, I found scraps of wood, a door jamb, plastic shutters, and hinges at Habitat for Humanity and sawed, drilled, and painted in my living room.

I ‘faked’ an early twentieth-century women’s wardrobe with my basic sewing skills and garments already in my closet (shirts with poufy sleeves and lace collars and some long skirts), plus a few thrift shop items (an oversized straight skirt in which I sewed tucks to give the illusion of a long, full skirt; a poufy shirt; a vintage prom dress). Male characters used their own button-down shirts, khaki pants, bow ties, vests, etc., and I bought a bowler hat, top hat, newsboy hat, and fake moustaches from online costume shops. For a particular scene, where the mother and daughter characters are altering

dresses, I made objects from fabric, fake flowers, and lace from a craft store to which I attached metal snaps so that they could be ‘sewn’ on quickly and then removed for the next show. YouTube was very useful for tutorials on stage makeup and historical hairstyles.

Events Services was going to charge several hundred dollars for lighting, so I checked out a lighting kit from the library and supplemented with (borrowed) clip-on study lamps, which I clipped to the front row of seats to serve as footlights. I brought many extension cords and power strips. Two folding doors hinged together served as a place to clamp study lamps to at different heights and doubled as another screen to hide the podium.

My mother helped me bring everything to the performance in her pickup truck.

7. Step seven: advertise the performance ... and enjoy!

We advertised with mass emails to the same listservs as before, flyers posted around campus, Facebook pages, and a Facebook event. I contacted the Editor of our campus newspaper, and they published an article about the play in the online version. I invited the Chancellor. I invited my students to attend.

I was very pleased by the turnout—parents, siblings, neighbours, friends, a handful of my colleagues, and some of my and my colleagues’ students came out to support us.

From the stage, I could hear laughter at the appropriate moments, the applause was thunderous, and we were approached afterward with congratulations.

8. Final budget

Of the \$495 total expenditure, \$178 was spent on wardrobe, \$95 on set and lighting, and \$51 on miscellaneous (printing). \$160 was spent on Events Services staff, a requirement for events open to the public.

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Teaching and Learning Arabic Vocabulary

Barbara Bakker¹
Dalarna University, Sweden¹

Abstract

Within the frame of structural approach to language teaching, research has mainly focused on how to teach and learn language rules and systems and little attention has traditionally been paid to vocabulary teaching and learning. The general idea about vocabulary has been that words are just words, implying that learning new vocabulary is just a matter of mnemonic exercise. However, during the last 30/40 years, vocabulary learning and teaching has emerged as a newly recognized aspect of language acquisition, with vocabulary learning strategies as one of the main research topics. Research in this field has so far mainly focused on English vocabulary acquisition, with a few single or comparative studies involving European languages and even fewer about non-European languages. The almost total lack of research about Arabic language acquisition for non-native speakers is striking, especially when considering the importance of morphology and lexicography within the Arabic tradition. This paper is a contribution to the field from the Arabic language acquisition perspective. The topic is introduced by a brief outline of the field's central definitions and theoretical framework and an attempt is made to put them into a learning and teaching Arabic vocabulary perspective. An ongoing research project is then presented, involving two beginners' courses for non-native speakers (Arabic 1 for beginners and Arabic 2) taught at Dalarna University, Arabic Department. The frequency ranges of the words taught in the courses are first outlined, and an account of the way(s) chosen to measure the students' vocabulary proficiency follows. The spring term results for the vocabulary proficiency tests are subsequently presented, together with a discussion on how more focused vocabulary teaching, including training vocabulary learning and learning strategies, can be implemented next term in order to improve these results.

Keywords: Arabic, vocabulary, strategies, language learning, foreign language acquisition

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the field of Arabic vocabulary acquisition, with focus on Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) vocabulary acquisition from a foreign language learning perspective.

The first part of this paper briefly outlines some of the field's central concepts and theoretical definitions and tries to put them into an Arabic vocabulary acquisition perspective. A brief overview of the existing research about learning Arabic vocabulary concludes the first part. The second part of the paper presents a pilot research project conducted on two internet-based Arabic courses. The words of the course materials are analysed in terms of frequency ranges and the type of questions in the tests are outlined in terms of general theoretical vocabulary acquisition framework. The results are subsequently discussed and some suggestions are made to amend the course materials with specific focus on Arabic vocabulary acquisition and proficiency.

2. Research field definitions and the Arabic language

2.1 Vocabulary knowledge

A general distinction is usually made between receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge (Nation [1]). **Receptive**, or **passive**, vocabulary, implies that language input is received through listening and/or reading in order to understand a word. **Productive**, or **active**, vocabulary denotes the intention to express a message by speaking and/or in writing. From an Arabic language acquisition perspective, this distinction is especially significant because of the diglossic nature of Arabic. In fact, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), i.e., the written language used in literature and more formal contexts, is not the same language as the so-called dialects or vernaculars, i.e., the spoken languages, which differ from country to country and even from region to region. The differences are not just related to pronunciation and grammar issues, but often concern the vocabulary itself. Examples go from words for fruit and vegetables, which differ from country to country, to several specific commonly used words such as *money*, *car*, *bread* and *rice*.

As a consequence, **receptive** vocabulary obtained through listening may vary enormously depending on the message source. A formal context will provide the learner with MSA passive vocabulary, while informal situations like a conversation between two friends or family members will supply vocabulary in the local dialect. **Productive** vocabulary learning also depends on the type of language output. As the instances with spoken MSA are more formal situations (news broadcast, political and religious speech, higher education, etc.), MSA is perceived as artificial in real life interactions and day-to-day situations.

According to Nation [1], to know a word means to know its **Form** (spelling, pronunciation and the morphological aspect), its **Meaning** (labelling concepts, referents and associating other words) and its **Use** (grammatical functions, collocations and constraints caused by register, frequency, etc.). Each of these three aspects comprises both receptive and productive knowledge. Diglossia fundamentally affects both Meaning and Use. In addition, the Form aspect is especially significant for beginners, because of the new writing system, which “constitutes a serious obstacle to comprehension at all levels” (Ryding, p. 399) [2]).

Also, to be taken into consideration because of the diglossic nature of Arabic is the **Involvement Load Hypothesis** (Laufer & Hulstijn 2001 [3], Laufer 2010 [4]), which claims that retention of unfamiliar words depends upon the amount of the learner’s involvement while processing these words. For students of Arabic, their involvement is related not only to the context itself but also to a variety of other factors, including the specific situation and the word register required by the situation itself.

2.2 What is a word?

There are several ways to count words (Nation [1]). **Tokens** and **types** refer to counting every item in a text. Tokens are each occurrence of a word, regardless of how many times the word occurs in a text, while types refer to counting each word only once, even if it occurs more than once. A **lemma** is “a headword and its inflected and reduced forms”, while a **word family** “consists of a headword, its inflected forms and its closely related derived forms” (Nation [1] p. 10), including other parts of speech. Because of the root system of Arabic morphology, the lemma and the word family units represent more arguable ways of counting words. However, it is not entirely clear how we can define a word family in Arabic.

In the example presented by Milton ([5], p. 11), the lemma for the English word *govern* includes *governs*, *governed* and *governing*, while the word family also includes

government, governance, governess, governor, governable and misgovern. Let's now consider the Arabic verb *ḥakama*. The verbal noun *ḥukm/ahkām*, the active and passive participles *ḥākim* and *maḥkūm*, the adjectives *ḥukmī*, *ḥakīm* and *ḥikmī*, together with other nouns like *ḥakam* and *ḥikma*, may be part of the same word family. However, all these words do not only reflect the same underlying meaning of the verb *ḥakama* (which a beginner learner of Arabic finds translated as *to govern*), but also, among others, *to judge* and *to decide* (Wehr & Cowan [6] p. 228). A learner would also need to learn *judgment* and *opinion*, *ruler*, *legal* and *wise*, *referee* and *wisdom*, despite the fact that all these words, from a strictly morphological perspective, belong to the same word family.

In addition, because of the fixed patterns structure of prefixes and infixes, a learner has also to relate to *maḥkama*, *ḥakkama*, *taḥkīm*, *taḥakkama* and *istiḥkām*. In terms of roots and word patterns, these words are all part of the same *ḥakama* word family, but from a meaning-related perspective they are not as closely related to each other as the English word examples. This peculiarity of Arabic morphology significantly increases the **learning burden**, i.e., the amount of effort needed to learn a word, of the word *ḥakama*.

3. Vocabulary learning strategies

Research shows that different vocabulary learning strategies work differently for different students and that a combination of different strategies, usually give the best results (Nation [1], Chacón-Beltrán *et al.*, [7]).

A few attempts have been made to compile taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies, for example based on which cognitive aspects (Schmitt [8]) and which aspects and sources are involved in each strategy (Nation [1]). Another main distinction that has been made so far is related to **intentional** vs **incidental** vocabulary learning strategies, where intentional refers to language focused learning, for example learning from lists, as opposed to incidental vocabulary learning strategies, where learning is message-focused, i.e., in context.

It may be argued that for learners of Arabic **form-focused vocabulary** instruction (Nation [1]; Laufer [4]) and learning strategies can be extra beneficial, to a bigger extent than for learners of non-root-based languages, because of the morpheme-based structure of the Arabic language previously mentioned. Even incidental vocabulary learning strategies, like learning words from context, may be integrated in and/or followed up by form-focused instruction.

4. Existing research about learning Arabic vocabulary

In her *Second Language Acquisition*, Ryding [2] presents an overview of the existing body of research on Arabic-specific language acquisition studies. However, these studies deal with Arabic language acquisition in general. Interest in vocabulary learning strategies and their efficiency for learners of Arabic has been also brought up by Jamal in his *Vocabulary Learning Theories – A Keen Perspective* [9], although no mention is made on specific strategies for Arabic language acquisition.

Al-Shuwairakh [10] investigated vocabulary learning strategies used by AFL (Arabic as a Foreign Language) learners in Saudi Arabia. He found that neither individual factors nor social variables seem to affect the learners' overall use of vocabulary learning strategies, while situational factors, such as the type of course and the variety of Arabic used out of class, affect which and how strategies are used. He also lists four specific components of knowing a word in Arabic that reflect the importance of both diglossia and Arabic morphology. They are knowing a word's root and its pattern, knowing how to apply

the morphological rules to a word, differentiating between spoken and written words and knowing how to deduce the short vowels¹ from context.

A similar study about the use of vocabulary learning strategies was conducted on learners of Arabic of the International Islamic University of Malaysia (Mustapha & Muhd Isa [11]). Results showed that despite the use of a variety of vocabulary learning strategies, translation was the most employed strategy. Another Malaysian study investigated which vocabulary knowledge, receptive or productive, is most important when writing in Arabic and found that a combination of both is the ideal instructional style in order to increase learners' interest (Maskor & Baharudin [12]).

Finally, al-Schalchi [13] compared the effectiveness of two vocabulary learning strategies, the keyword mnemonic and the context strategies, in order to determine whether a learner's proficiency level plays a role in the effectiveness of the strategies.

Her results suggest that a more structured strategy such as the keyword is more effective for a beginner learner.

5. Pilot study

The aim of this study is to monitor Arabic vocabulary acquisition of learners of Arabic, specifically in two internet-based beginner courses taught at Dalarna University, Sweden. The two courses, Arabic 1 for beginners and Arabic 2 (AR1 and AR2), are given on a 50% basis, corresponding to approx. 20 hours study per week. Direct teacher instruction amounts to two hours per week, for a total of 16 lessons per term in an online classroom. Before class the students have to prepare a written text and a wordlist, study a grammar presentation and do some exercises related to the grammar/vocabulary topic.

During class the students work, together with the teacher, on the text, the vocabulary and the grammar, they practice conversation and ask questions. After each class, they have to hand in grammar, listening and writing homework (HW).

5.1 The words and their frequency

A *Frequency Dictionary of Arabic* (AFDoA) compiled by Buckwalter and Parkinson [14] has been used to identify word frequency bands, see the tables below. For AR1 the wordlists amount to a total of 338 lemmas, or words, of which 239 are high frequent words (70.7%), i.e., in the first 2000. As for AR2, the wordlists amount to 532 lemmas, or words, of which 311 are high frequent words.

AR1

Frequency band	How many words	%
1 – 1000	177	52.4
1001 – 2000	62	18.3
2001 – 3000	35	10.4
3001 – 4000	21	6.2
4001 – 5000	18	5.3
5001 – 7000	3	0.9
n/a (not in the AFDoA)	22	6.5
Total lemmas	338	100

¹ Short vowels in Arabic are diacritical marks around the letters of word and are usually not written down, as native speakers do not need them in order to pronounce the word correctly. Exceptions are so-called vocalized texts, such as religious texts, children books, etc. For learners of Arabic however, the short vowels are indispensable.

AR2

Frequency band	How many words	%
1 – 1000	210	39.5
1001 – 2000	101	19.0
2001 – 3000	60	11.3
3001 – 4000	34	6.4
4001 – 5000	37	7.0
5001 – 8000	10	1.9
n/a (not in the AFDoA)	80	15.0
Total lemmas	532	100

*Tables 1 and 2. AR1 and AR2 word frequency band***5.2 The tests**

The mid-term tests are called HW 7 and HW 8 for AR1 and AR2 respectively. The end-of-term tests are called HW 16 for both courses. The four tests consist of 20 questions and have the same format. All questions are mainly related to the **Meaning** aspect of knowing a word, but in some cases the **Form** of a word makes the choice of the correct answer “tricky”. The last five questions also imply a **Use** aspect knowledge.

- Questions **1 to 5** attempt to test receptive recognition by translation: the students are given three possible English translations of an Arabic sentence and asked to mark the correct one.
- Questions **6 to 10** are similar to the previous 5 ones, but attempt to test productive vocabulary in translation, on the basis of the considerations made by Milton ([5] pp. 119-125). The sentence provided is in English and the students have to choose which Arabic translation is correct.
- Questions **11 to 15** are groups of six or seven Arabic words related to each other, the students are asked to mark the odd word in the group. This type of question is derived from the checklist method outlined by Milton ([5], pp. 71-75).
- Questions **16 to 18** vary depending on the course level. The students are asked to choose which Arabic sentence out of three best describes an English statement (HW 7), to choose which Arabic statement of three best completes an Arabic sentence (HW 16, AR1) or to mark all the suitable statements that can complete a provided Arabic sentence (AR2, both HW 8 and HW 16). The questions are built on a variation of Nation’s Level test, as outlined in Milton ([5], pp. 74-75).
- Questions **19 and 20** are construed on the basis of the word association tasks outlined by Milton ([5], pp. 141-143). The context is provided by means of an Arabic word and students are asked to mark all the words that can be used together with it.

Because of the many limitations of vocabulary measurement (Milton [5]), the tests were construed with a variety of question typologies. The tests have been time-limited, in order to try to prevent the students to look up the words in a dictionary or in the word lists.

5.3 The results

As for AR1, 40 students took the HW 7 test and 26 students took the HW 16 test. As for AR2, 13 students took the HW 8 test and only 9 took the HW 16 test.

The breakdown of the correct answers is given in the table here below:

		Correct answers (of 20)												
		total taken	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	<10
AR 1	HW 7	40	10	11	6	2	4	4	1	1	1			
	HW 16	26	2	6	5	2	5	2		2		1		1
AR 2	HW 8	13			1	1	4		2	2			2	1
	HW 16	9		2	1	1	2			1	2			

Table 3. Vocabulary tests results, AR1 and AR2 mid-term (HW 7 & HW 8) and final (HW 16).

6. Discussion

A good proficiency level was estimated at minimum 14 correct answers, i.e., 70% of the total questions. For AR1 this resulted in 96% and 85% of the students “passing” the HW 7 and HW 16 respectively. For AR2 the percentages are lower, i.e., 62% and 66% for HW 8 and HW 16 respectively.

Several points deserve to be taken into consideration when looking at these results.

Firstly, a main reflection concerns the validity and the reliability of the tests. As already mentioned, both courses are internet-based, i.e., students attend classes, study and do their homework from home, so the possibility that any student may have had help by an Arabic mother tongue speaker is never to be excluded. Despite these risks and other factors that can affect the results of this kind of tests (guesswork, students’ aptness to this kind of tests, etc.), a decision was made in favour of this kind of tests for consistency reasons, as both AR1 and AR2 courses have grammar and listen HW tests with the same “click on the right answer(s)” format.

Secondly, students have not received any specific vocabulary training or any specific training on vocabulary learning strategies. The only vocabulary learning instruction supplied in the courses has been a short document about overall vocabulary learning strategies.

A third very important factor is students’ motivation and interest in connection with the words chosen for the courses. As mentioned above, vocabulary retention is directly related to the amount of the students’ involvement in the task of learning. While AR1 focuses on talking about oneself and one’s family, friends, city, house, etc., in AR2 the need arises to learn more different types of words in order to start reading newspapers and/or listen to the news. This consequently raises the issue of how and which topics may or may not be appealing to all the students. Keeping in mind the diglossia that characterizes the Arabic language, different kinds of motivation can be distinguished in both courses – depending on the reason(s) why students decided to start studying Arabic.

Fourthly, the time limit for the test’s completion might have been one of the reasons for which there are, proportionally, more wrong answers to the last questions of the tests than to the first ones. Despite the instructions given for each question, the different types of questions (multiple choice vs multiple answers) might have confused some students and led them to click only one answer, resulting in a higher total of wrong answers.

In view of all the above, the following suggestions are made for some changes in both courses for next term, in order to include specific vocabulary training and vocabulary learning strategies training. Firstly, the morpheme-based structure of the Arabic language is particularly suitable for a more word-focused instruction. As opposed to incidental word acquisition from input out of, for example, wordlists, word-focused

instruction is based on the fact that “what affects learning is not whether learning is incidental or intentional, but what learners do with the word” (Laufer [13]). Nation ([1] p. 132) presents an extensive list of activities for vocabulary learning, broken down according to Form, Meaning and Use. A specific word-focused activity like “go back to the roots”, would increase the students’ knowledge of Arabic morphology.

Secondly, specific vocabulary exercises that focus on the Form, Meaning and Use of the most frequent words in the lessons could be added, both to each weekly 2-hours classes and as weekly homework.

Finally, the importance of vocabulary learning strategies could be stressed throughout the courses to a greater extent. In order for the students to take control of their vocabulary learning process, mid-term and final written assignments asking them to reflect on the use of vocabulary learning strategies could be introduced, where the students account for which strategies they have tested and reflect on which strategy/ies they think work best for them and why.

7. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to discuss some theoretical concepts and research findings within the field of learning and teaching vocabulary in a foreign language from the perspective of Arabic vocabulary acquisition. Diglossia and the importance of morphology have been identified as most significant for learning and teaching Arabic vocabulary.

This paper has subsequently presented a pilot research study of Arabic vocabulary acquisition conducted at Dalarna University for two Arabic courses at beginner level.

Specifically, the construction of two mid-term and final vocabulary tests has been outlined and their results have been accounted for. Main issues and concerns in conjunction with these results have been identified and discussed.

The results of the vocabulary tests have shown that there is room for improvement in vocabulary acquisition in both courses. For this reason, some changes to the courses structure and materials have been suggested, reflecting the significance of form-focused instruction in vocabulary learning and of teaching vocabulary learning strategies.

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The Use of ICTs to Enhance Students' Speaking Skills

Hayat Naciri¹

University Sultan Moulay Slimane, Beni Mellal, Morocco¹

Abstract

Speaking is part of the language skills which is important for language learners to be developed. It is a crucial part of foreign language learning and teaching. In education, improving the speaking skills of students has always been a challenge. In the 21st century several new technologies are being introduced to teach speaking skills in the classroom. The use of technology has become an important part of the language learning process to achieve successful and better teaching outcomes. This paper focuses on the role of using new technologies in enhancing students' oral performance. It highlights the effectiveness and the positive outcomes of using ICTs to improve speaking skills which is primordial in English language learning. The paper emphasizes the tremendous role of ICTs in improving students' oral performance in and out of class. According to Means (1994), "the primary motivation for teachers to use technology in their classrooms is the belief that the technology will support superior forms of learning" [1]. Thus, teachers need to be aware of the merits of the effective use of ICTs. And, therefore, consideration needs to be given to develop ICT-based activities in oral classes, which enable students to learn and experience at the same time.

Keywords: ICTs, use, enhancing speaking skills, outcomes

1. Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have had significant impact on all features of our lives. In education, ICTs play crucial roles in facilitating teaching and learning. They have revolutionized the process of learning and language teaching.

According to [1], the use of technologies has the great potential to change the existing language teaching methods. They transformed classroom communication methods and transformed instruction strategies.

2. Definition of ICTs

Information and Communication Technology/Technologies (ICTs) refers to all the technologies that permit to access, gather, manipulate and present or communicate information, these technologies could include hardware's such as computers and other devices and software applications and connectivity such as access to the internet, local networking infrastructure, video conferencing. [2]

According to [3] ICTs are a "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information." These technologies include computers, the Internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and television), and telephony. In the same vein, [4] define ICTs as a means of accessing, storing, sharing, processing, editing, choosing, presenting and communicating data through a selection of media in which it involves findings, sharing, and restricting data in

its various forms. In this context, [5] stated that information communication technologies are electronic and computerized devices and associated human interactive materials in which we can apply in a range of teaching and learning processes.

3. The significance of using ICTs in teaching-learning

Several studies argue that the use of new technologies in the classroom is indispensable for giving opportunities for students to learn to function in an information age. It is obvious, as [6] maintained that traditional educational environments do not seem to be qualified for preparing learners to be productive in the workplaces of today's society. She claimed that organizations that do not integrate the use of new technologies in institutions cannot seriously claim to prepare their students for life in the twenty-first century. Similarly, [7] reported that "what is now known about learning provides important guidelines for uses of technology that can help students and teachers develop the competencies needed for the twenty-first century" (p. 206). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the use of ICTs in education can help improve memory retention, increase motivation and generally deepens understanding [8]. ICTs can also be used to promote collaborative learning, including role playing, group problem solving activities and articulated projects [9]. Thus, technology can effectively improve teaching and learning abilities, hence increasing learners' performances.

Some authors maintain that technology has the power to change the ways students learn and professors teach [10]. ICTs are recognized as catalysts for change; change in working conditions, handling and exchanging information, teaching methods, learning approaches, scientific research, and in accessing information. [11], recognise that technology-based teaching may not be essential in all classes but generally it is most facilitative as a result of providing relevant examples and demonstrations; changing the orientation of the classroom; preparing students for employment; increasing flexibility of delivery; increasing access; and satisfying public demands for efficiency. "The whole purpose of using technology in teaching is to give better value to students" [12]. These latter can access recent materials and can update their knowledge in order to enrich themselves as trend setters in the global market.

Making use of technology in university classrooms allows teachers to diversify their lectures, display more information, and enhance students' learning. Using different technologies in the classroom may also help teachers save time and energy and allow for more attention to be paid to the course content. Therefore, [13] states: "Technology has become a powerful catalyst in promoting learning, communications, and life skills for economic survival in today's world". According to [13], technology is a powerful tool with enormous potential for paving high-speed highways from outdated educational systems to systems capable of providing learning opportunities for all, to better serve the needs of 21st century work, communications, learning, and life. The innovations that ICTs has brought in teaching-learning process include: E-learning, e-communication, quick access to information, online student registration, online advertisement, reduced burden of keeping hardcopy, networking with resourceful persons, etc. Therefore, the presence of all these factors increased the chance of excellent integration of ICTs in teaching-learning process.

The integration of ICTs in the language teaching-learning environments is becoming a primordial step since the outcomes would be very productive. In this sense, [14] claims:

The application of ICT gives more opportunities for communication between peer learners: they can exchange information in real time, they can participate in blog discussions, work in teams on different

projects, exchange emails, search for information, etc. By using the authentic material provided by the Internet, we will have a better insight into the culture of the country and people whose language we study. (p. 98)

4. Students' difficulties in speaking

Despite its importance, for many years, teaching speaking has been undervalued and teachers have continued to teach speaking just as memorization of dialogues or a repetition of drills. However, today's world requires that the goal of teaching speaking should improve students' communicative skills as a way to help students express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance. Speaking is part of the language skills which is important for language learners to be developed. Furthermore, according to [15] as foreign language learners, we should master speaking skill as our priority. Foreign language classrooms are the key for daily life setting in which language acquisition occurs. Thus, speaking is a crucial part of foreign language learning and teaching. In this context, Basavarajiah has stated that "speech is the ground work, all the rest are built up from it".

Yet, student's ability to speak depends not only on the classroom techniques, but also on other factors like motivation, adequate vocabulary and practice, and so on'. However, speaking represents a challenge to the majority of students. [16], speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English. One of the main speaking challenges is learner's mistakes. Another challenge is the lack of motivation. Students are demotivated and they pay less attention to the oral course because of many reasons that may include the repetition of uninteresting topics and activities as well as the use of traditional materials and techniques which need to be refreshed. Also, lack of practice is another problem that most students encounter.

There are some studies which have investigated the speaking difficulties encountered by EFL learners. For instance, one study [17] examined Turkish EFL learners' communication obstacles in English language classrooms. It reported that anxiety and unwillingness during the English-speaking process are considered two of the main obstacles for EFL learners. Anxiety and unwillingness are caused by the fear of being negatively evaluated when making mistakes, particularly in front of their friends. This study also revealed that students who perceive their English as 'poor', feel more anxious and are more unwilling to communicate in English classes than the other students perceiving their English level as 'very good', 'good', and 'OK'. Unlike reading, writing or listening activities, speaking requires some degree of real-time exposure to an audience.

Learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in foreign language in the classroom: worried about mistakes or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts. Accordingly, [18] also support this view and argue that asking the students to express themselves in front of the whole class is a common behaviour of teachers in teaching speaking. However, they must know that this can result in the experience of stress for the students while they are doing speaking activities. [19] also confirmed that "it is easy for a foreign language classroom to create inhibition and anxiety."

Furthermore, [20] asserts that all these factors can stop students from speaking confidently in front of their classmates. Therefore, he believes that the teacher must be alert to recognize them in the classroom.

5. The use of ICT to enhance speaking proficiency

As an essential means for communicating, speaking is one of the skills that have to be mastered by students in learning a foreign language. Improving the speaking skills of students has always been a concern. It has become vital for the person to be explanative, expressive and persuasive to excel in any profession they may peruse. Speaking effectively receives a lot of input in the case of interviews, group discussions, presentations, meeting, seminars, workshop, and projects. So, to keep up with the fast developing 21st century, technology has to be introduced in speaking classes.

The concept of language learning has been revolutionized and according to [21] “Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill”. “Acquisition requires meaningful interactions in the target language – natural communication – in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding”. “In the real world, conversations with sympathetic native speakers who are willing to help the acquirer understand are very helpful”.

[22] wrote, “success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (target) language”. Therefore, if students do not learn how to speak or do not get any opportunity to speak in the language classroom, they may soon get de-motivated and lose interest in learning. On the other hand, if the right activities are taught in the right way, speaking in class can be a lot of fun, raising general learner motivation and making the English language classroom a fun and dynamic place to be.

There are important tools that can be used to enhance and facilitate the learning/teaching process, especially speaking proficiency, such as:

Computers: are the most important tools of information and communication technology and backbone of modern human life. They are the most common ICTs tools used by most teachers. They are helpful in storing, collecting and preparing of data for communication.

Overhead projector: is an effective tool of displaying information and processes to a large number of people simultaneously. Prepared forms of information are easy to display with the help of overhead projector. Teachers can build strong relationship between their students and the equipment they are dealing with to make them use the language effectively and being good speakers. Visual aids are tools in presentation for the speaker because they give them something to refer to in order to preserve the act of interacting and make it more organized. Moreover, they give learners the opportunity to move around and use different gestures when they are presenting the work and they make the presenter more relaxed since they shift the eyes of audience from time to time to focus on the video aid so reducing the impression at the learner.

Digital camera: its usage presents endless chances for language profits and improvement across most of the subjects. It is very helpful tool to be used as a recorder of role playing or classroom presentations to be corrected later on by the teacher or even by the student him/herself as a kind of self-evaluation. That technique breaks the ice between the learner and the teacher and also it makes learners closer to technology.

The interactive board: provides the best to the students. For instance, the students can watch even the way the native speakers speak and they can learn a lot about communication, its process and proficiency outside the box. Visualizing the concepts by different persons with varying efficiency through ICT makes the students not only to know and learn the language, but also to practice it in their day to day life.

Social media: has become an important tool of communication. It provides a platform for sharing thoughts and ideas. Students can add themselves with the English language learning groups and take advantage of sharing information. Lots of social sites are available on it like, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. It is very helpful in learning situational language.

Online facilities for English language learning: A lot of online facilities are available on internet for the development language skills. Some of them are e-guidance, e-tutoring, e-teaching, e-journals, e-magazines, e-books, e-library, online training, virtual classes etc.

Pod casting: is the integration of audio files where they can feed their materials and play it inside and outside of the classroom. Podcasts can help the learner familiarize with the target language and teachers can use them as useful audio material that can be used in class for activities like discussions, besides, in the web, there are even particular podcasts that can include pronunciation for particular needs of students. These ways of learning have been observed to improve oral proficiency in students and make up for the lack of native speakers in the areas where students live.

Quicktionary: is a pen-like device that permits the reader to easily scan the word and get its definition and translation on its own LCD screen.

Quick Link Pen which allows learners to copy and store printed text, Internet links. It helps to transfer the data to computers and enables the reader to get the meaning of the word from a built-in dictionary.

Therefore, the use of technology has a great influence on learners' speaking ability inside as well as outside the classroom. On this basis, [23] described two different views about incorporating technology into the class. First, in the cognitive approach, learners get the opportunity to increase their exposure to language meaningfully and make their own knowledge. Second, in the social approach, learners must be given opportunities for authentic social interactions to practice real life skills.

6. Conclusion

Speaking plays, a crucial role in teaching a foreign language. It is one of the most important skills to be enhanced and improved as a means of effective communication.

So as to increase students' attention and motivation, teachers ought to create a smoothing classroom atmosphere. And bringing ICTs into practice has a major impact to facilitate and improve learning in general and speaking skills in particular. ICTs provide interaction between teachers and learners, provide comprehensible input and output, help learners to develop critical thinking skills, make learning and teaching become more student-centered, promote learners' autonomy and help them feel more confident, and increase learners' motivation to effectively learn a foreign language. As a conclusion, the use of ICTs in education has to be highly encouraged as the present students are the future generation who are going to mould themselves, their society, and the world as a whole. Thus, ICTs are viable tools for enhancing the teaching of foreign language speaking proficiency.

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Understanding Language Acquisition Based on Research in Language Learning Styles

Petra Langerová¹

Masaryk University, Faculty of Education, Brno, Czech Republic¹

Abstract

The paper presents a current research project on language learning styles or preferences, as they are called nowadays, focusing on students of a technical university in Brno, the Czech Republic. The project aims at identifying students' English learning styles in order to innovate and adapt English lessons to match them. The main goal of the project is to understand how students of a technical university acquire language, taking into consideration their primary orientation on technical subjects. The research will use Ehrman and Leaver Questionnaire (2003) which identifies language learning styles based on psychological and personality types and traits. The research consists of two phases. The first stage will use the Ehrman and Leaver questionnaire whose results will also help to identify, apart from the learning styles, students who show a strong preference for some style. These students will be given a second questionnaire where they will be asked how difficult it would be for them to change it. This second stage of the research is aimed to identify how rigid and flexible the students are in their learning preferences, which the author of the research believes to be crucial for understanding learning styles in general. It is obvious that flexible students do not have problems adapting to teaching styles that do not match their learning styles. On the contrary, students with rigid preferences have many more difficulties in language acquisition if the styles do not match. The author's 14-year-long teaching experience suggests that there is a high percentage of students with rigid preferences among the technical students. The research will help to understand common features technical students share and the results will be reflected in an innovation of language education at the Department of Languages. Thus, the project also hopes to raise students' motivation in language learning and willingness to cooperate.

Keywords: language learning styles, rigidity, flexibility, technical students

1. Introduction

1.1 Learning styles definition

Learning styles are a very difficult notion to define precisely. We can find a lot of definitions in different authors, the terminology has also evolved throughout the years, including terms such as cognitive styles or learning preferences, and nowadays, the preferred term is preference in learning/cognition rather than a learning style, as the word "style" associates somewhat permanent quality, which is not always relevant. Another reason for avoiding the term "style" is the hot debate over the existence or non-existence of learning styles. The notion was challenged by some researchers, such as Geake [1], Kirschner and van Merriënboer [2], but so far, no satisfactory or persuasive results have been presented to deny its existence.

Nevertheless, in my paper I will be mostly using the term “learning style” because it is used in Ehrman and Leaver Questionnaire.

We can define learning styles as “an individual’s preferred and habitual modes of perceiving, remembering, organizing, processing and representing information.” Reid [3]

However, learning styles are not firmly fixed ways of behaviour, but just tendencies and preferences more or less strong, which can be modified and extended according to various tasks and situations, as Dörnyei [4] says. According to Riding [5] learning styles are probably physiologically based and they are fairly fixed for the individual.

2. Assessing learning styles

There are many ways of approaching, assessing and analysing learning styles.

Different models have been created based on diverse criteria of understanding cognition process and on varied aspects of processing, keeping and retrieving information. Among the best-known models, we can list Joy Reid’s Perceptual Learning Styles Preference Questionnaire [6], defining learning styles based on the preferred sensual channel of assessing information into *visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, tactile, individual* and *group*. Rebecca Oxford [7] uses a similar model in her Style Analysis Survey where she also uses the sensual preference, but she adds personality traits such as *introversion* and *extraversion*, and she includes other dimensions, such as *intuitive* and *concrete, close* and *open* and *global* and *particular*. Grasha and Reichman [8] offer a completely different view of learning styles, they define them according to students’ interaction amongst their peers, the instructors and learning in general into six styles: *avoidant, collaborative, competitive, dependent, independent* and *participant*. There are also many other models, so we can see that learning styles are a very complex matter.

2.1 Ehrman and Leaver Construct

In my research I have chosen to use Ehrman and Leaver Construct [9] whose questionnaire is based on the psychological personality typology stated by Myers-Briggs Type Indicator questionnaire [10]. The questionnaire includes cognitive, learning and perceptual styles and it combines and matches them to personality traits. Moreover, it was thoroughly tested in practice in the United States at the Foreign Service Institute, where it was used for assessing language learning problems of the Civil Servants working abroad. This model distinguishes learning styles on the continuum between *synoptic* pole and *ectenic* pole, a *synoptic* requiring a subconscious and intuitive information processing while an *ectenic* prefers and requires a conscious control over the learning process. The questionnaire contains thirty statements, expressing ten bipolar cognitive dimensions: *field dependent* vs *independent*, *field sensitive* vs *insensitive*, *random* vs *linear*, *global* vs *particular*, *inductive* vs *deductive*, *synthetic* vs *analytical*, *analogue* vs *digital*, *concrete* vs *abstract*, *levelling* vs *sharpening* and *impulsive* vs *reflective*. The person decides between the two poles and marks the preference of a statement on a 9-grade Likert scale according to the statement he/she agrees most with. The answers thus show a range of styles running from a mild preference, a strong need to an outright rigidity.

3. The research

3.1 Research background

The research, currently in its piloting stage, takes place at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Communication, Brno University of Technology, in the Czech Republic.

The Department of Languages, where I work, teaches about 350 Bachelor and about 200 Master students every year. Students must pass two one-semester compulsory English courses during their Bachelor studies and one two-semester English course in their Master studies. Their level of English varies from A2 to C1, and they are all mixed up in their B1-B2 English classes. Despite their difference in language skills their common features are anxiety and lack of willingness to communicate (both regardless of their English proficiency), poor accuracy in grammar and vocabulary, and great problems with assessing one's language learning skills. I chose Ehrman and Leaver questionnaire because I assume, based on my 14-year-long teaching experience, that students of this faculty show similar personality traits that are also reflected in their learning style. As the questionnaire is based on cognitive dimensions related to personality traits, it should help to understand, analyse and explain the common features they share in learning English, and it should help to prepare innovations for tailoring the English instruction to their needs.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Aims

The research has two aims. The first aim is to identify the most common language learning styles, to find out their proportion in the research sample and to identify the proportion of students that differ from the common pattern. This will help teachers to predict and prevent possible problems when using a non-matching teaching style.

The second research aim is more specific: to identify how rigid and flexible the students are in their learning style preferences, what cognitive dimensions they are rigid in and what their percentage in the research sample is. I believe that the notion of rigidity and flexibility of preferences is crucial for understanding learning styles. If students are flexible in their preferences, they can easily adapt to teaching styles that do not match their learning style. However, the more rigid they are in their learning preferences, the bigger problems they have if the teaching style does not match their own learning style.

My teaching experience suggests there is a high percentage of students rigid in their language learning preferences

3.2.2 Research sample

All Master students will be given the questionnaire, as the students will already have passed two compulsory courses in their Bachelor studies. The questionnaire needs to be translated into Czech to avoid language misunderstanding. Most students are male, so we can expect some misrepresentation, since, according to psychologists, men understand, perceive and use language differently from women.

3.2.3 Data collection

In the first stage of the research, all students' answers will be transcribed into an Excel file which will calculate an average score in each dimension and thus, a language learning style profile of a typical student will be composed, based on the most common features they will share.

(see Fig. 1)

Sample results of the questionnaire represented in the Excel file (Fig. 1)

	12				1	10				Ectenic
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
1. Field Sensitive			1							Field Insensitive
2. Field Independent				1						Field Dependent
3. Levelling							1			Sharpening
4. Global						1				Particular
5. Impulsive							1			Reflective
6. Synthetic						1				Analytic
7. Analogue				1						Digital
8. Concrete			1							Abstract
9. Random					1					Sequential
10. Inductive				1						Deductive
	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	

Based on the results from the first stage, the second stage of the research will focus both on students who have shown either a strong preference for some learning style (i.e., marking answers 1 and 2 or 8 and 9) or those who could not identify their preference, which means students who marked 5, (i.e., I am in the middle), for their answer in some cognitive dimension. These students will be given a second questionnaire which will ask them how difficult it would be for them to change their preference to the other pole. If they reply it would not be difficult, their preferences are very strong, but flexible. If it is difficult for them, it shows a strong and rigid preference.

Students who replied "I am in the middle" regarding their preference of a cognitive dimension will be asked whether they cannot identify their preference or they are that flexible that they can do both equally well. This will help to distinguish flexible students from the ones who cannot assess themselves.

The data will be collected from two cohorts for two years in order to make the research more reliable. They will be compared and statistically evaluated, focusing on the percentage of students with rigid preferences in particular.

3.2.4 Results

The results are impossible to predict, as it is difficult to make a hypothesis without any data. Large part of the results will lie in the interpretation of the data and the hypothesis statistical evaluation.

4. Conclusion

The aim of the research is to understand better students' preferred ways of learning, to analyse the cognitive dimensions of learning they share and to identify the proportion of the students with rigid preferences. The results will be reflected in the innovation of English instruction. For a teacher, obviously, the awareness and knowledge of students' learning styles can be a great help for the choice of adequate learning activities and the whole dynamics of a lesson. Understanding students' learning styles also gives a teacher an invaluable tool for analysing, understanding and solving various learning problems of individual students, as the teacher is more capable of deeper insight into an individual

learning process, which is also beneficial for students.

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Using TED Talks for Updating and Customizing the Learning Experience

Alexey A. Tymbay¹

MGIMO University, Moscow, Russian Federation¹

Abstract

The article contains the analysis of current trends in education that should be taken into account when teaching ESP students. In particular, the author underlines the necessity to develop students' discursive competence as well as their ability to present the results of their research in a foreign language. The existing learning materials in form of textbooks often become outdated rather quickly. What is more, the majority of them often overlook developing students' public speaking skills. For these ends, on-line TED conferences can be employed. In the course of working with TED talks students learn to analyse authentic video clips and make up their own presentations and lectures in accordance with the speech patterns they have learned. They develop the skill of impromptu speaking skills on a variety of professional subjects they major in. The work with TED talks in a classroom, though, requires a thorough preparation and a careful planning on behalf of the teacher. Successful integration of talks into an ESP course, on the other hand, will provide students with a readily available updates in their areas of expertise as well as entertaining and motivational learning material.

Keywords: Public speaking skills, ESP classes, Ted Talks, impromptu speech

The most important goal of working with students studying a foreign language for special purposes, that is, when teaching English in non-linguistic universities, is the formation of a number of professional skills. It is quite obvious that a simple ability to read and understand texts in a foreign language, as well as work with video and audio materials, is no longer sufficient. The globalization of the educational environment has turned a foreign language into a means of cognition, into the most important working tool, without which the formation of a modern, highly qualified specialist is no longer possible.

This approach is relevant for a number of specialists ranging from engineers to managers and lawyers. International practice of solving problems does not stand still, so modern scientists just have to receive fast dates, exchange experiences, get acquainted with the results of studies carried out in other countries and related fields. The question arises why simple work with the text of the article is no longer enough? The fact is that along with the expansion of the geography of research, the speed of research processes is growing, which means potential competition. Months, sometimes years, pass from the moment a study is conducted to the publication of its results in a reputable international scientific journal. Young scientists, in anticipation of important data, cannot afford the luxury of such downtime, so one of the tools of modern scientific work has become participation in specialized seminars, webinars and conferences.

The language of work of most international conferences is English. But even for the majority of specialists who have specialized professional vocabulary, participation in

such events is a certain difficulty. The task of university teachers in this regard is to foresee what kind of difficulties their students may have in the future, and make every effort to bring their educational practices closer to the real needs of students studying a foreign language for professional purposes. First of all, these are the skills to present the results of your own research and be able to discuss them with colleagues.

A lot of important words have been said about the benefits of holding round tables, panel discussions, role-playing games. The effect of this kind of work is colossal. First of all, it consists in the transition from working with text and vocabulary to real speech practice. Students learn to represent and argue their position. They learn to listen, understand and perceive a text in a foreign language and ask the speaker some questions.

Invaluable help for English teachers in this regard is provided by working with the TED online platform, which allows you to select video presentations for students on almost any topic based on their professional interests. It must be remembered, however, that working with TED lectures requires special training for students. We distinguish two work plans with similar material: substantive and structural.

If the teacher needs to prepare a basis for discussion, propose options for solving the problem, make an overview of existing approaches, introduce the speaker's opinion or enlighten students, it is usually only the content side of the lecture that matters to him.

However, one should not expect students to perceive the content of the lecture with the same ease as they do in their native language. Skills of taking notes and perceiving information will work here only partially. To achieve the maximum effect from listening, the teacher will have to prepare an entire arsenal of methodological tools, including the well-known pre-listening, while-listening, post-listening tasks. Experience shows that students can adequately assess the content of a lecture only after doing all these types of tasks.

One should also be aware that, unlike ordinary listening assignments, in presentations such as TED, each speaker has a thesis statement, which is substantiated during the speech. Students can often easily define the topic of a lecture, that is, what it is about. However, to single out the idea (thesis/subject matter), that is, why the speaker makes this speech, is often problematic for them. To solve this problem, one must be prepared to do a series of assignments with students to summarize texts.

To teach students to do it successfully it is always better to start with printed materials.

To optimize the work with the TED platform, or rather, in preparation for this type of work, we recommend using the well-known courses of Oxford University Press "Lecture Ready" [3], which suggest different levels of training for this type of work: from intermediate (low-intermediate) to advanced (low-advanced). These study guides focus students on the structural features of building a lecture (introduction, plan, conclusion), and gradually introduce vocabulary often used by lecturers to form a common "skeleton" of a lecture (key points, paraphrase, examples, conclusions).

To make a smooth transition from the mini-lectures included in the course to authentic lectures from the TED.com portal we recommend using "TED Tasks" by T. Alieva. and Yu. N. Efremova [1]. In our opinion, this manual can serve as an example of the successful implementation of the use of online lectures in the preparation of undergraduates in the areas of "regional studies" and "diplomacy" at MGIMO University (Russia) as a supplement to the main course textbook. The authors developed a range of exercises aimed at the development of communicative competencies, skills of perception of audio text, summarizing skills, and most importantly, they carried out a selection of lectures in accordance with the topics and needs of the course.

However, the main advantage of this work, unfortunately, is its main disadvantage. If

we set as our task the actualization of the studied materials, we cannot rely on the fact that the manuals published several years ago will retain their significance in the next academic year. Materials become outdated incredibly fast. Both in the sphere of international relations and in any other, including medicine or nuclear physics, new materials quickly lose their relevance and significance. Therefore, the teacher has the task of constantly updating the selection of lectures, developing a new set of exercises, without which, unfortunately, listening to materials has limited benefit for students.

The second level of work with TED materials is the structural level, which seems to us even more important than the substantive. The ultimate goal of working with such lectures is the preparation by students of presentations of their own research projects, such as those commonly called the 'Research proposal' in the English-language educational environment. In addition to preparing the actual visual series in Power Point format, which, incidentally, is also often a difficult task for students, they must present the results of their scientific work to the audience.

Such tasks can vary in complexity, from the presentation of the results of a collective study on materials studied in the course of professional disciplines, to the real presentation of master's work in a foreign language. In this type of work students solve primarily language problems. They are required to collect certain language material, develop a practice of working with lectures, and form speech skills. In addition, a successful linguistic experiment may become a sustainable and necessary speech skill in the future.

As an example of working with such problems, we would like to share the practice of holding a student presentation contest in the III and IV years of the bachelor's program at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University).

Unfortunately, not all students see a significant difference between the written text and its presentation. As we already wrote in other articles on this subject [3], for many of them there is simply no phono stylistic distinction between reading and speaking, academic and informational style. Of course, in the framework of teaching a foreign language for special purposes, there is no need to go into details of the features of the perception of the text to the audience. It is much easier to motivate students to take advantage of presentations and speeches on the Internet.

Student presentations are held annually. In the third year, students should make an individual presentation on the problems of diplomacy (for example: types of diplomacy, diplomacy and war, the press and international relations). In addition to the substantive side of the speech, the jury of the competition, which often includes current diplomats and invited guests, evaluates the actual speech skills. Particular attention is paid to the use of rhetorical techniques, the ability to captivate the audience, to keep the attention of listeners, contact with the audience, the quality of speech.

In the fourth year, the task becomes more complicated: the presentation can no longer be simply descriptive, students must put forward a problem hypothesis regarding the topics being studied (relations with the USA and the European Union, Brexit, human rights, demographic trends in the modern world, etc.) and reinforce or to refute it using the results of their own research (for example, a selection of news or opinion polls). In addition to the research nature, this project involves step by step work on its preparation and presentation. The jury evaluates the relevance of the chosen topic, the development of evidence and the ability to argue their position.

The educational goal of this type of work is the formation of the necessary discursive skills which students will be able apply in exams. Thus, the training program includes monitoring speech in different versions at all undergraduate and graduate courses. The result of the work is the final exam of the masters' program, where students present the

topic of their master's thesis in English.

Summing up, it should be noted that with the expanding role of a foreign language in further professional education, teachers have new tasks to customize the educational process, that is, to carry out a more thorough selection of relevant language and speech material in accordance with the needs of students. Modern students, young scientists and specialists should have sufficient discursive skills to present the results of their own research and conduct discussions in a foreign language. Such work is to be conducted regularly, since it involves the analysis of the content and structural side of authentic lectures and the synthesis of students' own speeches based on the knowledge and skills developed.

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World Languages in High School: The Freedom to Discover the World (A Practical Example in the French Class)

Elena Martí Alonso¹
American School of Valencia, Spain¹

Abstract

There is a general unanimity in the need to make learners demonstrate an intercultural communicative competence. Interculturality as a pedagogical approach aims to enable learners to get out of a unique vision of culture and to accept cultural plurality. In some way, the cultural proposals of the school programs often limit the real possibilities of language classes. Why not use the new language as a tool to discover and understand the world around us without further borders? Learning a new language includes the knowledge of the language system as a tool to communicate, but also the ability to express people's cultural thoughts and beliefs. Therefore, it is also a way to understand how the speakers of the target language see the world and to open our minds. Planning the language lessons without limitations of cultural contents allows the students to discover, compare, analyse and reflect on a large variety of topics from a wider cultural context, to make connections between previous and new knowledge, to choose topics for research and at the same time, provides teachers and students with multiple possibilities for practice, assessment and specially for differentiation. The practical example proposed in this paper aims to demonstrate how a simple proverb in the French class ("La plume est plus forte que l'épée.") becomes the conductive thread among multiple topics related to Art, Literature, History and real news, offers learning experiences in writing, listening, speaking and reading, interconnects contents of other subjects and increases substantially the student's motivation. As a result, the vocabulary, the topics, the opportunities of reflection, comparison and interaction as well as the activities carried out by the students covering all areas of the language, become much more enriching and meaningful than limiting the contents to a series of topics. World languages represent the perfect tool to make connections and, linking the classes to real life makes students take an active part in learning that goes far beyond the language itself, offering them a better understanding of the world.

Keywords: cultural plurality, borders, perceptions, differentiation

1. Introduction

World Language teachers have a "magic wand" that opens a window to the real world, they show and teach a way of communicating experiences and thoughts through different words. It is magic because the more tools we have to express ourselves, the freer we feel and the best we can understand others. There are no limits to how many words we can learn in the target language or how well we can use them. New words and new structures immediately connect to our previous knowledge and create an ingenious spider web through similarities and differences. Students unconsciously research

language connections through their own interests and for many of them the school programs seem limiting and therefore frustrating. In addition, language teachers face diversified groups of students in terms of skills, interests, cultural backgrounds and experience in learning languages. So, how can we make the lessons and tasks meaningful for all of them? There is not an easy answer to this question but students react more positively when they have the freedom to choose a path that is appropriate and challenging enough for each of them. They need a variety of choices and opportunities to show their capabilities and improvements. The classroom is a representation of society and language teachers are asking the students to open their minds to a global and multicultural world; consequently, they need to experience it inside the classroom, feeling that they are unique in a diversified group of learners.

2. A practical experience in the French class

2.1 Context

The American School of Valencia is an international school with a multicultural student population. More than a goal, interculturality is a daily reality so that the topics presented in class are naturally interpreted differently.

The lesson was designed for a group of tenth grade students with a B1 general level of French, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is an intermediate level where a language learner can

- Understand points regarding family, work, school or leisure-related topics.
- Deal with most travel situations in areas where the language is spoken.
- Create simple texts on topics of personal interest.
- Describe experiences, events, dreams, and ambitions, as well as opinions or plans in brief.

Although some audio-visual documents may occasionally be used in other languages because of the interest of the message, French is the only language used in the classroom to communicate and participate in oral and written activities.

The main goal of this lesson was to experience how students would react with authentic documents and make them reflect and enrich the lesson with their own proposals. The use of technology plays an important role to introduce the learners to different forms of media so that they can become familiar with the sound of the target language and its variations through French speakers and listen or watch news in real time. The classrooms are provided with interactive whiteboards and the students have access to computers, therefore, students are used to these frequent connections to real world (pictures, videos, video clips, articles, news, etc.) and to quickly share any kind of information with the rest of the group.

2.2 General brainstorming

The learning goal of this lesson was to make the students understand the importance of freedom of speech as a fundamental right and how this right can be visible (or not) in our daily life.

The idea of starting the lesson from the quote "*La plume est plus forte que l'épée.*" ("*The pen is mightier than the sword.*") came from the title of the first unit of a French B2 student book from Didier/Santillana (*Génération Lycée 3*). Starting the lesson with this quote made the students reflect about the meaning of the quote and how this freedom of speech can be visible through not only words but also through art.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quel est le sens de ce proverbe? • Remplacez "la plume" et "l'épée" par d'autres mots sans changer le sens du proverbe. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Est-ce qu'on peut aussi dénoncer des inégalités ou des injustices à travers l'art? • Cherchez des exemples.
Réflexions sur l'écriture (EO)		Réflexions sur l'écriture (EO)	

Fig. 1: Brainstorming

First brainstorming: What is the meaning of the proverb? / Replace "the pen" and "the sword" by other words without changing the meaning of the proverb. / Is it possible to react against inequalities or injustice through art? Find examples.

During the activity, students named writers, journalists, artists and also singers of different nationalities.

2.3 Reflecting about Art

The second step was to deepen into the topic through pictures analysis: art street, comics/cartoons, classic and modern art, sculptures, advertisements. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 2: The freedom of speech through Art

Students were able to identify some of these pictures and make connections with their previous knowledge so that other subtopics came out through the references of these images: terrorism, war, environment, consumerism, feminism, weapons, violence, stereotypes. From this, it was easy to introduce some names such as Charlie Hebdo, *Corto Maltese* by Hugo Pratt, *Guernica* by Picasso, *La liberté Guidant le peuple* by E. Delacroix (versus one of the multiples versions made by some cartoonists after the terrorist attack to Charlie Hebdo), even the philosopher Descartes with the allusion to his sentence *I think, therefore I am* versus *I shop, therefore I am*.

At this point, students were confident, focused on content more than in language accuracy, which increased motivation and participation in a visibly way. Again, they added some names referred to street art like Banksy, they talked about some of his famous drawings, and also talked about street art in Valencia. Even Escif, one of the best-known artists of urban art in Valencia, was also introduced.

2.4 Reflecting about Music

The analysis of images through videos was introduced with the video clip *Roméo kiffe Juliette*, (Romeo loves Juliet) from Fabien Marsaud¹, a French slam poet, better known by his stage name Grand Corps Malade (GCM). This slam is a new version of the classic Shakespeare's tragedy, taking place in France, where Romeo is Muslim and Juliet is Jewish, and where racial and religious conflicts emerge. Students were then asked to describe the video-clip orally, and, in groups, to answer some questions in writing about the lyrics (Fig. 3) and to compare both versions of the story, with a more hopeful message in the new version, where the characters decide to live their love in spite of adversity and the opposition of their parents.



BIOGRAPHIE

<http://www.grandcorpsmalade-fan.net/biographie>

<http://www.ri.fr/artistes/grand-corp-malade/biographie>

QUESTIONS



1. Quels sont les noms des personnages? Quel est leur âge? Où habitent-ils?
2. Pourquoi se voient-ils en cachette? Expliquez les raisons.
3. Qui les découvre et comment?
4. Quelles en sont les conséquences?
5. À quoi fait référence *Mercutio* et *la fiole de cyanure*?
6. Est-ce que la fin de l'histoire de ces deux jeunes est la même que celle de la tragédie de Shakespeare?
Roméo et Juliette par Shakespeare: <http://www.histoireamour.com/romeo-juliette.html>

Fig. 3: The freedom of speech through Music

This social criticism through music resulted in a brainstorming of singers and music styles from different backgrounds. A short biography of GCM was told to the students: a diving accident on his 20th birthday left him disabled. The level of engagement of the group increased considerably and reacted with solidarity towards the young characters and the urban poet. Then, we came back to the idea that the freedom of speech is a fundamental right which led us to the following part.


2.5 Reflecting about the freedom of speech

After the brainstorming and reflection sessions, students were asked to listen to a short explanation of the freedom of speech by *1Jour 1Actu*, a free French educational website² and they had to answer some general questions in complete sentences. (Fig. 4)

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcxRMikZrbY>

² <https://www.1jour1actu.com/info-animee/cestquoila-liberte-dexpression/>

La liberté d'expression




VIDÉO:
<https://www.fourtactu.com/info-animee/ce-que-est-la-liberte-d-expression/>

FICHE:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QZMkXsFLuFxBsD_tuMOrn14vt18Ia5dL176SvzB7eq/edit?usp=sharing

10e
UNITÉ 1

La liberté d'expression.



1. Donnez une définition de la liberté d'expression.
.....
2. Pourquoi dit-on que la liberté d'expression est un droit fondamental?
.....
3. Pourquoi c'est si important, la liberté d'expression?
.....
4. Que se passe-t-il dans les pays où il n'y a pas de liberté d'expression?
.....
5. Que garantit la liberté de presse?
.....
6. C'est quoi Charlie Hebdo?
.....
7. Que s'est-il passé le 7 janvier 2015?
.....

<https://www.fourtactu.com/info-animee/ce-est-que-la-liberte-d-expression/>

Fig. 4: Listening comprehension activity

Now that they had some information about the freedom of speech as a fundamental right and one of the pillars of a democratic society, students were asked to imagine their lives without that right. (Fig. 5)

They thought of some historical moments that they studied and imagined life under Spanish dictatorship or under Nazism. Some films were mentioned like *Au revoir les enfants*, that they watched in the French class the previous year, *Schindler's List*, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* based on the novel by John Boyne and *The Book Thief* based on the novel by the Australian writer Markus Zusak. The students who knew the last book or film mentioned talked about it and we watched the trailer of the film to analyse the images.

Et si on nous interdisait de lire/voir/dire librement ce qu'on veut?




Avez-vous entendu parler de La voleuse de livres?

La voleuse de livres (The Book Thief) est un roman de l'écrivain australien Markus Zusak




Fig. 5: TRAILER:

http://www.allocine.fr/video/player_gen_cmedia=19539113&cfilm=204237.html

When students are engaged, some spontaneity and flexibility from teachers is needed in order to make them feel free to share their knowledge, not about the target language itself, but about any topic, experiences, ideas and opinions. And then, by using the target language, there are no more levels or fear to make mistakes, students do their best to make themselves understood.

2.6 Activities, assessment possibilities and differentiation

The complete lesson covered different cross-curricular topics and resulted in different learning experiences and assessment as shown in Fig. 6 and Fig. 7.

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS: Literature, Art, Music, History and Cinema.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES: reading, listening comprehension, writing, speaking

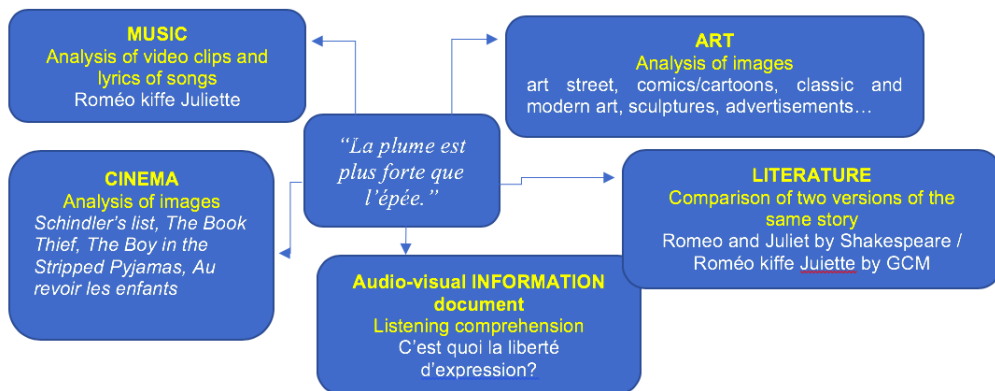


Fig. 6: Learning experiences

ASSESSMENT: Writing (Personal reflection, blog, article). Oral presentations, making a video, role play, art/music project...

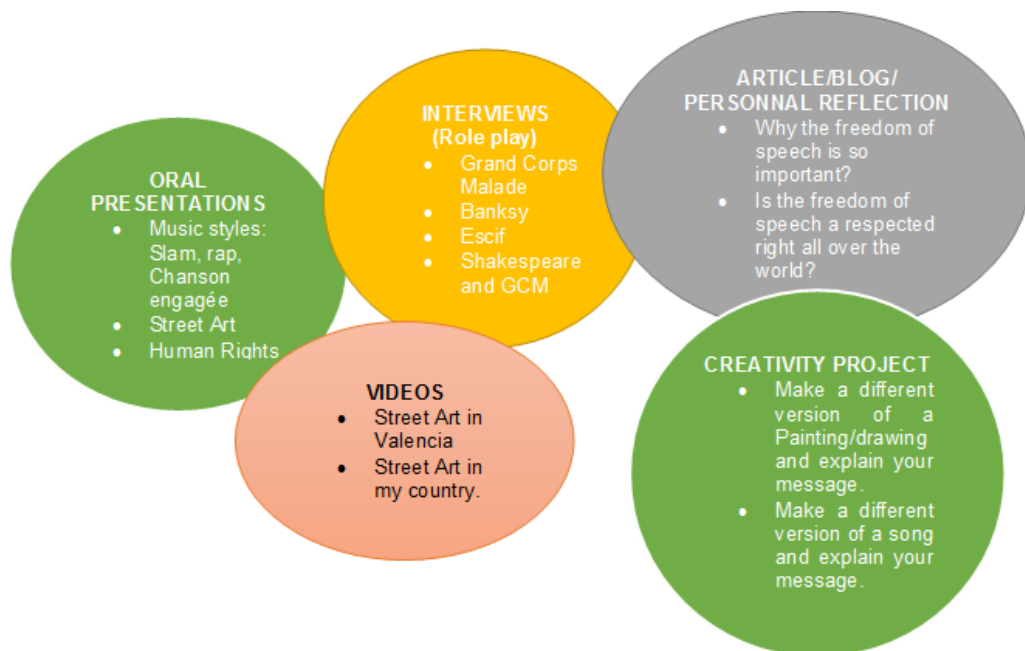


Fig. 7: Final projects

3. Conclusion

When students have the option to collaborate with the structure of the lesson, working with topics that interest them or about topics they already know from other subjects, not only do they improve their skills in language, but the level of motivation and engagement increases considerably. They become an active part of the learning process and the use of technology, allows infinite possibilities of research and creativity so that they can discover, read, listen and share final projects. The target language becomes the tool they need to make their tasks, reflections and projects while they feel free to choose topics in

order to link the French culture with their own and with previous knowledge. This is done so the classroom becomes a place to share knowledge, opinions and topics of interest, feeling unique and different, which is the best practice of interculturality.

Language for Specific Purposes

Approaching Learner Differences with Learner-Centred Teaching in Higher Education

Dietmar Tatzl¹

FH Joanneum University of Applied Sciences, Austria¹

Abstract

Learner differences are expressions of individual students' personal characteristics and their social contact groups. Biographical and personal differences include age, gender, ethnicity, physical qualities, nationality, languages, education, and the like, whereas further differences stem from a person's involvement in and identification with social and cultural communities. On the one hand, such differences may challenge teachers who may feel overwhelmed by very heterogeneous groups; on the other hand, they can provide a rich source of interactive potential in the tertiary foreign language classroom. This contribution reviews selected literature on classifying learner differences and revisits learner-centred teaching as a means of accommodating diverse needs of learners. It is the goal of this review to sensitize teachers to the individuality of their learners and approach the global foreign language classroom from the perspective of learner-centred teaching. A crucial construct to that end is learner interest, which teachers should capture with their materials, activities, and courses. Particularly in higher-education English for specific purposes (ESP) settings, course designs require a focus on learners' individual and professional interests. This contribution, therefore, further reviews good practice of learner-centred teaching to share techniques applied in higher-education language classrooms. Such a learner orientation in educating future professionals may eventually yield mutual gains in teaching, research, and industry for both the educational institution and its students. Well-educated, professionally literate, and self-confident graduates and alumni in global businesses will seek networking opportunities with their home universities and thus promote cross-cultural and transnational cooperation in classrooms, joint projects, and internships.

Keywords: ESP, learner differences, learner-centred teaching, interest, context, higher education

1. Introduction

Learner differences stem from individual students' personal traits and learners' involvement in social contact groups. Although some teachers may feel challenged by very heterogeneous groups, learner differences also represent great interactive potential in tertiary foreign language education. This contribution reviews selected literature on learner attributes and positions learner-centred instruction as a way of catering for students' diverse needs. This review aims at sensitizing teachers to the individuality of course participants and conceptualizes the global foreign language classroom from the angle of learner-centred instruction. The contribution further revisits learner-centred teaching techniques that may be applied in tertiary English for specific purposes (ESP) classrooms.

2. Learner differences

Learner differences may be subdivided into personal-biographical and sociocultural traits. It needs to be remembered that in both categories such differences may partly fluctuate and change over time, reflecting a person's private and professional development in life.

2.1 *Biographical and personal learner differences*

Biographical and personal learner differences encompass age, gender, ethnicity, physical qualities, nationality, languages spoken, education, and similar characteristics.

In higher education, age plays a rather advantageous role in foreign language learning, as studies of older and younger learners in comparable settings suggest that “older learners are more efficient than younger learners. By using their metalinguistic knowledge, memory strategies, and problem-solving skills, they make the most of second or foreign language instruction” [1, p. 93]. Research also indicates that “adults and adolescents can make considerable and rapid progress in their proficiency in a second language in contexts where they use the language in social, personal, professional, or academic interaction” [2, p. 96]. Apart from age, personal learner differences have been classified according to intelligence, aptitude, cognitive style, personality, and behavioural strategies [3, pp. 131-143]. Larsen-Freeman views differences as contributions that learners bring to the classroom: “who they are (*attributes*: age, aptitude, personality, learning disabilities, social identities), how they conceptualize second language acquisition (*conceptualization*: motivation, attitude, cognitive style, beliefs), and what they do (*actions*: learning strategies)” [4, p. 13].

Regarding differences as contributions affords teachers instructional scenarios that can draw on learners' personal biographies and experiences for teaching.

2.2 *Sociocultural learner differences*

Sociocultural learner differences issue from a person's interaction and identification with social and cultural communities. Social habitats and cultural contexts shape an individual's identity and contribute to marked traits that distinguish learners from each other or serve as common ground when such traits are shared by several members of a group. A very useful model of viewing the classroom as part of interconnected and diverse social frameworks is Holliday's host culture complex, which was originally conceptualised for study-abroad situations but is transferrable to broader educational settings. Holliday's model consists of several layers, starting with classroom culture as an embedded and interlinked element of “[s]tudent culture”, “[h]ost institution culture”, “[i]nternational education-related cultures”, “[p]rofessional-academic cultures”, and “[n]ational culture (including urban, village, regional and other activity cultures)” [5, p. 29]. Needless to say, student culture further comprises various social and cultural communities of interaction with strong identity-shaping forces, such as spare-time activity groups, sports clubs, and other peer groups.

3. Learner-centred teaching

Even rather homogeneous groups of learners, that is groups with learners who share many similarities, are diverse and bring different experiences to the classroom. As Lightbown and Spada note, “it is not possible for a teacher with 50 students – or even one with 10 students – to customize instruction to suit the abilities or preferences of each one”, and yet “there can be little doubt that an instructional approach that rigidly adheres

to a single way of teaching all students and an expectation that all students can learn in the same way will deprive some students of learning opportunities” [6, p. 92]. Particularly in tertiary ESP settings, learners’ individual and professional interests need to be taken into consideration when designing courses, materials, and tasks.

A wider acceptance of learner-centred instruction originated in the wake of communicative language teaching (CLT) [7; 8], together with the recognition that “learning is a student-centred process” [9, p. 22] and with a “focus on the unique contribution that each individual brings to the learning situation” [10, p. 95]. A key idea in that context is learners’ self-concept, “the amalgamation of all of our perceptions and conceptions about ourselves which give rise to our sense of personal identity” [11, p. 97], or, in Mercer’s words, “the beliefs one has about oneself, one’s self-perception” [12, p. 14]. Working with students’ self-concept, teachers can customise instruction and engage learners by creating pedagogical links between course contents and individual participants.

Another key element of learner-centred teaching is the construct of interest: “What triggers interest in language learning in one context – at one time and in one space – may not necessarily stimulate interest in another context (another time and/or in another place)” [13, p. 8]. According to Tin interest is “a knowledge-intensive emotion” [14, p. 277], whereas Dörnyei and Ushioda view interest as a multidimensional concept: “besides its obvious motivational connotations, the notion of interest also involves a salient cognitive aspect – the curiosity in and engagement with a specific domain – as well as a prominent affective dimension concerning the joy associated with this engagement” [15, p. 93]. As Tin argues, interest arises from a student’s interaction with an object of personal significance when this interaction involves “positive affect (positive feelings about the object), value (personal significance of the object), and knowledge (a desire to know more about the object)” [16, p. 277] and when the objects are appraised by learners as “complex, novel, and yet comprehensible” [17, p. 279]. Tin further states that interest “as a personal trait, idiosyncratic motive, or individual interest develops over a longer period of time through repeated experience of situational interest” [18, p. 279], but situational interest can be stimulated by teachers and particularly by teacher talk [19, p. 280].

In a similar vein, Coleman, Galaczi, and Ástruc [20] argue that an interesting methodology supports the development of positive attitudes towards language learning.

In this context, Jacobs and Renandya suggest ten elements of student-centred learning, and these are students and teachers as co-learners, student-student interaction, learner autonomy, a focus on meaning, curricular integration, a favourable attitude towards diversity, a promotion of thinking skills by student engagement, alternative assessment, a participatory learning climate, and a classroom harmonising with students’ intrinsic motivation to learn [21, p. 14]. In order to make their courses relevant to learners, therefore, instructors need to be aware of the potential of other subjects in the curriculum for their teaching; use a range of materials, tasks, and activities; vary forms of class organisation (whole class work, group work, pair work, individual work); welcome diversity as an enrichment to teaching; and remain flexible in terms of teaching strategies and techniques. Tapping into students’ thematic interests, indeed, may constitute a central teaching strategy in ESP courses. Furthermore, instructors may design learner-centred programmes by aligning course contents, resources, and assignments with disciplinary requirements and professional demands.

4. Conclusions

Teaching, research, and industry may profit from learner orientation in the education of future professionals because in such contexts individual students can focus on relevant needs and goals, while educational institutions are enriched by tailored course contents. When tertiary course instructors put their learners at the centre of pedagogical considerations, they will lay the foundations for successful careers of their graduates, who, in turn, will have an interest in further cooperating with their home universities. Well-educated, professionally literate, and self-confident alumni affiliated with international companies, therefore, will seek cross-cultural and transnational networking opportunities with their degree-granting institutions through participation in lecturing, joint projects, and internships.

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Evaluation of an ESP Coursebook Quality: Design-Based Research

Eva Ellederová¹

Brno University of Technology, Czech Republic¹

Abstract

This contribution deals with the research methodology and results of one phase of design-based research (hereinafter referred to as DBR) of an ESP coursebook – evaluation of the coursebook by means of a questionnaire survey. The ESP coursebook was designed for the course English for Information Technology taught at Brno University of Technology in the Czech Republic. The main objective of DBR is to establish a link between the design of the coursebook and its iterative testing for the purpose of its evaluation and re-design so that it would be the most appropriate teaching and learning tool for the target group of students. Besides the optimisation of the coursebook quality by means of the production of substantive design principles (characteristics of the coursebook design itself) and procedural design principles (characteristics of the coursebook design approach), the research results should lead to the verification and development of the existing theories of the ESP learning materials development. The first part of this contribution focuses on research methodology, the coursebook and samples characteristics and development of a research tool. The second part provides data analysis and interpretation. Besides the recommendations concerning the coursebook redesign, the research findings reveal similarities and differences in teachers' and students' opinions about the ESP coursebook quality.

Keywords: ESP coursebook, design-based research, iteration, evaluation criteria checklist, questionnaire survey, design principles

1. Research Methodology

This research is divided into one preparation stage and three realization stages. The *preparation stage* focuses on gaining an insight into the state of the art of DBR of ESP learning materials. Based on the literary research and establishing the conceptual framework, a research problem and research questions were formulated, and research samples and data collection methods selected. The main aim of the preparation stage is to design data collection tools, which include: 1) identification and elaboration of a checklist for evaluating the coursebook, 2) transformation of the checklist into questionnaire items, 3) piloting and modification of the questionnaire, 4) design of didactic pre-tests and post-tests to verify knowledge and skills acquired by the students before and after using the coursebook, 5) piloting and modification of didactic pre-tests and post-tests.

The *first realization stage* involves implementation of the coursebook pilot version into lessons, and consists of the following five steps: 1) evaluation of the coursebook by teachers, 2) pre-testing of students, 3) students' evaluation of the coursebook by means of a questionnaire survey, 4) post-testing of students and 5) data analysis and

interpretation.

The *second realization stage* involves redesign of the coursebook pilot version followed by the iteration, i.e. repeated implementation of the coursebook, its evaluation by teachers and students, pre-testing and post-testing of students and the second data analysis and interpretation. The *third realization stage* consists of two parts – the production of substantive and procedural design principles. The aim of this last stage is to characterize the optimal coursebook design, optimal research design and to draw up recommendations designed to improve educational practice. The following chapters focus on one part of the first realization stage, in particular on the coursebook evaluation by means of a questionnaire survey distributed among teachers and students of Brno University of Technology (hereinafter referred to as BUT).

2. ESP Coursebook and Research Samples Characteristics

The main subject of the research is a coursebook *English for Information Technology* (Ellederová, 2016) which will be repeatedly implemented in the course English for IT.

This coursebook is aimed at the intermediate level learners who study information and communication technology at universities and wish to further their careers in this field. Its aim is to equip the university students with both receptive and productive skills in professional English language at the level B2 according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* and to enable them to read a wide range of texts including technical documentation, scientific articles and textbooks, write academic assignments and research papers, listen to lectures, give presentations and participate in seminars and conferences as well as effectively communicate with teachers and colleagues. It consists of fourteen units covering a wide range of topics dealing with information and communication technology and one revision unit. Each unit consists of the main topic, vocabulary practice, reading, listening, speaking and language functions, such as predicting, giving advice and instructions, classifying, qualifying, and describing features and processes.

The research sample “Teachers” consisted of 13 respondents. The respondents who worked as assistant professors prevailed (61.54%). The length of teaching experience varied from six to ten years (23.80%) and eleven to fifteen years (23.08%). Ten respondents were teachers of English language and three respondents were disciplinary teachers of information technology courses taught in English.

The research sample “Students” consisted of 92 respondents from the Faculty of Information Technology, BUT. Most respondents studied English for eleven to fifteen years (54.44%) and they successfully passed the state school-leaving exam in English language (73.33%). Five respondents held a Cambridge English Qualification: three of them had the First Certificate in English (FCE) and two had the Certificate in Advanced English (CAE). The research sample can be considered as homogenous because the course English for IT prerequisites are the level B1 according to the *CEFR*.

3. Research Tool Design

The design of the questionnaire was based on the evaluation criteria checklist that examines different aspects of the coursebook quality. The evaluation criteria checklist was developed based on the synthesis of my own design and the checklists created by Cunningsworth (1995), Sikorová (2007), Mol and Tin (2008), McDonough, Shaw and Masuhara (2013), and Danaye Tous and Haghigi (2014). Twenty-four criteria were clustered into the following six categories: 1) *General Aims* of the coursebook; 2) *Clear*

Arrangement; 3) *Correctness* (correctness in language was evaluated by teachers of English language, professional content was evaluated by teachers of information technology courses); 4) *Learners' Needs* including the subcategories a) *Adequacy*, b) *Learning Guidance* and c) *Motivational characteristics*; 5) *Language Content* and 6) *Language Skills*. The course English for IT focuses primarily on speaking, reading and listening skills, therefore, the coursebook does not cover writing skills. Students learn and develop writing skills in another course provided by the Department of Languages at BUT.

The evaluation criteria checklist (see Table 1) was transformed into the questionnaire items presenting the respondents with a five-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree). Each item included a box *Reasons Given* where respondents should explain why they specified the particular level of agreement or disagreement.

Respondents could also add more comments on and/or objections to the coursebook itself. The questionnaire for teachers focused on all above-mentioned categories of the checklist. The questionnaire for students included twenty items focusing primarily on the category *Learners' Needs*. Categories *General Aims*" and *Correctness* were left out because students' evaluation of the coursebook regarding these categories might be irrelevant.

The first version of the questionnaire was piloted with teachers of English language and teachers of information technology courses taught in English at BUT and consequently modified. The final version of the questionnaire was distributed among teachers and students. All collected data was managed and analysed in *IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0*.

Category		Criterion	
I	General aims	1	Do the aims of the coursebook correspond closely with the course aims concerning the language use?
		2	Do the aims of the coursebook correspond closely with the course aims concerning the professional content?
II	Clear arrangement	3	Is the external layout (logical sequencing of chapters, topics, vocabulary) clear?
		4	Is the internal layout of texts and tasks clear?
III	Correctness	5	Is the subject matter correct and accurate regarding language/professional (field of IT) content?
IV Students' needs			
A	Adequacy	6	Is the level of texts and tasks adequate to the language level of students?
		7	Is the level of texts and tasks adequate to the professional level of students?
B	Learning guidance	8	Are different text features for guiding attention (e.g., different typefaces for distinguishing types of subject matter, bold print for highlighting key vocabulary) used in the coursebook?
		9	Do the tasks require problem solving and creative activities?
		10	Does the coursebook contain pairwork or groupwork tasks?
		11	Does the coursebook contain individual work tasks (e.g. those including the answer key for self-monitoring)?
		12	Are the visuals used as an integral part of teaching material?
C	Motivational characteristics	13	Does the coursebook contain enough tasks for recycling and reinforcement?
		14	Are the topics in the coursebook authentic and do they correspond closely with the students' field of study (e.g. examples from real-life situations, importance of knowledge and skills for the future IT career)?
V	Language content	15	Are texts and tasks interesting for students?
		16	Is the range of professional vocabulary in the coursebook adequate?
		17	Does the coursebook support vocabulary learning strategies (e.g. presentation of vocabulary in the text, tasks, with visuals)?
VI	Language skills	18	Does the coursebook contain enough tasks for students to acquire linguistic means for expressing different language functions (e.g. description, classification, comparison)?
		19	Is reading material adequately covered?
		20	Is there a focus on the development of reading skills and strategies?
		21	Is listening material adequately covered?
		22	Is there a focus on the development of listening skills and strategies?
		23	Is material for speaking adequately covered?
		24	Is material for speaking (dialogues, role plays, etc.) well designed to equip learners for real-life interactions?

Table 1. Evaluation criteria checklist for evaluating the coursebook English for Information Technology.

4. Results of the Questionnaire Survey

Evaluation of the coursebook was made by means of 1) a quantitative assessment of response frequencies for each point of the Likert scale and 2) a qualitative content analysis of the open-ended responses (respondents' comments) in the questionnaire. Comparing each category of the evaluation criteria checklist based on teachers' and students' evaluation of the coursebook, certain differences and similarities can be found.

The charts illustrating the overall evaluation of the coursebook quality (cf. Fig. 1) indicate that teachers' and students' opinions of the overall coursebook quality slightly differ.

Over 90% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed with the overall quality of the coursebook, whereas the percentage of students who either strongly agreed or agreed was about 82%. The following text focuses on presentation of quantitative data and

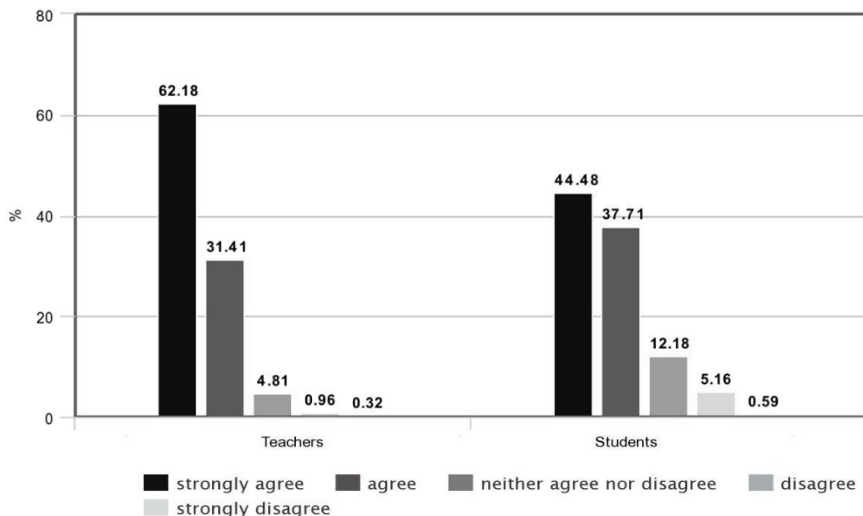


Fig. 1: Teachers' and students' overall evaluation of the coursebook

Although the category *Clear Arrangement* was evaluated by teachers more positively than by students (80.77% teachers strongly agreed with this characteristic of the coursebook), students were also quite satisfied with the clear arrangement of the coursebook since 45.56% of them strongly agreed and 45.56% agreed. Teachers tended to strongly agree (65.39%) with the *Adequacy* of the coursebook. Most students agreed (almost 47%) with the adequacy of the coursebook texts and tasks regarding both their language and professional level, which is supported by such comments as, "If the texts and tasks in the coursebook were more specialised in IT field, we might focus on the development of our professional knowledge rather than on language skills that are more important here." or "I think the language level as well as the professional (IT) level was suitable for everybody". More than one half of teachers (56.41% strongly agreed) positively evaluated characteristics of the coursebook related to *Learning Guidance*.

Students were slightly more negative (47.48% strongly agreed) – they required to add more self-study tasks. Both groups appreciated a large number of tasks for pair and group work and both required to include more problem-solving tasks in the coursebook.

The category of *Motivational Characteristics* was the only one where students were more positive than teachers (85% of students either strongly agreed or agreed as opposed to 73% of teachers). A relatively large number of teachers were undecided (23% neither agreed nor disagreed) and they openly admitted that they were unable to decide if the texts and tasks were motivating for students. One of the reasons might be that students are more knowledgeable about their field of study and the latest trends in information technology than English language teachers who prevailed against teachers of information technology courses. Students' positive evaluation of motivational characteristics of the coursebook is supported by their comments: "I will definitely use a great deal of acquired knowledge in the future. Most things were interesting due to the fact that I chose to study IT"; "The coursebook covers enough topics from the IT field, so everybody should find 'their own cup of tea'; "Some tasks were less interesting because

I wasn't interested in the particular IT issue, but overall, all topics were interesting"; "‘Interesting’ might be exaggerated, but texts and tasks weren't boring"; „Regarding English coursebooks, the attractiveness of texts and tasks is above average...”. The following examples illustrate slightly different teachers' opinions about the motivational characteristics: “The question whether the texts and tasks are interesting for students depends on the needs of the individual”; “Whether or not the texts and tasks are interesting varies from individual to individual”; “The attractiveness of the texts and tasks depends on the level of students' professional knowledge.”

In the case of the category *Language Content*, 90% of teachers positively evaluated this characteristic of the coursebook and students were satisfied with this aspect of the coursebook as well (about 83% strongly agreed or agreed). Both groups commented favourably on the professional vocabulary range in the open-ended responses, as shown in the following statements by students, “The range of professional vocabulary is adequate. My vocabulary learning went smoothly with the help of the coursebook”; “I hadn't known quite a lot of words before and I learned something new”; “We will need all those professional vocabulary terms for our future jobs in the IT sector. It's easier to remember vocabulary if every key word is repeated frequently throughout the particular unit...” and teachers, “Concerning the support of vocabulary learning strategy, the combination Topic + Vocabulary Practice + Wordlist is excellent...”; “I positively evaluate vocabulary practice in the coursebook...”. Both teachers and students shared their opinion about the need to add more tasks for acquiring linguistic means for expressing different language functions.

Somewhat bigger differences could be observed in evaluation of *Language Skills*.

While over 70% of teachers strongly agreed with this quality of the coursebook, about 50% of students strongly agreed or agreed. Students particularly liked the large number of tasks focused on the development of speaking skills (65.22% strongly agreed). Their comments support this finding: “The beginning of each lesson is great cause it focuses on discussing...”; “I really appreciate all speaking tasks – dialogues, discussions, role plays (especially after bad experience with English lessons in the secondary school), I began to enjoy it”; “I appreciated information on how to improve my presentation skills and the opportunity to give a persuasive presentation...”; “I've found out I can respond to every lead-in question and I liked sharing my ideas...”; “Questions asking if we have already solved something similar or if we solved or used something in the same way were good...” and “I loved role playing best.” On the other hand, only 35.56% of students strongly agreed in the item concerning the listening skills and strategies where they recommended modifying the listening tasks so that they could allow them to develop listening skills.

5. Conclusion

The pilot version of the coursebook *English for Information Technology* enabled students to improve their professional English knowledge as well as speaking, reading and listening skills. Regarding the positive evaluation, the research results reveal that teachers appreciated its clear arrangement, self-study tasks accompanied by the answer key, the content accomplishing the course objectives and adequacy of the texts and tasks to the language level of students. Students welcomed a variety of pair work and groupwork activities that the coursebook includes. They were also very satisfied with the number of tasks focused on the development of speaking skills, a range of professional vocabulary, graphic layout including highlighted vocabulary and a clear arrangement of units, texts and tasks.

However, the research revealed some weaknesses of the coursebook that will have to be taken into consideration and minimized during its redesign. Based on the questionnaire survey, the following modifications of the coursebook will have to be made:

- 1) add more tasks for the acquisition of linguistic means for expressing different language functions;
- 2) include more material for recycling and reinforcement focused in particular on vocabulary practice;
- 3) increase the level of difficulty of listening passages and add more tasks which will enable students to develop listening skills and strategies;
- 4) add more problem-solving tasks;
- 5) adapt (or add) some tasks that will enable students to work individually.

Students' approaches and opinions seem to be an important part of the process of the coursebook development since they not only help improve its efficient use, but also push development toward what students and teachers envision as enhancing the language learning process. Pardo-Ballester and Rodríguez (2010, p. 551) confirm that "learner perceptions play a crucial role in helping us get a bit closer to materializing what we imagine". Ivey (2013, p. 247) also maintains "students' perceptions on the consequences of their engagement indicated not just growth in reading, but also social, emotional, moral, and individual growth". Now the pre-test and post-test results must be analysed and then re-design of the coursebook will follow as well as the iteration, which will lead to the production of more design principles related to both theory and practice of ESP coursebook development.

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Language for Work – Tools for Professional Development

Titika-Konstantina N. Tsintoni¹
University of Patras, Western Greece, Greece¹

Abstract

Europe is home to many millions of adults – migrants (including refugees) and ethnic minorities – whose first language is different to the majority language of the country where they live. The ability of these adults to secure employment and then progress at work is essential both to their wellbeing and, more broadly, to social stability and economic development across Europe. The recent arrival of large numbers of refugees in Europe makes the issue of integration all the more urgent. Key to this is support for these adults to learn the majority language, particularly in relation to work. (Vermeulen, H., 2002) Labour market inclusion is a primary goal of integration policy. For millions of adult migrants in Europe, learning the language of the country of residence (L2) is a key enabler of access to and progression within the labour market. The Language for Work Network (LfW) aims to promote and develop this important area of linguistic integration. Created through a project funded by the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, this international network brings together researchers, practitioners, policy makers and others from the field of vocational learning and skills. Through its website and programme of activities, LfW shares research, policy and practice across Europe, supporting the full range of practitioners engaged in this field. Language for Work – Tools for professional development uses the European learning network created by the ECML project, Language for Work – Developing migrants' language competences at work (2012-15), to make these approaches accessible to practitioners involved in work-related majority language learning. It creates a professional development framework to help teachers implement these new approaches. To support refugee integration, the project also develops a 'quick guide' with key underlying principles and a selection of effective approaches (including non-formal and informal approaches) to support work-related majority language learning. The project's 'Quick guide' tool offers an at-a-glance overview of the key principles and approaches used to deliver successful work-related linguistic integration of adult migrants, including refugees. (Vermeulen, H., 2002)

Keywords: foreign language, professional development, international network

1. Introduction

Successful integration of adult migrants depends to a considerable extent on two interconnected enablers, language skills and employment. Migrants need language skills to find suitable employment and then progress at work. Employment can help migrants to develop their language skills.

Migrants who arrive with the language skills and qualifications they need to secure quality employment may require little further support. For the many other migrants who

arrive with limited language skills and no recognized qualifications, support to develop work-related language skills is crucial.

Work-related language skills are the skills people need to:

- find suitable employment, including language skills for job-search, CV writing, job applications, interviews, etc.
- contribute positively as an employee, including language skills for job specific tasks, health and safety, team working, quality management, customer care, employment rights, responsibilities and processes,
- progress at work and develop their career, including language skills for formal workplace training, informal on-the-job learning, further vocational education and training outside the workplace.

Work-related language skills are specific to:

- social norms around work – i.e., general expectations around behaviours, ways of communicating, etc. in the context of the world of work
- legislation and regulation, e.g., health and safety law, quality standards
- the communicative demands of the particular field of work – i.e., language skills required for e.g. engineering, health and social care, retail, IT, etc.
- social norms specific to a particular workplace – i.e., ways of communicating, behavioural expectations, etc.
- the communicative demands of the individual job itself – which will always evolve as circumstances around the job change.

1.1 Language skills at work

At work, people need to be able to:

- understand their rights and responsibilities
- talk about work schedules
- talk about job tasks
- process and communicate information, spoken and written
- deal with instructions, spoken and written
- collaborate with others including
- offering suggestions
- offering help
- asking for help
- dealing with feedback
- interacting with customers
- reporting, orally and in writing and much more besides!

What level of work-related language skills do migrants need?

The answer to this question will always depend on specific circumstances, including the type of work and the amount of on-the-job support. In the field of social care, for example, the worker providing care to an individual in that individual's own home may have less support available to them than the worker based in a care centre, who can seek help from colleagues close at hand.

Broadly speaking, the vocational level of the job gives some indication of the level of language skills it will require. Legislation, regulation and quality standards related to the job may offer further indicators.

In some countries, compliance with the basic health and safety laws that apply to all jobs generally requires at least CEFR level B1 language skills, whatever the

communicative demands of the job itself. Likewise, national quality standards and regulations for specific sectors, e.g. health and social care. (Cavounidis, J., 2006). Also, worth noting is the increasing requirement across all jobs for workers to process information and communicate effectively.

Ways to help migrants develop work-related language skills:

Migrants can be helped to develop work-related language skills through many different kinds of formal learning programme, including

- integration and other language learning programmes for migrants
- employability and pre-employment programmes for job-seekers
- vocational programmes for specific occupations.

For migrants already in employment, support for language learning can be incorporated into most workplace training programmes. People and performance management processes, including supervision and team meetings, also offer good opportunity to support language development. These formal and non-formal learning opportunities can be supplemented by support for informal learning, both at work and in the community, through:

- coaching and mentoring programmes
- volunteer buddying schemes
- peer support groups
- self-access learning resources.

What expertise do you need to help migrants develop work-related language skills?

There are different ways to help migrants develop work-related language skills, including:

- formal instruction
- coaching
- support groups
- making learning resources available.

The expertise you need varies accordingly. It is definitely good, however, to have some understanding of two things. One is language learning – specifically, what helps an adult acquire a new language (and what hinders them). The other is the field of work in question (e.g., hospitality, engineering, social care, etc.).

What do we know about language learning?

We learn a new language primarily by interacting in it. Formal instruction can be very helpful, but is not enough on its own. We gain competence by using the language to communicate in real-life situations.

Much of the learning happens unconsciously and it takes persistence over an extended period of time, particularly to achieve the level of required by most jobs.

Individual progress depends on a host of often interrelated factors, including motivation, aptitude; educational background, what other languages the individual knows, what opportunities and support for learning are available to the individual – and so on.

Barriers to language learning for migrants.

Typical barriers to language learning for migrants include:

- lack of confidence to interact in the language
- very limited contact with speakers of the language
- limited literacy
- lack of time, money for tuition
- not knowing how to find language tuition

- lack of learning support at or outside of work
- lack of effective personal learning strategies (sometimes linked to lack of confidence in own ability to learn)
- lack of motivation to persist with language learning activity.

To offer effective support, we need to address these barriers. It is also important to remember that the personal situation of migrants may be extremely difficult due to trauma, family circumstances, legal uncertainties and many other factors. (Baldwin-Edwards, M., 2008)

2. Literacy and work-related language learning

Information processing and written communication (often using the medium of digital technology) are now central to all jobs, including entry level jobs – making literacy a key competence at work. Likewise, formal language learning (including self-access online learning) typically assumes confident literacy as well as study skills. Not all migrants have these skills, so support to develop them can be extremely valuable.

2.1 What is ‘adult literacy’?

Adult literacy can be defined as the ability to read and write at the level an adult need to function and progress at work and in society generally. It is a key to citizenship as well as employability. Literacy is not a fixed thing and (like language itself) it is inextricably bound up with social practices, i.e., the context in which it is used. It is possible to be more literate in one context than another, cf. terms such as ‘financial literacy’, ‘digital literacy’ and ‘scientific literacy’. Moreover, it changes over time (again, like language itself) as society evolves and technology develops.

Literacy skills themselves sit on a continuum and people often benefit from support when confronted with a new literacy task, e.g., a new type of form to fill in.

3. Why might a migrant have limited literacy and/or study skills?

- Limited access to schooling – migrants from impoverished, war-torn countries, for example, may never have had opportunity to attend school
- No previous exposure to the alphabet used in your country
- No previous exposure to the social practices around literacy in your country, including the literacy practices common in workplaces in your country
- No previous exposure to the methods of formal learning used in your country
- Negative experiences at school
- Learning difficulties related to literacy, e.g., dyslexia
- (Baldwin-Edwards, M., 2008)

3.1 Enablers of language learning for migrants

Migrants today come from a very diverse range of backgrounds – but, as language learners, all migrants will benefit from:

- Encouragement and support to learn
- Opportunity to use the language in real-life situations
- Help to notice and understand the forms of the language
- Help to notice and understand social norms and expectations around communication
- Corrective feedback
- Help to develop effective personal learning strategies

- Help migrants to learn outside of the classroom
- Help migrants take better advantage of informal language learning opportunities
- Beware of the low-pay, limited language trap
- Support learning at work
- How to gain the support of managers
- Workplace tips

(Baldwin-Edwards, M., 2008)

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Main Characteristics of Establishing and Maintaining Rapport in an ESP Classroom

Naira Poghosyan¹

National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia,
Chair of Languages, Armenia¹

Abstract

The target goal of the current paper is to thoroughly analyse and introduce the main characteristics of establishing and maintaining rapport in the ESP classroom. The term “rapport” refers to the good working relationship in a classroom: either teacher-student or student-student. It is not primarily technique-driven, but grows naturally when people like working with each other and mostly get on together. On the part of the teacher it basically embraces a number of popular techniques, such as being welcoming, encouraging and approachable, treating each learner as an individual, concentrating on positive features of learner character, expressing empathy, not faking happiness and avoiding sarcasm. However, the ESP context implies and entails another set of personal and professional factors which should be taken into close consideration by the teacher as they may directly influence the quality of the rapport in the ESP classroom. It is a well-known fact that ESP teaching is extremely varied, and ESP work involves much more than teaching. We see the ESP teacher as having key roles of a course designer and materials provider, collaborator, researcher, evaluator, facilitator and consultant. These roles are difficult to adopt for any teacher, especially an inexperienced one and in many cultures, these might seem alien to traditional views of the role of the teacher. However, ESP teachers should be well-aware of some factors which can considerably improve or worsen the quality of rapport in their own lessons. Thus, the role of the ESP teacher in building and maintaining positive working relationship should be implemented considerably and skilfully with ESP learners who have a clear and specific set of purposes in language learning.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, rapport, teacher’s role, technique

The most effective teaching and learning basically happens when learners are actively involved, interested and engaged in their work. This is more likely to come about in situations where the learners are asked about, and have at least some direct influence or “say” in, what they study and how they do it. This presupposes a classroom where the teacher and the learners can work together and talk or listen to each other in a respectful and supportive manner. Our aim in the current paper is to shed light upon a number of factors which can affect the quality of the rapport in the ESP classroom. But before passing on to the good working relationship, it would be worthier to define the characteristics of the ESP course and the ESP learners, in particular. It is a common knowledge that ESP is not a monolithic universal phenomenon and it has developed at different speeds in different countries. One of the most important features of ESP in relation to General English is that the status of English changes from being a subject in its own right to a service industry for other specialties. The term “specific” in ESP refers

to the specific purpose for learning English. Students approach the study of English through a field that is already known and relevant to them. This means that they are able to use what they learn in the ESP classroom right away in their work and studies. Thus, ESP assesses needs and integrates motivation, subject matter and content for the teaching of relevant subject-specific language communicative skills. In other words, ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning. From this perspective, new developments in educational psychology contributed to the rise of ESP, by emphasizing the central importance of the learners and their attitudes to learning [3]. Learners were seen to have different learning and target language needs and professional interests, which would have an important influence on their motivation to learn and therefore on the effectiveness of their learning. This lent support to the development of ESP courses in which 'relevance' to the learners' needs and interests was paramount. The assumption underlying this approach was that the clear relevance of the English course to their needs would improve the learners' motivation and thereby make learning better and faster. The focused nature of learning, its relevance and cost-effectiveness ensure that its aims are widely accepted by learners. Opinions about specific work, however, vary.

Many learners are hungry for the material and advice that will help them with their specific course or with particular skills related to their course. Thus, for example, team taught courses, where the language teacher works together with the subject lecturer to help international students understand actual lectures on postgraduate courses, appear to be highly motivating [5]. Thus, motivation in ESP has a profound effect on the question of how specific the course is. High motivation on the part of learners generally enables more subject specific work to be undertaken; low motivation, however, is likely to lead to a concentration on less specific work. Specialists in either academic or occupational contexts, who need English for specific tasks, will be impatient with an ESP course that does not address their difficulties or language gaps. Other students who are studying English because it is on the timetable of their institution, or who have been sent on a course by their company, and who do not have specific, immediate and clearly definable needs may be demotivated by more specific work and may be more motivated by ESP courses based on common-core language and skills not related to specific disciplines or professions or ESP courses for broad disciplinary or professional areas.

Consequently, the first step towards building rapport in an ESP classroom is analysing learners' target language needs. By building a relationship with students and finding out about their needs and interests, the teacher can make the ESP course more relevant to their needs and plan lessons and activities which engage them more. Needs analysis in this context is a complex process, involving much more than simply looking at what the learners will have to do in the target situation. There are a number of ways in which information can be gathered about needs. The most frequently used are: questionnaires; interviews; observation; data collection e.g., gathering texts; informal consultations with sponsors, learners and others. Both **target situation needs** and **learning needs** must be taken into account. Analysis of target situation needs is concerned with language use. But language use is only part of the story. We also need to know about language learning. Analysis of the target situation can tell us what people do with language. What we also need to know is how people learn to do what they do with the language. We need, in other words, a learning-centered approach to needs analysis [5]. From this perspective, rapport in the ESP classroom can be characterised as a kind of indefinable magic that some teachers manage to create where others fail, and certainly it can be detected when there is a sense of lively engagement, a room full of people who are happy to be together and work together. Despite the appearance of

magic, good rapport is all down to a number of distinct, concrete, learnable elements.

Any teacher can learn to create better rapport. The crucial foundation block in an ESP context, particularly, is **authenticity**, as without that, any relationship will be a façade rather than genuine. Authenticity means behaving in a way that is appropriately real, letting the students see genuine reactions to things, moods and natural behaviour, rather than covering everything up in a performance [4].

Carl Rogers, the US educational psychologist suggested that authenticity was the single most important teacher characteristic. The teacher can be a real person in her relationship with her students. She can be enthusiastic, can be bored, can be interested in students, can be angry, can be sensitive and sympathetic. Thus, she is a person to her students, not a faceless embodiment of a curricular requirement nor a sterile tube through which knowledge is passed from one generation to the next. He believed that authenticity created the conditions for good rapport and helped build a real depth of trust and respect, and that this made the difference between a successful classroom and an unsuccessful one [3].

Being authentic for the ESP teacher implies the following:

- **Behave as an individual, not as a teacher with an official job title.** ESP is a practical discipline

with the main focus on helping students to learn. In many situations the teacher is expected to control the class, to provide information about skills and language, to control the activities, possibly moving into pair or group work for part of the class. In these situations, the role for the teacher generally matches the expectations of the learners and the teachers remain the classroom organizers; they have clear objectives for the class and finally a good understanding of the carrier content of the teaching material.

ESP teachers need to have a great deal of flexibility, be willing to listen to learners, and to take an interest in the disciplines or professional activities the students are involved in. They must be ready to change tack in a lesson to take account of what comes up, and to think and respond rapidly to events. ESP teachers must also be happy to take some risks in their teaching. The willingness to be flexible and to take risks is one of the keys to success in ESP teaching.

- **Avoid pretending omniscience.** If the teacher doesn't know an answer to a question, it is better

to say that, rather than confusing students with roundabout explanations. The ESP teacher is not in the position of being the 'primary knower' of the carrier content of the material. The students may in many cases, certainly, where the course is specifically oriented towards the subject content, know more about the content than the teacher. It is often stated that this provides the ESP teacher with the opportunity to draw on students' knowledge of the content in order to generate genuine communication in the classroom.

- **Have real conversations.** Where the teacher really listens to learners and responds appropriately

giving her/his genuine personal reactions to students' comments. In many cases, it is essential that the teacher adopts the stance of the consultant, when teaching a much more specific course. A consultant who has knowledge of communication practices, but needs to 'negotiate' with the students on how best to exploit these practices to meet their objectives. The relationship is much more one of partnership. In specific ESP teaching it may be the learner who asks the questions and the teacher who responds. In some situations, the role of the ESP teacher goes beyond that of the classroom teacher and extends to giving one-to-one advice to students.

- **Be authoritative appropriately.** The teacher should not use the cloak of teacher superiority and

hierarchical authority in order to give instructions. In some situations, the ESP teacher manages rather than controls. She may not make decisions about the course design but will negotiate with the learners about what is most appropriate to include, and when to include it. She will often get members of the class to bring material for exploitation in class. We see this role of the ESP teacher as a facilitator or a consultant. A development of this is where the teacher knows relatively little about the content or the skill that is being taught in the ESP class, and proceeds by pulling together and organizing the information that the learners, and – if possible – their lecturers or instructors are able to provide about the language or skill. This role is a difficult one to adopt for any teacher, especially an inexperienced one. In many cultures it is a role that is alien to traditional views of the role of the teacher. However, where it is possible, it is a role that is very appropriate and productive with sophisticated learners who have a clear and specific set of purposes.

- **Be creative and constructive with what is available.** It has often been noted that ESP is a

materials-led movement and that part of the role of the ESP teacher has been to write teaching materials to meet the specific needs of learners. It has emerged that the ESP teacher is mainly a provider of materials – selecting material that is available, adapting it as necessary and supplementing it where it does not quite meet the learners' needs – although in some cases it is more appropriate to use the authentic materials that learners can provide.

Often, being creative with what is available is crucial, especially if the work environment is heavily constrained. Situations can vary along the cline of:

- freedom to choose from any material
- small range of material to choose from
- given materials have to be used.

We would dispute that; only a small proportion of good teachers are also good designers of course materials. What all ESP teachers have to be is good providers of materials. A good provider of materials will need to be able to:

- select appropriately from what is available;
- be creative with what is available;
- modify activities to suit learners' needs and
- supplement by providing extra activities and extra subject-specific language input [5].

The balance between these will vary from course to course, situation to situation. Initial questions to ask when selecting materials include:

- Will the material stimulate and motivate learners?
- To what extent does the material match the stated teaching/learning objective. It is rare for a single set of published material to match the exact learning needs of any ESP learner group; and activities do not always meet the stated objectives.
- To what extent will the materials support that learning?

To stimulate and motivate, materials need to be challenging yet achievable; to offer new ideas and information whilst being grounded in the learners' experience and knowledge; to encourage fun and creativity. The input must contain concepts and/or knowledge that are familiar but it must also offer something new, a reason to communicate, to get involved. The exploitation needs to match how the input would be used outside the learning situation and take account of language learning needs. The

purpose and the connection to the learners' reality need to be clear.

- **Provide variety.** Variety is essential in any language class, but we feel that it is particularly

important in an ESP class as there is sometimes the danger of the ESP class becoming rather a dry affair that fails to motivate learners. We need to practice a number of micro-skills in one class, we need to introduce a range of activity types and we need to vary the type of interaction taking place during the class.

- **Variety in Micro-Skills**

Micro-skills are generally defined as lower-level skills that constitute a macro-skill, which are considered to be the basic language communicative skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening to monologue, for example, can be broken down into micro-skills, such as the ability to identify the purpose and scope of the lecture, the ability to deduce meaning of words from context. Thus, an ESP class may have as its aim one particular macro-skill, such as writing, but the use of other macro-skills will both help the learning of the target macro-skill and provide variety for the class. In the same way we feel that we should ensure that we focus on a number of micro-skills in a class; a reading class dominated by, say, deducing the meaning from context is likely to be less effective and motivating than one that focuses on a number of related micro-skills, for example deducing meaning from context, learning certain key core vocabulary items and investigating collocations.

- **Variety in Activity Types**

Actually, textbooks cover a relatively narrow range of receptive exercises but we have always found that the use of productive exercises increases motivation for both the learners and the teacher. Learners welcome this variety, but, when we use a new exercise type, we must familiarize learners with it so they know what they are expected to do. A visual element in an exercise is often effective as it both increases variety and avoids the danger of too much writing to be read and understood as input for a task. We can use visuals for language work, to generate spoken or written production, and as a comprehension check on a reading or listening passage. Visuals include Power Point slides, diagrams, flow charts, graphs, bar and pie charts, matrices, photographs and sketches.

- **Variety in Interaction**

We need to ensure that the ESP class is varied in the nature of interactions. Changes from teacher input to individual work, to pair work, to class discussion can provide this so long as they are not overdone. We should also build in choice as far as possible: some students would rather work on their own than in groups or pairs, so we can allow them to do so for at least part of the class. Class size and learners' expectations of how they should be taught will affect how successful these changes are and the teacher should be sensitive to these issues.

- **Implement Differentiation Techniques**

Differentiation doesn't necessarily mean planning and delivering multiple lessons, but considering how the aim of the lesson as a whole can be met by different learners and in different ways. Differentiation can be done in many ways, for example by **content** (the resources and materials learners will use and study in the lesson), **process** (the way the teacher designs and manages the lesson) or **product** (the work that the learners are asked to produce during the lesson) Many ESP teachers fear that teaching mixed ability classes is one of the biggest challenges that they have to face. In reality, all classes are mixed ability, because learners are unique individuals. Differentiation is the term often given to the principle of recognising differences in the classroom. To achieve effective differentiation, we need to tailor our planning and teaching to enable all learners to

participate and achieve the level of challenge which is appropriate for them.

- **Incorporate Subject-Content Materials**

As it has been noted, rapport implies a positive relationship between a teacher and his/her learners, where they understand each other well and communicate well. In contrast to a General English teacher, the ESP teacher is faced by a group of learners with definite expectations as to the nature, content and achievement of the course.

Learners in the ESP classes are generally aware of the purposes for which they will need to use English. Having already oriented their education toward a specific field, they see their English training as complementing this orientation. Knowledge of the subject area enables the students to identify a real context for the vocabulary and structures of the ESP classroom. In such way, the learners can take advantage of what they already know about the subject matter to learn. The reasons for having a subject-specific approach rest almost entirely on two affective factors generated by the learners themselves:

- **Face validity.** Subject-specific materials look relevant.
- **Familiarity.** If learners have got used to working with a particular kind of text in the ESP classroom, they will be less apprehensive about tackling it in the target situation.

ESP students are particularly well disposed to focus on meaning in the subject-matter field. Thus, in ESP, English should be presented not as a subject to be learned in isolation from real use, nor as a mechanical skill or habit to be developed. On the contrary, English should be presented in authentic contexts to make the learners acquainted with the particular ways in which the language is used in functions that they will need to perform in their fields of specialty or jobs.

To conclude, effective teaching requires an in-depth analysis of the classroom environment and a flexible ever-changing reflection as to what might be the best thing to do next. ESP teachers should take higher and higher qualifications involving more and more comprehensive study of aspects of education and become very knowledgeable classroom practitioners. The ESP learners come to the ESP class with a specific interest for learning, subject matter knowledge, and well-built adult learning strategies. It is clear that establishing and maintaining rapport in an ESP classroom is more than just the positive relationship and understanding, the enthusiasm and attitude towards teaching and learning.

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On the Use of Authentic Materials in a Legal English Class

Vaiva Eimulienė¹, Aušra Janulienė², Olga Medvedeva³
Vilnius University, Lithuania^{1,2,3}

Abstract

The use of textbooks and/or authentic materials in an ESP class has been debated over decades. In the context of learning languages at the tertiary level, the use of authentic materials related to students' disciplinary areas does not need any justification, the benefits of their use, in terms of professional development and motivation, are recognized by theoreticians and practitioners. In the digitized global world, the overwhelming amount, availability and accessibility of authentic materials (e-files, audio and visual sources, etc.) and students' overall exposure to the information sources in English, which dominates in most areas of academic studies, highlight the necessity to raise the effectiveness of authentic materials in language acquisition progress in general, as well as what regards specific learning environments (classroom, blended, self-studies). The present paper has been triggered by the results of the on-line questionnaire offered to the teachers of language for specific purposes who teach at several universities of Lithuania. The research incorporates the analysis of the collected 'field data' (63 respondents) regarding LSP teachers' attitudes and preferences in terms of textbooks and other teaching aids, including authentic materials, the most common practices in using authentic materials, their advantages and drawbacks, as well as the authors' conclusions on the effective ways of the use of authentic materials in a legal English class, specifically while applying the task-based approach to language teaching. Although the presented courses and activities are mostly based on the authentic materials from the legal area of knowledge (laws and legal acts, lawyers' and judges' opinions, academic articles on legal research etc.), the recommendations on the use of authentic materials in LSP classes and other learning environments at universities go beyond studying law and law-related disciplines; they will be of use to teachers of languages for other professional areas, course developers and material designers.

Keywords: Authentic materials, languages for specific purposes, effectiveness, learning environment, course development, material design

1. Introduction

The use of textbooks and/or authentic materials in an ESP class has been debated over decades [1], [2], [3]. The design and production of textbooks flourish due to the creative synergy of scholars, who specialize not only in language teaching methods, but also in cognitive linguistics, psychology and pedagogy, as well as of most experienced practitioners, who provide indispensable and varied classroom data. The choice of teaching aids depends on a range of factors, such as accessibility and affordability, teachers' and/or students' preferences, school and country policies, to name just a few.

The impact of a well-chosen teaching aid is far from being unambiguous; there are

side-aspects to be considered to ensure its maximum effectiveness. The present research deals with teaching languages for specific purposes at the tertiary level; the area is well-catered for by such famous publishers as Cambridge university press, CRC Press, Caslon Press Inc., etc. The authors will abstain from criticizing or advertising of the available textbooks; their purpose is to demonstrate how textbooks can and should be complemented with authentic materials to raise the effectiveness and quality of language learning.

2. Background

According to Hutchinson and Torres, a well-chosen and appropriately used textbook provides “an excellent vehicle for effective and long-lasting change” [2: 323]. The successful management of change, which may be viewed as a crucial part of development in general and education in particular, is facilitated by the structured and consistent approach to the learning and teaching process; with coherent structure and consistency being obligatory features of a good text-book.

Regardless of the availability of quality textbooks, ESP teachers, especially those in tertiary education, seldom work without additional teaching aids, mostly authentic materials (see the results of the Survey below). What makes them resort to additional time and energy investment required for selecting materials and designing special “tailor-made” activities? What might quality ESP textbooks lack to satisfy this particular class, in this particular environment? Hyland [4] underlines the specificity of literary skills acquired in ESP classes that are appropriate to the purposes and understandings of particular academic and professional communities. The need for and applicability of the specific skills and rhetoric in a certain subject/knowledge area and for a particular audience is supported by other scholars [5], [6], [7]. Thus, ready-made learning/teaching materials or course books may not satisfy our students’ specific needs as they represent very different and often very narrow disciplinary areas. The use of authentic materials in teaching ESP can, therefore, hardly be argued, and one of the roles ESP practitioners are believed to assume is that of a course designer and materials provider [8], [9]. As authentic materials have to be selected and adjusted to the needs and potential of the learners by designing specific tasks and activities. Authenticity in language studies has been researched by Daly, Gilmore, Tarnopolsky, Williams and others [10], [11], [12], [13].

We will use the definition of authentic materials suggested by Morrow: “An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort” [1:13], e.g., judicial opinions for legal professionals or a contract clause construed by the lawyer to a client.

Alongside the content (information) value of authentic materials, there are at least three layers of learning embedded within them: language learning (the structure and vocabulary), cultural insights, which international course books might be lacking in, and practical application, i.e., using the item in the way it was intended [3]. Related to a specific area of knowledge, authentic ESP materials are often term-dense, i.e., having a high ratio of technical or subject-specific terms to general language words and structures, and thus posing a challenge to students. Although this may be true, it was rightly pointed out by Swales (quoted in [13]) that non-native learners of ESP, who are usually university students, may already possess a certain degree of technical knowledge about the subject in their native language, and even with their relatively limited English language skills they may well find that highly subject-specific texts in English are easier to understand than their popularized equivalents written in a less formal, more idiomatic style using terms and expressions that could cause difficulties to

non-native speakers. This “background awareness” of the subject matter and recognizable international terms does not undermine the importance of studying the peculiarities of content organization, structure and precise expressive means specific to the target language discourse.

The aim of the research is to present our approach to the selection and application of authentic materials in a legal English class. Although the presented courses and activities are mostly based on the authentic materials from the legal area of knowledge (laws and legal acts, lawyers’ and judges’ opinions, academic articles on legal research, etc.), the recommendations on the use of authentic materials in LSP classes and other learning environments at universities go beyond studying law and law-related disciplines and may be of use to teachers of languages for other professional areas, course developers and material designers.

3. Methods and Tools

The present paper is based on the research undertaken by a VU team to investigate the current practice and perspectives of teaching ESP at several Lithuanian universities and colleges. The research data was collected through the on-line questionnaire addressed to language teachers, particularly those who teach languages to other than philology students. The anonymous questionnaire was freely accessed at the e-platform of Vilnius University; potential respondents were informed and invited to participate in the survey through the university exchange mail, via administration channels, via the mailing lists of the Lithuanian Association of Language Teachers. 89 language teachers responded, 65% of the respondents completed the questionnaire, that is answered all the questions. The participants of this research study included lecturers of differing academic rank and experience who teach languages at various tertiary education institutions in Lithuania. All of them have the teaching experience of 2 and more years.

13.79% of respondents have been teaching ESP for less than 10 years, 86.21% – for the period over 10 years. Most of them (82.76%) have experience of teaching general English as well. The questions fall into three groups, namely: seven questions to gain general information (teaching experience, preferences, problems, etc.), ten questions about various aspects of ESP (textbooks and authentic materials, subject awareness, cooperation with subject teachers, etc.), and five questions about assessment (including self-assessment).

The survey questions were of three types: close-ended, open-ended (19 out of 22), and graded questions. Although the responses to open-ended questions are more difficult to summarize, the value of teachers’ answers, their shared experience and ideas outweigh the difficulties in interpreting the results. The respondents provided extremely rich research data, its analysis will update the existing view on the role and place of ESP courses at faculties, and the findings may have valuable implications for the professional development of ESP teachers. In compliance with the aim of this article, the authors will limit themselves to the collected data that concerns teaching/learning materials in an ESP class.

4. Survey Data: textbooks and/or authentic materials

63% of the respondent’s state that they use ESP course books in their classes (33.3% answered negatively). Expressing their opinion about the appropriateness of the course books in terms of content, attractiveness and the level of difficulty, the majority of the teachers evaluated the ready-made ESP materials (course books) positively. The

prevailing opinion is that the used materials are of the “appropriate level of difficulty”, the teachers are satisfied with the content, activities provided. Some teachers combine different course books available for the subject. Only 10.5% of respondents claim that the course books used are ‘too old’, ‘too difficult’, ‘too easy’, ‘the topics are not adequate to those required in the course syllabus’. About 33% of the respondents do not integrate ESP course books into their classes; they named the following reasons: course books decrease student motivation; the textbooks can be too easy in terms of exercises and vocabulary; there are no course books appropriate for their subject area or students’ language proficiency.

About 20% of the respondents, who do not use ESP course books, mention ‘rapid changes in teaching/learning methods’ and ‘availability of different platforms that offer more attractive approaches to teaching ESP’ as well as the fact that ‘course books tend to get outdated due to students’ changing needs.

96.67% of the respondents claim to be using additional teaching materials in their classes (just about 3% did not answer the question). In most cases the additional materials are found on various social platforms (TEDx, YouTube – 35%), they include articles from scientific/academic journals and periodicals (31%), materials from online newspapers or TV and radio broadcasters (28%). It should be noted that all of the respondents claim using more than one source for supplementary materials.

Indicating the criteria for material selection, the respondents stated that it should be ‘appropriate to the level of students’ language proficiency’; it should ‘increase motivation’, ‘satisfy students’ specific needs’, ‘contain subject-specific terms’, and ‘reflect the latest developments’ in students’ study discipline.

The respondents were also asked whether the additional materials used in their classes are authentic. 86.6% of them answered positively, about 10% gave negative answers.

Naming the reasons for choosing authentic materials in class, the respondents mentioned ‘real life communication’ (30%), ‘authentic language’ (26%), ‘student motivation’ (22%). 13% of the teachers consider authentic materials to be ‘a good source of subject related/specific terminology’, 8% mentioned that authentic materials ‘contribute to the students’ specialist knowledge in their major subject’.

The challenges posed by the use of such materials in class fall into two groups: language proficiency level (authentic texts and recordings of lectures or discussions pose serious difficulties for the learners below level B2) and time-consuming preparations for the effective use of authentic texts, recordings and videos in class.

However, this picture might be incomplete as only one third of the teachers indicated the challenges they faced.

5. Discussion

There are several issues to consider regarding the use of authentic materials in an ESP class.

1) TYPES of authentic materials are subject-specific. Bhatia as quoted in Duley Evans [8:50], distinguished three main areas of legal written texts: academic legal writing (legal course books, research journals), juridical writing consisting of court judgments, case-books and law reports, the purpose of which is to report the proceedings of the court and the decision of the judge; and legislative writing, which consists of Acts of Parliament, statutory instruments, contracts, agreements, treaties, all of which serve to legislate. The development and accessibility of IT and communication means have increased manifold the possibility of using authentic materials either from the websites

of justice and law-enforcement institutional websites (national and international law-making updates, annual reports on crime rate, national/international databases of cases, judicial opinions or court proceedings. In other disciplines, laboratory reports, business plans, balance sheets will provide authentic language input and lead to further activities. This supports the idea of differentiating humanities and social sciences from science and technology on the basis of different skills required to analyses and synthesize multiple sources as opposed to describing processes and finding solutions [14].

2) SELECTION CRITERIA include **relevance** of the authentic materials to the students' needs and academic interests, **informational value** (recent discoveries and findings), **accessibility** (open sources): besides the selected materials should be **country specific** (fosters multicultural and language awareness) and **complementary** to the major subjects taught. It is reasonable to align the language course with the major subject courses taken in the same term, so that in deciding about the topic of their English presentation, students would select the issues which they might discuss in their subject seminars and tutorials. The same principle applies for searching and reading sources in English for annual research papers.

3) MODES OF USE depend on the institutional settings and course arrangements.

In our practice we can distinguish the use of authentic materials in a) **classroom**, b) **self-studies**, c) **blended learning**. While using authentic materials in **class**, one should consider timing (45–90 min) and the size of the class (individual vs group/team work) as well as the balance between classroom receptive and productive activities, based on the authentic materials, which are offered either as reading or listening input (relevant legal documents, judicial opinions, recordings of meetings between lawyers and clients, etc.)

While using authentic materials in class (not for self-studies), we pursue several goals: 1) to facilitate comprehension by preventing possible language problems, such as particular sentence structures, text organization (international treaties and conventions, academic articles), predominance of nominal phrases (contracts); which all relates to the developing of “noticing” skill (see [11; 59]; 2) to develop reading or browsing skills under time constraints; 3) to develop transversal skills such as summarizing, inferring, organizing, evaluating and sharing information (this is most effectively achieved in team or pair work that maximizes student involvement and allows them to work at their own pace); 4) to create a platform for further (productive) classroom activities, such as problem solving and opinion presented in case studies, note-taking and briefing. While using authentic materials for **self-studies**, the principle of pursuing individual needs and interests is implemented; which is well accepted and appreciated by mature university students. The teacher's interference in the self-studies may include focusing on specific language features of the authentic materials, also introducing the functional language for reporting on the results of individual or team research. The ‘productive’ activities may take the forms of writing a summary of one or several academic articles, individual or group presentations, panel discussions, etc. The use of authentic materials in the **blended learning** format combines the above-mentioned principles of facilitating comprehension, developing language awareness (noticing), individualization and collaboration (for example, using collaborative writing and other ICT supported tools).

6. Conclusions

The survey data collected by VU research team revealed that the overwhelming majority of ESP teachers working at tertiary level in Lithuania include authentic materials in their courses. Though quality course books are available in some specific knowledge fields (Law, Business, Medicine, etc.); additional authentic materials provide ‘real-life’

context and language, stimulate interest and motivation by their high content value based on most recent discoveries, achievements and research findings. In compliance with the learner-centered approach, which has proved to be most beneficial in tertiary education, the selection of authentic materials is mainly done by students: they are encouraged to choose what better meets their 'subject' interests or needs, and also complements to the major subjects studied. The use of authentic materials is advisable in any learning setting, provided it is supported with teacher's appropriate instruction aimed at facilitating comprehension of subject specific texts and developing language awareness.

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Project-Based Learning (PBL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL): A Perfect Alliance to Foster Employability

Mercedes Aznar¹
Florida Universitaria, Spain¹

Abstract

Although the relevance of PBL to enhance both cognitive and social aspects in the learning process is unanimously stated in the literature, it has been hardly used in language teaching. Recent methods such as Communicative Language Teaching have failed, as Task-Based Learning did too, because they lack practice time or autonomy, among other problems. Consequently, there is a clear process of demotivation that results in students not achieving their learning goals and being reluctant to carry on with their learning. This is the case in Spain where students start learning English already in primary education and carry on until they finish their secondary education. However, when starting at university, a high number cannot manage in English and what is worse, they hate learning it because of the evident unsuccessful outcome. The objective of this paper is to present a case in our institution in which the use of PBL has significantly improved Engineering students' learning goals: they must develop a compulsory interdisciplinary project in which all the subjects are involved and share 25% of their assessment. The challenge has been to develop a perfect coordination among all the teachers to establish the project goal together so that students can understand the rationale behind it and what is expected from them (the design of a prototype robotic arm). Concerning EFL, engineering degrees have Technical English in their curriculum and its role in the project has been to simulate the presentation of their innovation project in a real robotic international fair. In order to do that, they had to create their company, make a deep analysis on the international fair, create the promotional material and make an oral presentation. In other words, they learned how to search for specific information in English, read technical material, acquired the required vocabulary to describe their project, and used their oral skills to present it to a simulated audience of potential investors. The outcomes were very successful: firstly, students improved their language skills significantly; and secondly, they were extremely motivated as they could see the actual application of their learning.

Keywords: PBL, students' motivation, skills improvement, employability

1. Introduction

On the *European Day of Languages 2018*, EUROSTAT [1] released a report on foreign language knowledge referring to data from 2016. Whereas Luxembourg, Finland, and Slovenia show high levels of multilingualism (50%, 45%, and 38%, respectively), the situation in Spain is extremely worrying: 46% do not speak a foreign language and 54% claim to speak only one (34.8%), two (14.3%) or even three (5.2%). However, this data should be taken with caution as interviewees tend to lie concerning their competencies.

In conclusion, Spain remains last in Europe in this respect just before Bulgaria (50%), Hungary (42%), Romania (36%), and United Kingdom (35%).

A number of factors feature the problem of language learning in Spain: a lack of innovation in teaching methodologies, since memorization and repetition are the key tools in the learning process; no importance is given to critical thinking and hence, the learner can hardly grasp the rationale behind the foreign language learning process; the mother tongue is used in the classroom; teamwork is hardly used, because teachers regard it as a waste of time in many cases due to the time needed and certainly, because learners end up speaking in Spanish; in many cases, teachers in primary and secondary education lack appropriate qualification; and the focus is only placed on achieving the so-called prestigious language certificates as for example, Cambridge or TOEFL.

However, they fail sometimes because they are based on algorithms and do not reveal learners' competencies. What is more important, employers are losing their interest in these certificates. Instead, they are opting for interviews with candidates in an attempt to analyse to what extent they can generate discourse. Therefore, learning to think in a foreign language is a must.

According to a report by IESE in which 53 big companies were interviewed in 2018, 72% employers have problems to cover their vacancies, which clearly indicates a talent mismatch. In Spain, 33% workers are affected, as reported by OECD; and the *Global Skills Index* report by Hays confirms that talent mismatch rates 10 out of 10. Digitalization has forced companies to change the profiles they need, i.e., professionals with the ability to undertake the digital transformation process that the business community is going through now. However, the Spanish education system and training offer do not progress at the same pace as companies' needs, and it is evident that they have not adapted to the new scenario arising from the past economic crisis. In conclusion, the high level of youth unemployment in Spain (11.3% in 2018, the highest in the European Union with only 6.3% [2]) derives mainly from a lack of certain knowledge and skills. Concerning foreign languages, in a joint report on the Spanish labour market by *Infoempleo* and *Adecco*, figures show that 34.7% job offers in 2018 required at least one foreign language and the figure is on the rise; in this respect, English is the most widely demanded foreign language (92.3%) and German comes second (7.4%). Furthermore, the higher the professional rank, the higher the demand on foreign languages, ranging from 23.3% in office work to 54.4% for senior managers.

Therefore, getting closer to companies and their needs is a must and reinforcing the practical side of acquiring knowledge is fundamental. Developing soft skills is crucial: critical thinking, decision-making, teamwork, and communication in a foreign language, among others. And bearing in mind the dramatic levels of foreign language skills in Spain, teaching learners how to develop those soft skills in a foreign language would mean the difference between either getting access to the labour market in a competitive way or being left behind with the resulting consequences deriving from this. Certainly, project-based learning (PBL) is an invaluable asset to guide learners towards this ideal – and needed – scenario.

This paper will review the literature first on the importance of joining PBL and EFL in order to achieve motivation and successful outcomes and then, an example of best practice will be used to illustrate this hypothesis.

2. PBL and EFL review

PBL has been used since the late 1960s, particularly owing to its successful application in medical education in North America in 1970s and because of its many

benefits for learners [3], [4], [5], [6], [7]. As there is a focus on actual issues, interactions are more authentic and also, learners become more autonomous in their learning process so that the skills acquired in the classroom are later transferred to their careers.

As a result, learners' motivation is increased and communication is stimulated, therefore they become more cooperative and gain confidence in learning. What is more important, there is a rise in the level of critical thinking, a focus on communicative and argumentative skills, and a shift towards using English to learn instead of learning to use English. However, in language education PBL usage began less than two decades ago despite its significant effects on communicative skills, since learners must make use of the four language skills while understanding and analysing the problem in question [8] [9]. Nevertheless, PBL also presents some challenges that make teachers reluctant to use it, since there is a shift towards depth of curriculum, higher-order thinking, or long-term effects rather than immediate learning outcomes [10]. On the other hand, learners may also feel reluctant to work under this methodology because it is costly in terms of hard work and very time-consuming [11].

In a research on language learning in Pakistan [12], the outcomes reveal a similar situation to the one in Spain: although English has become vital for the social and economic development of an individual, learners are less motivated towards learning it because of the ineffective teaching and learning environment, on the one hand; and on the other, because learners have scarce opportunities to practice English in the real world. Certainly, the same research concludes that the use of PBL in acquiring a second language has turned out to be fundamental in gaining the foreign language skills by improving learners' attitudes towards the learning process and also, by bringing out their self-confidence and thus, self-esteem.

PBL in EFL has been used in primary and secondary education. An example is *Learning English in Action*, a programme brought out by Stanford University in 2010, which proved to be very successful for both teachers and learners: the former were organized in interdisciplinary teams and the latter became active agents in their own learning process. This initiative was tested in International High Schools through intermediate level courses and the outcome was significant: dropout rates were very low.

There are successful examples in undergraduate programmes too: in the USA an analysis was undertaken on the integration of PBL in an ESP programme into an undergraduate biological engineering curriculum [13]. The objective was to prepare students for an engineering career that requires job-specific foreign language skills as well as to prepare students for the subsequent professional internship. Another analysis was developed in Chile in an English Pedagogy undergraduate programme [14]. The results were satisfactory, as PBL entailed a positive contribution towards learning and very significant, most students stated that PBL contributed to fostering personal growth.

PBL surely prepares students for academic, personal, and career success probably because teachers make learning come alive for students and bring authenticity into the classroom. Indeed, students develop deep content knowledge as well as critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills. Furthermore, they learn to work as a team, which is indispensable in a professional career nowadays. The project or problem they work on becomes the vehicle for teaching them in an autonomous way, and the teacher simply becomes a facilitator in the learning process.

3. PBL & EFL in action in Engineering programmes

The present case takes place in an institution whose cornerstone is learning by doing and hence, PBL was the logical consequence aiming to foster employability. This

methodology was first adopted in the academic year 2010-2011 in all its undergraduate programmes. All the modules participate in an interdisciplinary project that runs through the three study years and also, all the subjects are involved allocating 25% assessment for the assignments under the project. Therefore, it is compulsory for all students. A close coordination among the various lecturers is a must to establish the project to be undertaken and the tasks to accomplish it. Furthermore, students work in teams that are created at the beginning of the academic year.

The focus of this paper will be placed on the degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Industrial Electronic Engineering & Automation, particularly first-year students. The general objective of the interdisciplinary project is the design of a robotic arm and the specific objective to be implemented in the Technical English subject is the creation of a SME and the simulated presentation of the robotic arm innovation project in an actual robotic international fair aiming to search for potential investors to develop their project.

The course level should be B1, although the actual level ranges from A1 to C1, which is the typical case in a Spanish classroom. Consequently, developing such a project is a challenge both for the teacher and the students, but teamwork plays a key role here.

The teacher becomes a facilitator to guide students through their Internet search and implementation of the various tasks; however, they are never given a clear answer to their questions, because being an open project, more than one option can be acceptable.

They are only provided with two useful tools: information on how to design a PowerPoint presentation in a non-academic setting and how to make an oral presentation, with the right structure and key phrases and expressions to help them.

Working as a team, students help each other in searching for information and in writing the various assignments and final report. Therefore, they learn to learn in English and become autonomous in searching for those useful tools that may provide them with the right vocabulary and sentence structure. This is particularly relevant when students must present their findings to an academic panel at the end of the first semester (through a PowerPoint document), and to a mixed academic-business panel at the end of the academic year (through a poster and a prototype of the robot). Students must be able to communicate effectively when describing their work and during the demonstration through the prototype. They must also anticipate what kind of questions/comments may arise and be ready to answer them in a satisfactory manner.

For the first-year students, the outcomes are very satisfactory: they are highly motivated and pleased with their own work; they get actively involved in their project; they believe in the authenticity of what they are doing and become very innovative and creative; they do not realize how much English they acquire until they make their presentation and reply to all the questions from the audience; and they acquire invaluable skills that will ease their access to the labour market further on.

For the whole engineering degree students, the outcomes are also excellent because they become aware of the actual application of the specialized content they learn in the classroom and of the integration of all the disciplines in order to come out with a successful product. Besides, the project enables them to develop their critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills. Moreover, they become aware of the importance of communicating effectively both in Spanish and in English in a professional setting.

During the last academic year, student must carry out an internship. This is the first stage where students must prove the skills they have acquired, and the institution must analyse where PBL enhances employability. Therefore, the companies have been requested to fill in questionnaires from the academic year 2014-2015, which represents the first graduates from the PBL methodology, to 2017-2018. Companies are asked for

their opinions on several factors: 1. general issues on developing the professional task; 2. students' capacities; 3. students' autonomy; and 4. overall assessment. Nevertheless, only those items which are related to the present paper will be shown. Table 1 below presents the average figures for the 4 years in a scale of 1 to 5, being 1 very unsatisfied and 5 very satisfied:

Tasks accomplishment	4.75
Proactivity	4.75
Motivation	4.7
Capacity for teamwork	4
Capacity for initiative, innovation and creativity	4.3
Capacity for effective communication	4
Capacity for problem-solving	4.1
Capacity for foreign language communication	4.3
Capacity for working under pressure	4.3
Capacity for implementing presentations, reports, etc.	4.3
Autonomy	4.3
Overall assessment	4.6

Table 1. Company assessment on students' skills

Besides the above successful figures, it is worth noting that both the capacities for effective communication and for foreign language communication together with the implementation of presentation, reports and the like, are on the rise year after year. This proves the ongoing work carried out by the involved teachers in ensuring good results by reviewing and, if needed, amending all the processes at the end of every academic year.

4. Conclusions

As a rule, language teachers cannot develop scientific and technological training on their own, and engineering teachers most likely cannot instruct in the target foreign language, at least in Spain. Therefore, a close collaboration between the two areas can be achieved through PBL and EFL. This approach enables students to become independent thinkers, assess a problem and discover by themselves the resources they can use in its solution, both from the technical/scientific and language perspectives. They learn the target language by using it.

Certainly, PBL has a considerable impact on communicative skills because it implies teamwork and written and oral presentations both to an academic audience and a professional one. Since authenticity is crucial, students keep motivated all the way through the project and as a result, they become deeply engaged in the task on the one hand and improve – and become more confident in – their English skills on the other.

It can be concluded that PBL and its immersion in English is a major asset in undergraduate programmes in an attempt to improve students' foreign language skills so that they can come out with effective discourse and also, to help them develop certain capacities that companies consider a must nowadays. As a result, they can get access to the labour market in a very competitive way.

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Students as Experts and the End Result of SSR Performance in an ESP Course for Psychology

Alexandra Cotoc¹
Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania¹

Abstract

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) during the English for Specific Purposes course (ESP) is a suitable activity for the students in Psychology as it improves their reading skills, vocabulary and critical thinking. Moreover, setting up a digital space for our students provides easy access to resources, but also to other learners, creating a networked community in which the level of informality makes them feel comfortable. As such, organising analogue and digital projects as follow-up activities of SSR contribute to building a database of specialized terminology for the ESP under focus and to the formation of a learning community that lasts over time and may provide important resources for the language course. This study analyses the students' performance and feedback at the end of one academic year, giving us insight into our students' engagement in reading activities (stative activity) and follow-up activities (dynamic projects) in which they contribute with information extracted from the texts read during SSR.

Keywords: sustained silent reading, ESP course, specialised terms

Introduction

The online and offline learning patterns of behaviour are intertwined for the new generations as they grew with new technologies, but at the same time, they still have around them non-digital theories and practices. Nonetheless, activities which require higher attention-span and undivided attention tend to be replaced in the digital age by activities which involve play, interactivity, speed, collaboration and hyper connection.

Sustained silent reading (SSR) is one such activity which tends to be less popular among our students. As we consider reading to be beneficial for the development of vocabulary, critical thinking ability and cognitive skills (reasoning and problem solving, memory and social cognition), we inserted the SSR programme and SSR follow-up mini-projects in our classes, aiming at striking a balance between the online and offline teaching activities and helping our students acquire English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in an efficient, pleasant and up-to-date manner.

1. Management of SSR during ESP. Theoretical background

Sustained Silent Reading is defined as a programme which involves a period of uninterrupted silent reading for roughly 15 minutes during classroom time. It means reading for pleasure and usually the materials are selected by the learners themselves, the final aim being that of improving students' reading habits, performance and interests.

There have been many SSR programmes and all of them stress the importance of

doing the activity individually, silently, uninterruptedly and for pleasure (for a detailed list of these programmes, see Siah and Kwok, 2010: 169). During the English for Psychology course, we reinvented SSR to suit the purposes of the course. Hence, it involves specialised literature in English, indicated by the language instructor or chosen by the students themselves, as in the ESP class students are the content-experts (see Cotoc, 2019b: 382). Moreover, in the case of ESP, students participating in SSR find out information that is relevant to them and this causes L2 language development and implicit acquisition of specialised content. SSR engages the language instructor and the students in a process of discovery of new terminology and ongoing negotiation.

Speed reading and SSR are components of reading comprehension skills and they are essential for meeting the needs of everyday personal and professional life (see Alharbi, 2015). As hyper connection, interactivity, speed and digital screens are characteristic for today's warp-speed world, the practice of speed reading is the most used one as people had to adapt to the new situational contexts brought about by the new technologies. As such, university students, who are supposed to be expert readers, not only do they read the online digital text differently than the printed content (see Cull, 2011), but their reading behaviour also has changed entirely. They scan and skim content, in search for specific information, and tend to lose the practice of reading for pleasure in a slow manner, which is also a necessary component as it develops skills and abilities that speed reading doesn't cover to the same extent: critical thinking and deep analysis. Due to these factors, we embarked on an SSR academic programme during ESP as reading comprehension is tested anyways in any ESP class. What is more, through SSR texts, we practiced both slow reading and speed reading with our students. The reading for pleasure component was inserted at the beginning of each ESP class and the speed reading was required in various follow-up mini-projects, involving techniques like SST (skimming and scanning techniques), scanning involving reading for detail and skimming concerning taking the most important information and the main idea rather than reading all of the words (Yusuf *et al.*, 2017: 47). Another technique that we used was meta guiding/guiding your eyes technique. For example: the double like sweep (taking in two lines at a time), the variable sweep (taking in as many lines as the reader can), backward reading (using the backward sweep of your eyes to take in information) (see Buzan, 2004: 92-97).

2. Educational Context and Target Group

We focused on SSR during the ESP classes at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. At our university, at most faculties, students follow a compulsory course of language for specific purposes in the first year, for two semesters, for a teaching load of 2 hours every week.

At the end of the academic year, students have to pass the Test of Linguistic Competence which comprises of four parts: speaking, reading, listening and writing) and they have to reach the global level B1 in order to graduate and B2 in order to enrol at a master programme. Students who have a language certificate can validate the course in the second semester. The vast majority of the students choose English over the other language courses available (French, German, Italian, Russian or Spanish). At the Faculty under focus most of the bibliography is in English and, for this reason, we considered that SSR is of interest to them, helping them with all the other content-subjects.

3. Presentation of the SSR Project

We integrated SSR for two years in a row in our language for specific purposes classes at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences. We started in the first semester of the academic year 2017-2018 with a collaborative pilot project involving students in Psychology, Early Education Study, Pedagogy and the students at the Faculty of European Studies (see Cotoc and Nistor, 2018). We implemented the programme also with the students who studied French for Specific Purposes at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences (all fields), in the second semester of 2018 (see Cotoc, 2019a) and we ran the programme for the entire academic year 2018-2019 (for details about the first semester see the case study in Cotoc, 2019b).

This paper analyses the students' performance and feedback in the second semester of 2019, giving us insight into our students' engagement in reading activities (stative activity). It also presents the results of the follow-up activities (dynamic projects) in which students contributed with information extracted from the SSR texts during the entire academic year.

The SSR took place for 10 minutes at the beginning of the English class with all the students for the entire second semester of the academic year 2018-2019. The students in the English class performed this activity in the first semester as well in the exact manner: all the students received the texts in advance and they brought the texts printed out, but they were also allowed to read them on their smartphone devices. However, they were highly advised to perform the activity in the analogue manner, with pen and paper so that they could underline important ideas and concepts and write down notes/comments/ideas alongside the text. The texts were connected to the topic discussed in every course unit, they were very diverse, ranging from scientific articles to blogs posts and they were longer text meant to be finished at home and not in the classroom.

3.1 Digital learning community and group sourcing

In 2017, we set up a digital space for our students: a secret Facebook group: *EAP_English for Psychology*. This group is meant to last over time and every year a new generation of students joins so that we form a learning community in which students are treated not only as ESP learners, but also as Psychology experts. The communication in this group is informal, it takes place only in English and it can involve posts related to the English Course, but also related to Psychology in general, providing a digital space in which our students can find useful information, but also seek help for various projects and collaborate with their peers. We also used this group to hyperlink a folder in the google drive which contained the content necessary for the course and the texts used during SSR.

In the academic year 2018-2019, SSR had a digital follow-up activity as students had the mini-task to fill in a survey in which they were asked to provide feedback on the SSR activity and to write down 3 concepts from the SSR texts and 3 concepts that they encountered in other courses, providing a definition, example and translation in Romanian for each. In this way, we used the technique of group sourcing, "a social learning transmission model that integrates peers' production and feedback" (see Moccozet and Tardy, 2014) and we managed to collect Psychology-related concepts and work on the creation of an open-source database useful for any student in the first year at the Faculty of Psychology.

3.2 The end result of SSR programme: collection of specialised terms

The follow-up activities (dynamic projects) of the SSR requiring students to contribute with information extracted from the texts read during SSR represent the end result of the SSR programme: the collection of concepts related to Psychology. This offered us a valuable resource for the ESP class as it indicates the most prevalent concepts and the most frequent mistakes made by the students depending on their language level. We use it as teaching material as well. As such, using the database of specialised terminology, students select the best definitions and examples, provide corrections for typos, grammar and spelling mistakes and offer alternatives. As Psychology is an interdisciplinary study, students debate whether they would include some concepts and exclude others and give reasons why. They identify plagiarism, incorrect citation of sources, analyse their own and their colleagues' work from the instructor's perspective, thus constructing a useful feedback and constituting an efficient reinforcement exercise.

The database has also provided content for further projects for the students: data cleaning, eliminating overlaps, preserving the best definitions and translations, and, in the end, constructing an online database of concepts useful in Psychology. Currently, working with a group of 4 students, after eliminating all the overlaps, our database contains the entries provided in the mini-projects from the first semester, consisting of 357 concepts to which we still have to add the concepts from the second semester. For every concept, we aim at introducing a definition, example, translation in Romanian and a multimedia element.

We provide an example of entry submitted by an advanced student. The content is authentic, without any correction. The requirement was to write 3 specialised concepts/words/phrases from their silent reading activity, providing a definition, an example and a translation for each of them.

“1. Sexual dimorphism. It refers to the condition where the two sexes of the same species exhibit different characteristics beyond the differences in their sexual organs.

The condition occurs in many animals and some plants. Example: So, the cool thing about the Hercules beetle is that it's sexually dimorphic. Translation: dimorphism sexual.

2. Social cognition. It refers to a growing area of social psychology that studies how people perceive, think about, and remember information about others. Example: This is just a basic aspect of human social cognition. Translation: *cogniție social*.

3. Self-serving bias. It refers to the tendency to attribute dispositional causes for successes, and situational causes for failure, particularly when self-esteem is threatened. Example: Overall, research on the self-serving bias and depression suggests that the bias isn't completely flipped in people with depression, but the magnitude of the bias is less than in the general population – it's smaller. Translation: *egocentrism biasat*.”

4. SSR Results and Discussion

The SSR survey at the end of the academic year 2018-2019 was applied to 64 respondents, 51 females and 13 males, 57 intermediate level and 7 advanced level, age 19-20. The survey is two-folded, offering the language instructor the students' feedback on SSR and also containing information extracted by the students from the SSR texts.

On the one hand, the results in the second semester were similar to the first semester, confirming that the programme is useful, efficient and pleasant for the ESP class even for two semesters in a row. Moreover, the items of the survey meant to assess SSR were applied in the previous academic year during both the English for Specific Purposes class and the French for Specific Purposes class and the results show congruence with

our two previous studies (see Cotoc and Nistor, 2018, Cotoc 2019a).

The first three questions revealed students' enthusiasm for SSR, their engagement in the classroom and at home. When asked if they enjoyed the activity, 86% of students declared that they liked it, and the rest of them declared that it was both a pleasure and a burden. When asked to what extent they engaged in SSR during classroom time, 20 students declared average participation and 39 declared strong and full engagement.

However, not all of them continued the SSR activity at home when they didn't finish it in class: 12 students never continued it, 20 of them sometimes continued reading at home, 20 students often continued the SSR. Only 11 of them declared that they very often continued the programme and only 1 always finished the texts at home.

Questions 4-8 confirm that SSR is useful for specialised vocabulary acquisition. As such, 25 students declared that the texts were average in terms of vocabulary, 29 found them not difficult and only 10 declared that they were a bit difficult. The encouraging fact is that 63 students said that they learned new vocabulary during SSR, the vast majority of them also looking up unknown words and trying to use them in context afterwards. Overall, students found the activity useful and very useful for vocabulary acquisition.

Questions 9-13 addressed the content of the SSR texts and the results are similar to results about the vocabulary acquisition, showing that students acquired specialised content and that they were interested in the specialised content addressed. As the SSR texts are connected to the topics addressed at the ESP course, the survey validated the choice of content for our entire course.

Questions 14-15 constituted the collection of concepts that were meant to be included in the collection of concepts from the first semester, representing the continuation of the ongoing project of group sourcing with the final aim of making available an online database of useful concepts in Psychology. These questions also show our intention to build the database in a collaborative manner, but not to produce a final product, but rather an ever-changing one, depending on the *status quo* of the field and the community of (future) experts.

Question 16 was another open question in which the students had to write 2 new ideas/ items of knowledge they acquired during SSR. This question gave the language instructor an insight into the kind of information that draws the students' attention and what they already know as first year students, especially because many of them used lexical devices like: *Until now I did not know that ...; I was fascinated about ...; I learned ...; An idea that I found quite interesting was ...; Another piece of information that took me by surprise was that ...*

The students' likes and dislikes are addressed in questions 17 and 18. They liked the programme, the topics and the diversity of the texts, the individual work implied and the fact that it helped them improve their vocabulary. In terms of dislikes, 22 students complained that the time allocated to SSR was too short and 7 of them that the texts were too long. However, our aim was to use SSR to introduce them into ESP atmosphere and the topic addressed in every course and not to finish the activity in the classroom.

Moreover, the texts were longer so that the SSR was part of their homework.

A hierarchy of the factors enumerated in question 19 of the survey in *checkboxes* format with an 'add option' element showed us what motivated most our students to read the texts: 1. *The texts were directly related to my field of studies*, 2. *The texts were up to date*, 3. *This activity is compulsory (1 point in the section Reading Comprehension + Use of English in the Test of Linguistic Competence)*, 4. *These texts would be included in the useful bibliography for the exam*. Their choice shows us that their motivation to perform SSR was primarily intrinsic, denoting interest, enjoyment and inherent satisfaction (see Legault, 2016).

Our students' attitude towards SSR was mainly favourable, on a scale from 1 (unfavourable) to 5 (favourable), all of them selecting 3-5: 3 (13 students), 4 (33 students) and 5 (18 students). Most of them declared a favourable attitude towards reading in their native tongue (49 students), 11 students showing a neutre attitude, and 4 of them expressing an unfavourable attitude. Using the same scale, their attitude towards reading in English ranged from 3 to 5: 3 (12 students), 4 (23 students) and 5 (29 students).

The fact that the digital environment has shaped our students' preferences is reflected in their ever-increasing interest in multimodal, interactive and hyperlinked content in the format of a teaser, not requiring in-depth analysis. This is shown by the last question analysed in this study: *If you could have engaged in any other activity for 10 minutes at the beginning of each English course, what would you have chosen?* Unsurprisingly, the preferred answers were 'watching a (short) video/film' and 'playing (grammar/vocabulary) games'. One student even stated the following: "I think that it would be better if the SSR activity was a summary, like the movie trailers we watch, so that it stimulates our desire to read the whole text". Nonetheless, we consider this finding in favour of our SSR programme as it highlights the fact that many of our students have stopped engaging in slow reading and reading for pleasure on their own and, as a result, they would not benefit from the skills and abilities developed by it.

Relating to the use of Facebook for classroom communication with peers and with the language instructor and for hyperlinking classroom content and SSR texts, most of our students found the platform extremely useful (54 students), very useful (9 students) and useful (1 student). They also found useful that they could use their smartphones during classroom time, for class purposes, 48 students considering this was very useful and extremely useful, 7 students acknowledging an average usefulness, 9 saying that Facebook was not particularly useful.

5. Conclusions

The SSR programme combined with the follow-up mini-projects of contributing to and building an online database of specialized terms for Psychology constitute up-to-date teaching and learning activities which are valuable for the ESP class as they develop our students' critical thinking and language skills. At the same time, the SSR texts and the database, which is a work in progress at this point, constitute reusable content which is subject to change and improvement as they are students-oriented and dependent, offering our students the role of experts and ensuring a collaborative and encouraging classroom atmosphere. Moreover, the digital environment of a social network site has proved useful in building and maintaining a community of ESP learners and (future) content-experts and in promoting peer collaboration for various projects.

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Teaching English for Tourism: Fostering the Development of Field-Specific Skills. A Case Study

Elena Păcurar¹

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania¹

Abstract

The present study is part of a larger research on the impact of ESP acquisition among graduate students in Tourism at Babeş-Bolyai University. It reports the findings of a quantitative analysis carried out during the academic year 2018-2019 whereby the author seeks to identify a correlation between the field-specific language preparation (English for Tourism) of the graduate students in question and the rate of their employability in the travel trade or related (sub)fields. Additionally, the study provides information on both the professional and personal impact that the use of English for work and everyday life have had on the respondents.

Keywords: ESP, hard skills, soft skills, language instruction, tertiary education

1. Introduction

It has become a truism to state that the current bulk of academic products and services (journal articles, book publications, lectures, conferences etc.) cannot be isolated from its “medium”: the English language. Whether English language proficiency is regarded as the means or the purpose of instruction, it is by now clear that its role in tertiary education is morphing still. Moreover, an attempt to measure the impact of LSP instruction on the students’ overall development of communicative skills for socio-professional integration brings forth a series of questions about the need to revisit certain key concepts such as: “employability”, “proficiency” or “development”:

- Is there a correlation between effective ESP instruction and the rate of graduate students’ employability?
- How does the graduate students’ language proficiency affect both their professional and personal development?
- How can we measure the graduate students’ professional and personal development?

These research questions have been addressed in an ongoing research project carried out by the author together with fellow lecturer Roxana Mihele and largely dedicated to the curricular (re)design of LSP classes at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. One of the objectives of this research project is to measure the impact that LSP courses have had on undergraduate and graduate students alike. [1] The present paper reports on the findings from the second stage of our research and focuses on the development of graduate students’ hard and soft skills as a result of their participation in *English for Tourism* classes at our university.

2. Relevant literature

As ESP instructors, our target group is represented by young future professionals and, as such, our concern is to foster the development of their communicative skills in a foreign language so as to increase their chances of getting a job in the field (tourism, in our case) and to be able to respond to the linguistically-specific demands of the job in question. One of the challenges we had to face in the initial stages of our research project was agreeing on a comprehensive definition of the concept of “development” when it came to LSP classes and their effectiveness. We have decided to look into possible readings of the concept from three main perspectives:

- the development of English language proficiency in the ESP context;
- the development of employability skills;
- the development of social and emotional intelligence.

Despite the increasing interest in other languages [2]ⁱⁱ, the “global ‘triumph’ of English” [3]ⁱⁱⁱ (as it was proclaimed in the 1990s) is seeking new means whereby it survives a linguistically-competitive and shifting market. In HE, English is still Meanwhile, the 2012 Report on Language Competences for Employability, Mobility and Growth issued by the European Commission clearly stated that: “Pupils should start *earlier in life* to learn foreign languages and *at least two* foreign languages should be taught to *all* pupils during compulsory education.” [5]^{iv} The EC Report also stresses the correlation between linguistic and employability skills, since: “Poor language skills are a serious obstacle to seizing professional opportunities abroad and in enterprises or organizations active at international level.” [6]^v

In the field of tourism, as much as in any similar sector of the service industry, (English) language proficiency and communicative skills are widely acknowledged as advantages in the recruitment process or priorities in the process of professional development: “The importance of English in international tourism is well recognized.

There is a dynamic commercially driven response to the need in the form of English language training provided as part of tourism training programmes and in the publication of English language course books designed particularly for those engaged in the tourism industry.” [7]^{vi}

ESP instructors have the possibility to witness and assist both the development of the students’ linguistic and field-specific skills and the dynamics of the specific field they teach for. The recent transition from “guaranteed lifelong employment” to “self-managed lifelong employability” [8]^{vii} has facilitated the configuration of a “pedagogy of employability” [8]^{viii}, of studies dedicated to employee attitudes or to field-specific/technical vs. transversal skills. Research shows that the whole repository of transversal and soft skills is gaining momentum to the detriment of the more limitative or normative technical skills especially in the service industry: “The quality of tourism product/service lies in intangible elements, including the interaction between employees and customers during the service encounter (Bailly and Léné, 2014).” [10]^{ix} In a study conducted by Marcel Robles, the role of soft skills is emphasized in both the academic field and in the workplace: “While technical skills are a part of many excellent educational curricula, soft skills need further emphasis in the university curricula so that students learn the importance of soft skills early in their academic programs before they embark on a business career (Wellington, 2005).” [11]^x

As the purpose of our project was to revise and redesign the LSP curricula at our university, we further explored the links between developing field-specific skills, fostering transversal and soft skills and strategic social and emotional learning (SEL). ESP learning goes hand in hand with the communicative approach which focuses on

“authentic classroom interactions, peer collaboration, and co-operative pair and group work activities” [12]^{xI}. Hence, the pedagogy of “social and emotional learning” is especially suitable for language teaching and learning, where levels of emotional and social intelligence are predictors for (linguistic and communicative) performance in class as well as for transversal and soft skills (“applied” or “21st century skills” [13]^{xII}) needed in the workplace.

3. The study

Our research project on measuring the impact of ESP instruction on both the professional and personal development of students from Babeş-Bolyai University was divided into three main stages: (a) identifying undergraduate and postgraduate students' expectations from ESP classes; (b) quantifying the impact of ESP courses on graduate students' overall development; (c) correlating previous findings with the employers' expectations regarding graduate students' linguistic profile and communicative skills.

The present paper offers an overview of the second part, with a special focus on graduate students' responses to a questionnaire administered between April 15th-May 12th 2019.

3.1 Data collection and sampling

The 17-item questionnaire (16 closed questions, 1 open question) collected 30 responses from tourism graduates of Babeş-Bolyai University. The questionnaire was administered online and it addressed only the graduate students who had chosen *English for Tourism* as a mandatory course at the B.A. level. The quantitative data resulting from this research stage are particularly important for the research members as they provide useful information on the relevance of ESP classes on future employees' rate of success in finding a job and performing in the workplace.

Respondent profiles include mostly young female subjects who possess a language certificate and have an upper-intermediate level of English language proficiency. Equally notable is the fact that almost 1/3 of the respondents are currently living abroad (5 out of 30 in an English-speaking country) and only 9 out of 30 subjects are working in tourism.

age	21-25	25-30	30-35	+35		
	23.3%	63.3%	13.3%	-		
sex	male			female		
	23.3%			76.7%		
academic degree	B.A. degree		M.A. degree		PhD	
	46.7%		46.7%		6.6%	
language certificate	yes			no		
	73.3%			26.7%		
level of language proficiency	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
	3.3%	-	6.7%	40%	30%	20%

Table 1. Respondent profiles

3.2 Main findings

A significant percentage of 86.7% use English as part of their professional routine, mostly in connection with productive activities such as writing emails and job-related materials, as well as face-to-face or mediated interaction with other people.

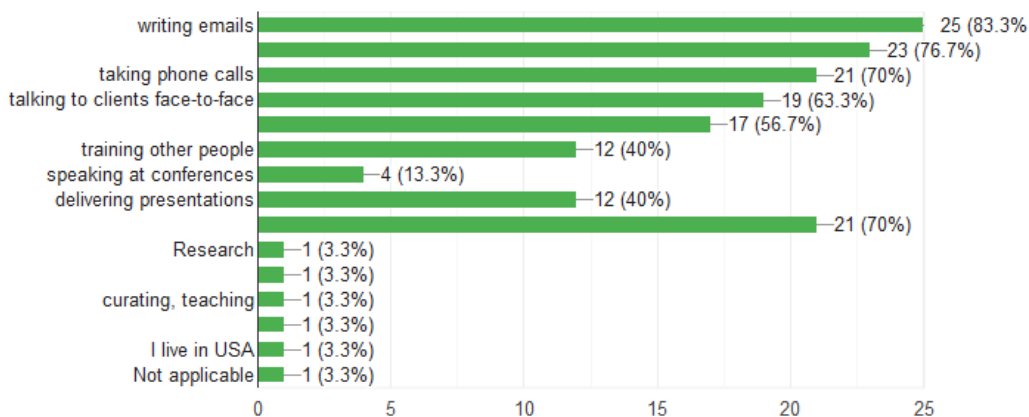


Fig. 1: Activities and tasks linked to use of English for professional communication

In measuring the impact that English language proficiency has had on their employability and professional success, an overwhelming number of 29 out of 30 subjects agreed and strongly agreed with the statement: “English-language instruction was important in getting my job”. Interestingly enough, a slightly smaller number of respondents (24 vs. 28) felt that they have learnt domain-specific relevant vocabulary in the university vs. in the workplace. This is partially surprising as more than half (53.3%) of the graduates interviewed had studied 6 semesters of *English for Tourism* at university.

As for the correlation between language proficiency and personal development, the results were predictable and matched our expectations regarding the possibility that (foreign) language competence is directly proportional with positive self-perception and level of confidence, as shown in the figure below:

On a scale from 1-5, how much do you agree with the following statements?

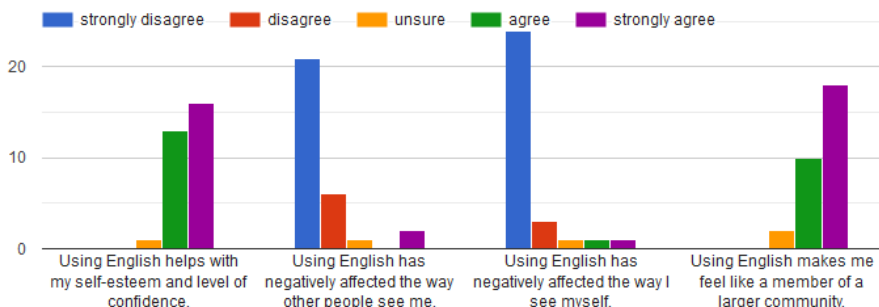


Fig. 2: Percentage of respondents with specific attitudes to the impact of English on personal development

Last but not least, the answers to the open question (“Could you say a few words about the relevance of your English-language academic instruction on your daily personal & professional activities?”) indicate the following:

- graduate students generally value the importance of ESP classes focusing on communicative activities that could boost fluency, facilitate use of English and improve oral skills;
- respondents point out the role of English as a “medium” for communication in a “multicultural context” or for work in a “global company”;
- there are recurrent references to the social and emotional impact of English on the subjects’ personal development and perception indicated by the frequency of certain adjectives (“confident”, “happy”, “important”), of nouns (“courage” or “relevance”) or modals (“must”, “should”).

4. Conclusions

Based on the findings from this stage of our research, we can conclude by addressing at least two recommendations for the process of curricular redesign we aim at. The first has to do with revising our list of intended learning outcomes by way of including more items that target the development of soft skills and of social and emotional intelligence, alongside hard skills. The second has to do with devising strategies, methods and instruments to make sure these intended learning outcomes can actually be measured against the actual learning outcomes. The next stage of our research (dedicated to mapping the perspective of the employer market) is expected to offer us a more comprehensive view on our role as ESP instructors in the professional and personal development of the future professionals.

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- [1] ^I Previous results dedicated to identifying the expectations of undergraduate students from LSP classes are presented in Mihele & Păcurar in *The Romanian Review of Geographical Education*, 2019.
- [2] ^{II} See Graddol 2006: 15.
- [3] ^{III} Graddol 2006: 10.
- [4] ^{IV} Report 2012: 2.
- [5] ^V EC Report 2012: 1.
- [6] ^{VI} Coleman 2010: 8.
- [7] ^{VII} Luka 2015: 76.
- [8] ^{VIII} Pegg *et al.*, in Luka 2015: 76.
- [9] ^{IX} Luka 2015:76-7.
- [10] ^X Robles 2012: 453-4.
- [11] ^{XI} Gkonou & Mercer 2017 :8.
- [12] ^{XII} Gewerts qtd. in Robles 2012: 458.

Teaching the Specific Language of Italian Lyric Texts to Future Opera Singers

Katerina Stroblova¹
University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic¹

Abstract

Future opera singers at conservatories in the Czech Republic study Italian as a foreign language but they also need to understand completely lyric texts related to the scores they interpret; on that account their language education should include translation activities. This paper includes a theoretical part, which analyses linguistic aspects that influence translation related to the specific language of lyric texts, and a practical part based on research conducted with students at the Conservatory of Pilsen, which aims to show all the concrete aspects of such a specific translation. The linguistic analysis is based on the corpus of lyric texts commonly used during the training of future opera singers. The research is based on texts actually interpreted in the current school year. The aim of the research is to provide a comparison of the linguistic knowledge obtained as a benefit of modern teaching methods and the specific knowledge required for the translation of Italian lyric texts. The research questions to be answered are: Do modern teaching methods help the translation process? In what way and to what degree? Finally, the research is extended by a comparison of the declared and performed language knowledge of the participants. The future application of the research presented is the modification of teaching methods used in the language education of future opera singers.

Keywords: Translation, Italian, Language education, Opera singers, Lyric texts

1. Introduction

Nowadays, intra-lingual and cross-lingual activities are often part of the language education, translation is also used as a teaching, diagnostic or corrective tool. Those aspects of language teaching which are best dealt through translation are handled in one type of lesson, and those best dealt by standard teaching method in another [1].

Future opera singers at the Conservatory of Pilsen, Czech Republic, study Italian in a standard language course, but lessons include the translations necessary for the performance of lyric texts.

This paper provides initially an overview of the aspects in which such texts differ from modern language. The benefit of this comparison is a list of criteria for assessment of the source text. The second part is dedicated to research conducted in the current school year, aimed to find out in what way and to what degree modern teaching methods help the translation process.

2. Specific language of lyric texts

To understand how modern language differs from the language of Italian lyric texts and to determine aspects that influence the translation of scores, *Metodo pratico* [2],

selected texts from *Arie antiche* [3] and several scores used for training future opera singers were analysed.

2.1 Quality of scores

The material that future opera singers usually work with is a photocopy of the score. While studying the scores several difficulties are encountered (missing punctuation, missing quotation marks etc.).

2.2 Orthography

In the case of transcribed scores, incorrect transcriptions often occur.

Orthographically, many words vary in connection to the historical period of the source text which can include different versions of one word. Also, the absence of capitalization influences comprehension. The linguistic aspect of the score is highly influenced by its musical part, which often requires stress at the last beat. Only a limited number of Italian words yet can be defined as oxytones, that is why librettists introduced unusual apocopes [4]. Differently elisioned expressions occur.

2.3 Grammar

In the standard language course *Nuovo progetto italiano* the present perfect, typically used in spoken language, is introduced in chapter 4 [5] and the preterite, used mainly in written production and librettos, appears only in chapter 4 of the second volume [6]. In course for students of conservatories and music schools, *Italiano nell'aria*, the situation is reversed [7], [8].

Morphologically, there are differences between commonly taught forms and historical versions of verbs and articulated prepositions.

2.4 Vocabulary

Lyric texts as expressive texts represent poetic lexicon that differs from everyday expressions and is often obsolete. Historical denotation of some expressions can differ if compared to the modern meaning. Obviously, rhetorical figures, idioms and sometimes dialects or foreignisms are present.

2.5 Word order

Atypical word order is often present because the music requires ending of the stanza or verse with a monosyllable or apocope word.

2.6 Context

Not only the verbal aspects should be taken into account, but also the rhythm, harmonies, changes in orchestration and other effects [9]. In the case of opera, the whole libretto should be known, with special regard to historical, geographical or cultural differences.

2.7 Source text assessment

Commonly used criteria for quality translation assessment, introduced by several authors like Werner Koller, Katharina Raiss, Peter Newmark, Chrisitane Nord and Juliane House, which often include also the assessment of the source text [10], give general guidelines, but in the case of lyric texts must be adjusted, taking into account all the above-mentioned aspects.

3. Research on translation

The research was conducted on students' translations of *Ciaccona del Paradiso e dell'Inferno*, created by an anonymous author in the second half of the 17th century. The chaconne was performed by students at the end of the school year.

To describe in what way and to what degree modern teaching methods help the translation process, the difference between the source text and its potential modern version was quantified. The source text included two incorrect transcriptions.

Orthographically, several words changed in the text. There were many lyric apocopes and obsolete elisions. The text included one idiom, one foreignism not found in a Czech-Italian dictionary and three potential false friends. The context was completely unknown but was not particularly unusual. With regard to all the above-mentioned criteria, the text represented approximately 37% of differences if compared to modern language use.

1.1 Quality of the scores	1.1.1 missing punctuation	-
	1.1.2 missing quotation marks	-
	1.1.3 missing words'/syllables' boundaries	-
1.2 Orthography	1.2.1 incorrect transcription	tute = tutte, ne = né
	1.2.2 obsolete transcription	foco = fuoco, ove = dove, giel = gelo, hore = ore, loco = luogo, havrai = avrai
	1.2.3 different transcriptions	ove / dove, foco / fuoco, havrai / haverai, qui / qua
	1.2.4 missing capital letters	-
	1.2.5 lyric apocopes	bel = bello, orribil = orribile, star = stare, veder = vedere, giel = gielo, ciel = cielo, si radunan = si radunano, fin = fine
	1.2.6 obsolete elisions	fest'e = feste e, l'hore = le hore, l'ghiaccio = il ghiaccio, l'intemperie = le intemperie, ch'abborisce = che abborisce
1.3 Grammar	1.3.1 obsolete articulated prepositions	-
	1.3.2 obsolete verb form	-
1.4 Vocabulary	1.4.1 lyric lexicon	abborisce
	1.4.2 obsolete lexicon	vi = ci, v'è = c'è
	1.4.3 rhetorical figures	-
	1.4.4 idioms	questo è quanto = ecco tutto
	1.4.5 dialectalism/foreignism	sempiterno
	1.4.6 faux amis	tempo, temperato, senza
1.5 Word order		di Dio svelato il viso = il viso svelato di Dio, fa pausa il canto e fin l'ardire = il canto fa pausa e l'ardire fine
1.6 Context	1.6.1 missing context	X
	1.6.2 historical context	-
	1.6.3 geographical unknown context	-
	1.6.3 cultural unknown context	-

Table 1. The source text assessed from a translational point of view

3.1 Methodology

The research was divided into two stages. In the first stage, the total number of respondents was 30, out of which 10 were in their first year, 10 in the second year, 5 in the third year and 5 in the fourth year. They were aged between 15 and approximately 33. All the participants were Czech native speakers and their CEFR level varied between A1- and A2-. They were asked to underline all the known words of the source text. In accordance with previous analysis, lexical and grammar explanations were given.

In the second stage, conducted two weeks later, the total number of respondents was only 17. They were asked to translate 30 Italian terms in a multiple-choice quiz online

(quizizz.com). The terms were based on the results of the first stage with the aim to verify students' declared knowledge.

<p>O che bel stare è stare in Paradiso Dove si vive sempre in fest'e riso Vedendosi di Dio svelato il viso O che bel stare è stare in Paradiso.</p>	<p>bel = bello fest'e riso = feste e riso vedendosi = vedendo, di Dio svelato il viso = il viso svelato di Dio</p>
<p><i>Ohimè che orribil star qui nell'inferno Ove si vive in pianto e foco eterno Senza veder mai Dio in sempiterno Ahi, ahì, che orribil star giù nell'inferno.</i></p>	<p><i>orribil = orribile, star = stare ove = dove, foco = fuoco veder = vedere, sempiterno = eternità orribil = orribile, star = stare</i></p>
<p>Là non vi regna giel, vento, calore, Che il tempo è temperato a tutte l'hore Pioggia non v'è, tempesta, né baleno, Che il Ciel là sempre si vede sereno.</p>	<p>vi = ci, giel = gielo = gelo Che = Perché, l'hore = le ore non v'è = non c'è Che = Perché, Ciel = Cielo</p>
<p><i>Il fuoco e 'l ghiaccio là, o che stupore Le brine, le tempeste, e il sommo ardore Stanno in un loco tutte l'intemperie Si radunan laggiù, o che miserie.</i></p>	<p><i>'l ghiaccio = il ghiaccio loco = luogo, l'intemperie = le intemperie si radunan = si radunano</i></p>
<p>Havrai insomma là quanto vorrai E quanto non vorrai non haverai E questo è quanto, o Musa, posso dire Però fa pausa il canto e fin l'ardire.</p>	<p>havrai haverai = avrai, questo è quanto = ecco tutto fin = fine, fa pausa il canto e fin l'ardire = il canto fa pausa e l'ardire fa fine</p>
<p><i>Quel ch'aborrisce qua, là tutto havrai Quel te diletta e piace mai havrai E pieno d'ogni male tu sarai Dispera tu d'uscirne mai, mai, mai!</i></p>	<p><i>quel ch'aborrisce = quello che aborrisce havrai = avrai d'ogni = di ogni d'uscirne = di uscire+ne</i></p>

Fig. 1: The source text with grammar and lexical explanations

3.2 Results and discussion

Among the most frequently underlined words there were *Paradiso* (paradise), well known to students also from English, *bel=bello* (beautiful), *vive* (lives), *dove* (where) and *tempo* (time/weather), all expressions studied in the standard language course during the first year. Not surprisingly, among the never underlined words were the lyrical expression *aborrisce* (hates) and the foreignism *sempiterno* (eternity). As for potential false friends, *tempo* (weather) was underlined twenty-three times, *temperato* (mild) thirteen times and *senza* (without) eighteen times.

Word	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	Total
Paradiso	7	10	5	5	27
bel	7	9	5	5	26
vive	10	8	3	5	26
dove	7	10	3	4	24
tempo	8	9	4	2	23
sempre	5	7	4	4	20
che	5	7	4	4	20
o	3	7	3	3	19
canto	3	6	5	4	18
senza	6	6	3	3	18
piace	6	5	4	2	17
tutte	5	6	2	4	17
Dio	3	5	4	5	17
pausa	5	4	5	2	16
quanto	5	4	4	3	16
stare	2	7	4	3	16
inferno	4	6	2	3	15

Table 2. The known words declared by more than half of the participants

The second stage of the research gave further results. The accuracy of correct translations slightly increased with the increased CEFR level of the participants.

Year (participants)	Correct answers	Accuracy
1 st year (5)	82	55%
2 nd year (7)	138	66%
3 rd year (5)	104	69%

Table 3. The total correct answers and accuracy in quiz

When comparing the most frequently underlined words to correctly translated ones, several differences between declared and performed lexical knowledge can be observed.

Word	1st year (5)	2nd year (7)	3rd year (5)	Total (17)
Paradiso	4	7	5	16
bel	4	7	4	15
vive	5	5	4	14
dove	4	5	4	13
tempo	0	2	2	4
sempre	3	5	4	12
che	3	6	3	12
o	4	4	4	12
canto	5	7	5	17
senza	3	4	3	10
piace	0	7	4	11
tutte	4	7	5	16
Dio	4	7	4	15
pausa	4	5	4	13
quanto	5	7	4	16
stare	2	4	3	9
inferno	3	6	4	13

Table 4. The number of correct translations of the most frequently declared known words

The results are particularly interesting when seen separately for each year of study, as there are direct connections to themes studied in standard courses. All the participants of the 1st year translated *piace* (like) as *těší mě* (nice to meet you) confusing *piace* and *piacere*, which is one of the first phrases they learn. Only two of them would associate the verb *stare* (to stay/to be) to the verb *být* (to be), as they had not learned the irregular verbs. But when participants of the 2nd or 3rd year chose the option *stát se* (to happen) or even *stát* (to stand), it must be considered a serious mistake.

Using the quiz as a diagnostic tool, we find that all the participants, future opera singers, translated correctly the word *canto* as *zpěv* (singing). But four participants translated *sempre* (always) as *pořád* (often), as Italian expressions of frequency *sempre* and *spesso* are often confused by students. The quiz also pointed out typical translational difficulties, for example the polysemantic word *che* (which/that/what), which was four times translated incorrectly as *který* (which) and once as *že* (that) instead of *jak* (*how*), or the homophone *o* (*oh*) which was three times translated incorrectly as *nebo* (*or*) and twice as *ale* (*but*).

In many cases, there was low sensitivity to the context, even if more than half of the participants would not consult a dictionary for words like *pausa* (break/pause/rest) because they use the word *pauza* also in Czech, only few of them have chosen the correct connotation *odmlka* (pause/silence).

As expected, *tempo* (time/weather) was translated correctly as *počasí* (weather) only in a few cases; eight times the option *čas* (time), taught primarily in a language course, was chosen and five times the option *rychlost* (speed/tempo), well known to students from musical terminology. The second false friend *temperato* (mild), was translated correctly only four times; nine times the meaning *poklidný* (calm) and five times *vyhříváný* (heated) were chosen, as in Czech the word *temperovaný* (heated) exists. *Senza* (without), was four times translated as *prostý* (simple) and three times as *senzační* (fantastic), as students confused it with a similar Czech expression.

4. Conclusion

It was previously confirmed that even students with low language competence can produce a good translation of lyric text when provided with appropriate strategies [11] and tools [12]. The presented research showed that correct translation increases with each year of students' study.

To quantify to what degree the language knowledge obtained by modern teaching methods helps the translation process, the source text must be assessed according to criteria that show its differences from modern language. Even if the research was limited by the number of participants, it can be concluded that standard language knowledge helps students with translation of lyric texts, as only a part of the source text presents differences from modern language (in presented research approximately 37%).

The detailed analysis of the results also showed that, on one hand, standard language knowledge helps, but on the other, brings in the translation process many students' mistakes, including confusion of homonyms or false friends. In the case of future opera singers, the knowledge of musical terminology can also influence the translation process and should be taken into account.

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Language Teacher Training

Developmental Stages of Good Mentors: Comparison between Novice and Experienced Mentors

Yukari Kato¹

Tokyo Metropolitan University, Japan¹

Abstract

The present study focuses on mentor teachers' awareness before and after supervisory experiences of mentees' teacher portfolios for professional development. In the context of developing mentors' communication skills and reviewing strategies through the course of a three-day intensive workshop, six consecutive meetings were conducted. The data of the discussions and reports among 11 mentors (three novice mentors, four experienced mentors, and four supervisory mentors) were recorded and analysed by quantitative content analyses method using the Tiny Text-Mining tool (TTM). In collected textual data, 1,484 different types of words were found during mentors' reflections on their consultations with their mentees. The analysis revealed the following three points: (1) distinctive words appeared on the reports of the experienced mentors who could explicitly reflect on and explain their difficulties and satisfaction as mentors; (2) novice mentors often confessed their worries and difficulties about their mentoring styles and communication skills; (3) regardless of their mentoring experiences, several mentors often mentioned mentees' progress during teaching portfolio creation and consulted the mentoring process to discover the mentees' educational philosophy.

Keywords: Faculty learning, Interdisciplinary collaboration, Quantitative research, Professional development

1. Introduction

In the context of education, it is commonly accepted that a mentor teacher leads, guides, and advises another teacher who is less experienced in a work situation characterized by mutual trust and belief. Mentoring is often identified as an essential step in achieving career success. Therefore, mentors working with mentees must work toward competence in areas such as consulting, mediation, negotiation, intervention and clinical supervision (Koki, 1997; Ramani *et al.*, 2006).

Nevertheless, not all mentors recognize the value of the mentoring relationship. Since mentors and educators in specialized areas rarely receive training on the mentoring process, they are often ill-equipped to face challenges when taking on a major mentoring responsibility (Ramani *et al.*, 2006). The actual learning processes of individual faculties that occur as a result of peer mentoring have not been described in detail (Castle, 2006; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Zwart *et al.*, 2008).

The aim of the present study is to uncover different mentors' awareness of effective mentoring between novice and experienced mentors participated in teaching portfolios workshop at Osaka Prefecture University College of Technology in 2016. The foregoing study revealed that there was a difference in the perceptions of mentorship between novice and experienced mentors. However, only a few studies have explored the

influence of experiences on mentors' perceptions. Consequently, whether the same findings will be revealed in the analysis of reliable quantitative data using the Text-Mining tool.

2. Previous Studies on Peer-Mentoring

Since 2009, Osaka Prefecture University College of Technology has conducted an intensive three-day seminar guided by mentor teachers to create teaching portfolios. It is designed to engage mid-career faculty members in the theory, practice, and scholarship of teaching and learning and to establish and support a faculty community of practice that provides mentorship and leadership in higher education (Kato, 2013; Kato, 2014; Kato, Hogashida, Kaneda, Kitano, Furuta *et al.*, 2018; Kato, 2019). Their mentors also have opportunities to consult with a supervisor who has vast experience in teaching and mentoring different levels of trainees at peer-support "mentor meetings."

Previous studies have analysed discussions at the final mentor meeting by employing the Steps for Coding and Theorization (SCAT) method, which is a sequential, thematic, qualitative data-analysis technique (Otani, 2008; Otani, 2011). With SCAT, the authors have anecdotally reported that mentors encounter the following six categories: [Reflection on immature mentor], [Waiting for mentee's awareness], [Education data collection], [Recognizing mentee's growth], [Leadership skills], and [Values of TP]. In unbalanced mentee-mentor relationships, in particular, novice mentors become anxious and refrain from asking questions or advising older mentees, but rather content themselves with merely listening to their stories (Kato *et al.*, 2018).

Learning from mentoring experiences – related data contained seven subcategories and two categories. Category 1 [reflection on immature mentor] included the following four subcategories: «difficulties of human relations», «inductive approach», «self-awareness of immaturity», and «no sense of accomplishment» (Kato *et al.*, 2018).

The other study, designed as a quantitative content analysis, intended to explore how mentors perceive mentorship as part of professional development and how they evaluate their own mentoring experiences (Kato, 2019). The author focused on discussions at the final meeting by analysing with TTM method. Differences among three groups of mentors, namely, novice, experienced, and supervisory were identified. Although previous exploratory studies (Kato *et al.*, 2018) yielded significant insights into individual mentors' awareness toward mentorship, concerns have been raised that mentor experiences may influence the difficulties and personal satisfactions they experience while mentoring. An enhanced understanding of the perceptions of mentorship may help develop the professional development that will foster diversity among future academic educators and researchers in higher educational institutions.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

Nine mentors and two supervisors participated in this project and were divided into two groups: namely, Group A and Group B. Table 1 presents the distribution of the participants according to their mentoring experience, academic background, and affiliation. Among the eleven mentors, three were novice mentors who had never worked with mentees before.

Table 1. Mentors' Profiles

Group	Mentor (Age)	Mentoring experience	Academic background	Mentors' Affiliation
A	A* (Fifties)	More than five times	Chemistry	Technical College
	B** (Forties)	More than five times	Chemistry	Technical College
	C (Forties)	Four times	Mechatronics	Technical College
	D (Forties)	First time	Mechanical engineering	Technical College
	E (Thirties)	First time	Education	University
B	F* (Fifties)	More than five times	Educational technology	University
	G** (Fifties)	More than five times	Mechatronics	Technical College
	H (Fifties)	More than five times	Mathematics	Technical College
	I (Forties)	More than five times	Information Science	Technical College
	J (Forties)	Three times	Chemistry	Technical College
	K (Thirties)	First time	Chemistry	Technical College

(* supervisor, ** coordinator)

3.2 Data Collection

Two group discussions were conducted and recorded with the participants' permission. Although Group A recorded discussions and reports at all six peer-mentor conferences, Group B only recorded their discussions during the final meeting on August 10, 2016. In the group discussions, a supervisor acted as a facilitator and encouraged the participants to reflect on their mentoring process and the changes they were aware of prior to and after the mentoring experience. The questions were intended to elicit the mentors' awareness of what their role as a mentor entailed and what problems and difficulties they experienced during mentoring. The supervisors as interviewers primarily addressed the mentors' perceptions of their learning from the mentoring process and asked them to describe the mentoring process. The author transcribed audio-recorded data after the meetings.

3.3 Data Analysis

In the context of developing mentors' communication skills and reviewing strategies during the three-day intensive workshop, the data of the final discussion and reports, were analysed by the quantitative content analyses method of Tiny Text Miner (TTM), a free text-mining tool for the English and Japanese languages (Matsumura & Miura, 2014). This technique enables Japanese language morphological analysis for the large text dataset in simple way.

The transcripts were prepared for analysis as follows. First, synonyms used in the final discussion and reports were identified and substituted with a single word so as to reduce the number of word categories and ensure more accurate results. Plural nouns were replaced by singular nouns to enable the software to recognize them as the same word. In addition, a proper noun was identified by its function and transformed into an appropriate noun with the same meaning. After this preliminary work, the software counted word frequencies generated by mentors in each discussion during the mentor meetings.

4. Results

The number of extracted words is displayed in Table 2. In total, 2,434 words were extracted from the data (40:58 min) of Group A and 2,493 words from that (63:25 min)

of Group B. In total, 5,027 words were extracted from the transcripts of the two final meetings and 1,484 different types of words were found in their reflections on their consultation. Novice mentors devoted less to the reflective mentoring process discussion than the experienced and supervisory mentors. Table 2 summarizes the basic statistics of mentoring reports at the final meetings of both groups.

Table 2. Number of Extracted Words

Group	Num.	Num. of cases	Total num. of words	Different num. of words
Novice	3	55(11.1)	767(15.3)	292(19.7)
Experienced	4	214(43.1)	2434(48.4)	649(43.7)
Supervisory	4	227(45.8)	1826(36.3)	543(36.6)
Total	11	496(100.0)	5027(100.0)	1484(100.0)

**The counted frequencies with percentages given in parentheses*

To elucidate the major images of good mentorship, co-occurrence relation among the words was analysed based on a cluster analysis. First, morphological analysis was performed by using TTM, and the dataset for further multivariable analysis was created with frequency-used (more than one time) nouns, adverbs, and verbs. Then, a cluster analysis was performed to the created dataset. The statistical distance between the variables was calculated as a Euclidean distance, and a Ward method was used for clustering. Figure 1 showed the dendrogram of mentoring experiences.

As shown in Figure 1, the dendrogram can be roughly classified into four clusters, which are typically associated with mentors-mentees relationship during three-day intensive workshop.

Cluster 1 consists of the words indicating basic verbs that describe human activities such as say, do, and be. Cluster 2 consists of the words corresponding to the characteristics of excellent mentors such as “great”, “can listen to (mentee’s voice)” and “do what is possible to”. Cluster 3 includes the words effective mentoring techniques such as “timing” and “share”. Cluster 4 seems to consist of several sub-clusters, including 28 words. The statistical analysis on four clusters indicated that mentoring experiences influenced the awareness of characteristics of excellent mentors (cluster 2) and mentor excellence (cluster 3), and challenging process (cluster 4).

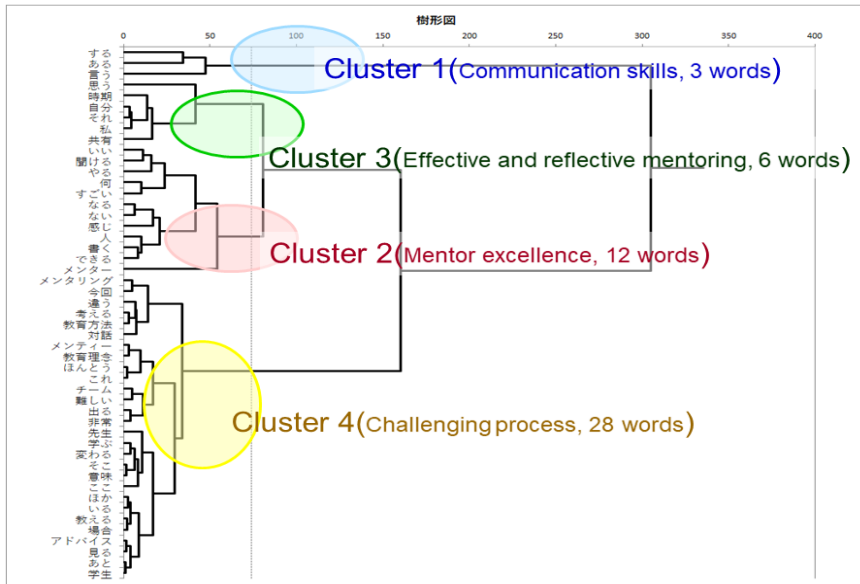


Fig. 1: Number of Extracted Words

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Integrating Self-Assessment in Higher Education for Developing Master's Students' Self-Reflection and Autonomy in Learning

Soodeh Eghtesad¹

Department of French Language and Literature, University of Tehran,
Islamic Republic of Iran¹

Abstract

“Assessment for learning” has recently been at the center of instructors’ attention in educational contexts since it is not only goal-oriented, but it also helps students and instructors regulate their learning and teaching according to course objectives and students’ progress. Among the various types of assessment for learning practices, self-assessment is a practical technique that enables students to reflect on their learning, develop practical learning strategies, and discover useful ways of compensating their learning problems, which turns them into independent and responsible lifelong learners. The purpose of this study is to examine the implementation of self-assessment in masters’ level French Language-Teaching seminars in order to investigate whether this type of assessment promotes improvements in students’ practical knowledge and skills as well as self-reflection and autonomy. Two groups of French Teaching Master’s students at the University of Tehran in Iran participated in this research over a period of two semesters. During the first semester, both groups were assessed by the instructor. During the second semester, however, the first group (control group) continued to be assessed by the instructor whereas in the second group (experimental group), students were responsible for assessing their learning throughout the semester. The overall students’ performance in the two seminars was compared and analysed at the end of both semesters, along with a questionnaire distributed among the experimental group students at the end of the second semester in order to examine whether self-assessment enhanced students’ learning, and whether it helped them develop self-reflection and critical thinking regarding their learning and learning strategies. Results indicated significant improvement in the experimental group students’ performance, and made them more conscious about their learning strategies, more responsible for their learning, and more independent and autonomous in their educational career.

Keywords: Self-assessment, Higher education, Self-Reflection, Autonomy, Iran

1. Introduction and Conceptual Framework

Assessment, according to Louis Porcher [1] is the key to learning. It reflects course objectives and teaching procedures, orients students and instructors’ learning and teaching, and demonstrates students’ learning and achievement. In recent years, a growing tendency toward “assessment for learning”, as opposed to “assessment of learning” has been witnessed in educational contexts, since “assessment for learning” is not only goal oriented, but it also helps students and instructors regulate their learning and teaching according to course objectives. Among the various types of assessment

for learning practices, self-assessment is a practical technique that enables students to reflect on their learning, investigate their learning gaps, and find ways of compensating their learning problems. Self-assessment may be defined as “the involvement of learners in making judgements about their achievements and the outcomes of their learning” [2], “identifying standards and/or criteria to apply to their work and making judgements about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards” [3]. It is a procedure in which students assess the quality of their learning and measure the achievement of their learning outcomes according to specific criteria. Self-assessment is a valuable learning instrument in that it does not only provide information for grading, but also encourages students to participate in and become responsible for their learning process by being the ones to indicate whether they have achieved their desired objectives. Students therefore learn to monitor their learning and progress in order to achieve their goals. Self-assessment is a widely used assessment technique in various educational contexts [4], [5], [6], [7], [8]. In Iran, however, self-assessment is not yet extensively considered as an efficient learning tool since students and instructors do not seem to fully trust this method of assessment.

In language learning, self-assessment has mostly been used in language classes.

However, Master's degree seminars in *Language Teaching* seem to require special attention since students in these seminars are trained to be future *instructors*, teaching *languages*. As future *teachers*, these students need to develop self-regulation, self-evaluation, self-reflection, and a critical and analytic approach toward their teaching in order to regularly assess their teaching capacities and their strengths and weaknesses.

As *language* instructors, they need to learn self-assessment practices and implement them in their future classes because languages are lifelong learning tasks; their learning is not limited within the boundaries of classrooms. Languages, whether they are learned as first, second or foreign languages, are not only taught and learned within a specific time, but are rather learned throughout life in various situations and interactions.

The purpose of this study is to explore the potential to use self-assessment as an effective method in Master's French Language Teaching seminars to orient students' learning, make them more independent in their learning, teach them self-reflection practices, and develop self-awareness, self-regulation and autonomy. Therefore, the main question addressed in this research is “Does the implementation of self-assessment at Master's level language-teaching seminars make students more responsible and independent in their learning, and more conscious about their learning process, time management and goal achievement?” Based on the above question, the following hypothesis has been formulated: The implementation of self-assessment practices at master's level French language-teaching seminars enables students to first set specific goals for their learning, and then develop a goal-oriented learning process in a timely manner, which makes them more responsible and more independent in their learning.

2. Research Context and Methodology

This study was performed at two Master's level French Language-Teaching seminars at the University of Tehran in Iran from 2018-2019. Students in both groups were aged 23-45, with an average age of 25 in the control group and 23 in the experimental group.

Group 1, the control group, was composed of 11 female and 1 male students, and group 2, the experimental group, was composed of 12 female students. The research, which mainly took a descriptive and an experimental form, was performed throughout two semesters. During the first semester in a French Language-Teaching seminar titled

“Principles of Language Teaching and Learning,” both control and experimental groups were asked to write a lesson summary at the end of each session. These summaries were collected by the instructor, assessed and graded using a rubric. At the end of the first semester, students’ overall performance was assessed through an identical final exam and an identical final project. In the second semester in a seminar titled “Language Course Design,” the control group continued to write the weekly summaries to be graded by the instructor. Students in the experimental group, however, did not write the summary. At the beginning of the semester, they were asked to set a series of outcomes they wished to accomplish by the end of the seminar based on the general course subject and objectives; they then responded to a series of self-assessment questions at the end of each session, instead of writing their summaries. These questions asked them to reflect on the lesson’s main objectives, the parts of the lesson that were well understood and those in which they had problems, the way in which they evaluate their learning of the new material, and the way in which the lesson helped them approach/achieve their initial course outcomes.

At the end of the second semester, students in the experimental group were asked to answer a questionnaire about their perceptions of the self-assessment used in class.

This research is therefore a descriptive and experimental study, in which the data for the two groups were described, compared, and discussed in order to investigate whether self-assessment is an effective assessment technique in higher education for improving students’ performance and helping them develop lifelong learning strategies.

3. Findings and Discussion

A comparison of both groups’ students’ final grade average indicates that in the first semester, the control group students’ average course grade was 16.25/20 and the experimental group students’ average grade was 16/20. These grades were rather similar; no significant difference was observed between the two groups’ initial state. In the second semester, however, the control group students’ average course grade was 15.9/20 whereas the experimental group students’ average grade was 17.85/20. This improvement is rather significant, given the fact that except the change in self-assessment, every other part of the two courses were identical. These data seem to suggest that self-assessment has had a positive influence on students’ overall learning.

The analysis of the experimental group’s questionnaire revealed that 62% of students acknowledged that compared to instructor assessment, self-assessment helped them better determine the state of their knowledge/skills. They believed that they learned in a more practical way (92%), which means that self-assessment helped them become practical “users” of the learned knowledge and skills (75%), since they meticulously and methodically analysed the state of their learning, determined their weak and strong points (82%) and found ways of compensating them. In addition, self-assessment helped students in determining personal goals (74%) and analysing the way in which they achieved these goals (75%). 91% of students believed they achieved their initial goals by the end of the semester. 66% believed that assessing their learning made them more successful in time management; 85% acknowledged that assessing their learning/goal achievement made them more responsible for their learning since they themselves had to monitor their learning in a way that they would successfully achieve their goals and pass the class. 74% of students considered themselves more independent in their learning, which, along with becoming more time-efficient and responsible, made them more competent learners, capable of measuring and processing the amount and quality of their learning without direct help from the instructor. 91% believed that self-

assessment helped them better understand the way in which they learn, and 83% considered self-assessment a tool that helped them better organize their knowledge and skills. Self-assessment therefore helped students recognize and strengthen effective learning strategies, and efficiently organize the newly learned information to make it more accessible and usable. In addition, students learned to reflect not only on learning, but also on the underlying processes responsible for learning (74%), which helped them develop more practical and personalized learning profiles, becoming more confident both in learning and in the selection of effective learning strategies (74%). These results, although not representative of every master's seminar context in Iranian universities, seem to confirm the positive influences of implementing self-assessment as an assessment tool as well as a learning instrument for developing students' learning and stimulating students' development of effective learning strategies.

4. Conclusion

As indicated by this research's data, self-assessment, as a practical "assessment for learning" instrument, should be strongly considered in higher education to actively engage students in the process of learning and assessment. At the same time, if used correctly, self-assessment should help students set and achieve learning outcomes, reflect on their learning process, pinpoint their weak and strong points, and find/apply effective strategies for compensating their main areas of difficulties. Such learners reflect the "utopiaic" image of a responsible, independent, lifelong learner, which should be the ultimate result of higher education in Iran.

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The Importance of Implementing Soft Skills into Business English Classes

Nasiba Valieva¹, Nodira Mukhitdinova²

Republican Graduate School for Business and Management, Uzbekistan^{1,2}

Abstract

The demand in developing teaching skills and soft skills has become “just-in-time” necessity. In this article we would like to signify importance of soft skills in professional development of teachers and business learners. It is revealed that leadership, risk taking, competitive spirit, great communication skills, creativity, personal and professional skills are common for both teachers and business people. Our experience at the Republican Graduate School of Business and Management shows that soft skills are more effective in teaching Business English, where a teacher serves as a role-model. Listeners of Republican Graduate school on the example of their companies make research, which includes teamwork, leadership skills, communication skills, problem solving skills, work ethic, adaptability and flexibility, and interpersonal skills. As a result of this experience the specialists from different business sectors get equipped for future business activities. In order to improve learners’ knowledge teachers should themselves acquire soft skills or 21 century skills in order to cultivate these in learners and provide the society with skilled professionals. Our research is based on the experience and employs descriptive and analytical-comparative methods.

Keywords: teaching skills, business skills, soft skills, experience

Introduction

The developed countries in the world emphasize on education and business communication first. To get progress in the development our country also focuses on these two spheres. Nowadays soft skills are demanded so as economy becomes known as 21st century high skilled economy. Thus, taking teachers and businessmen as an example, we can state that it is important to acquire 21 century skills for them, so as to strengthen the future of our republic. One of the essential reasons for education is to prepare students to be successful participants in the marketplace. So, what does the marketplace want? Are we organizing our learning environment to empower students to have necessary qualities? There is a range of hard skills – such as data analysis and software engineering – and even more soft skills – such as leadership, collaboration, and problem solving – that is growing in demand in the job market. Does our teaching reflect this? [7] XXI century has marked the rapid integration of information technologies in people’s lives. Hence, the flow of information increased in numbers. Government of Republic of Uzbekistan by creating opportunities for English learners to achieve success in both educational and workplace environments and join a global academic and workplace community supports educational process in our country. A great variety of educational grants and need for making international agreements trigger our citizens to learn English. The necessity of raising English teachers’ skills and qualification are

notified in number of governmental decrees and decisions, for instance PP-2909 of April 20, 2017 “On measures for the further development of the system of higher education”, The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan of August 29, 1997 “On Education”; “National training program” of 29 August 1997. Consequently, having basis for developing educational system we, teachers, should cultivate necessary skills both in ourselves and in our growing generation.

The importance of developing teaching skills

International research studies done by Uppsala Universitet emphasize three aspects when defining teaching skills. They focus on:

- What teachers do (different kinds of abilities)
- Different kinds of knowledge that teachers need in order to be able to act in the best possible way
- Attitudes and underpinning values that teachers embrace and apply. [4]

According to our research data of 2017 the majority of multidisciplinary teachers pointed that they are hardworking but not organized, lack of leadership and motivation, and hardly exercise reflection in teaching and learning [13]. This fact serves the reason for turning to the issue of developing teaching skills. Sometimes such factors as the age of learners, their social background, level of knowledge (in multilevel class) and etc. make it difficult to conduct a lesson. Hence, to regulate the situation in the classroom easily it is advisable for every teacher regularly upgrade their teaching skills. As teaching business English has become “just-in-time” necessity we need good English specialists who will provide with professional service entrepreneurs, government and non-government organizations and the whole business society. At Republican graduate school of business and management we teach specialists from significant corporations of both governmental and private sectors, who aim to be able to communicate in English with business partners. We share the viewpoint stated in the E-book called *Build up your business English skills with Macmillan Education* by Fauzia Eastwood “Communication with our students is key here and we need to use it to identify and prioritize the business skills that are important for them. Language input and presentation are essential, but we also need to look at the communication strategies students can integrate that language within and give them meaningful and realistic opportunities to practices using them.” Our main goal is to deliver knowledge for improving students’ language skills and soft skills.

For these needs it is actual to be aware of essential modern skills, understand their beneficial influence to business society and implement them in the working activity. “Key competencies can be identified on the basis that they make a measurable contribution to educational attainment, relationship, employment, and health and well-being outcomes, and do so for all individuals, not only those in a specific trade, occupation, or walk of life” [11]. The dynamic of development in all spheres depends on effective educational process where mastery in teaching has tremendous impact on formation of skilled specialists. Teachers attitudes to their profession and the way of cultivating cultural and spiritual values in their disciples reflect in shaping young generation’s worldview and accepting the life. So, it is crucial for teachers work on themselves.

Our study on teaching skills and business skills

During the last several months we studied materials on teaching skills and business skills basing on internet sources. The results of our studies showed that most demanded qualities for businessmen and teachers are almost similar: leadership skills, risk taking,

Competitive spirit, Personal and professional skills, Creativity, and Great communication skills.

On the bases of comparison, we can state that the teacher with good teaching skills can be considered as the role-model for the future businessman. Thus, we can see that these skills complement what is now known as 21 century skills. “More than technological expertise, 21st century skills refer to content knowledge, literacies and proficiencies that prepare individuals to meet the challenges and opportunities of today’s world,” stated the Kamehameha Schools report, *An Overview of 21st Century Skills*. The Ontario Public Service developed the following categories of 21st century competencies have been shown to have measurable benefits in multiple areas of life:

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship
- Communication
- Collaboration(teamwork)
- A growth mindset (metacognition/learning to learn to learn, perseverance, and resilience)
- Local, global, and digital citizenship [19]

Hanover Research recently analysed six major educational frameworks designed to improve the development of 21st century skills. While each framework has slightly different list of critical 21st century skills, all agree on four critical areas for development:

- Collaboration and teamwork
- Creativity and imagination
- Critical thinking
- Problem solving

MHA Labs chose 21st century skills to highlight the shift from a more structured 20th century basic skills economy to a fragmented 21st century high skilled economy. Now, all youth and adults must possess these skills in order to access higher quality education and career opportunities [14]. As the result of internet sources review, we can conclude that contemporary teachers are supposed to have 21st century skills, which is synonymous with soft skills, so as to prepare the youth to meet the challenges and opportunities of today’s world.

From our experience

To prepare good professionals for business world it’s crucial to obtain good teaching and business skills. “The term English for Business is wider and it represents every linguistic aspect used in **business areas**: accounting, commerce, e-commerce, finance, HR, insurance, IT, law, manufacturing, marketing, production, property, the stock exchange, (international) trade, transport and the **business communication activities**: presentations, negotiations, meetings, correspondence, or report writing” [7]. In our business school among listeners we have great range of specialists who aim to have a career growth and upgrade their knowledge and skills starting from engineers and accountants up to CEO from different sectors of economy. According to the requirement of our graduate school which is in the stage of entering the world market, soft skills are necessary for both teachers and students. As our Professor Yoko Toyoshima says: “In fact, teachers talk about actual business cases with business people rather often. This opportunity may surely make teachers clearly understand the business itself and accordingly create appropriate English expressions, vocabularies, idioms and other soft skills as well.” We have worked out a new programme which includes all aspects of language and soft skills that we need to be successful.

We, ESP teachers, permanently work on our professional development: in 2018-2019 academic year we took short term international on-line courses and participated in seminars hold at our school by business experts from different international organizations such as International Project Management Associations, European school of management and technology (Germany), Asian Development Bank (Uzbekistan), Freedom invest to mention but four. We have improved our knowledge of soft skills which we regularly implement during our classes. By incorporating media resources to the teaching process, we successfully develop language skills, in particular listening and speaking. By introducing business articles, we try to develop reading skills and critical thinking in our learners. By studying samples of business correspondence, the students practice writing similar letters, memos, ads, etc. We also pay special attention on ethical issues at work as well as develop intercultural communication skills which is crucial in our modern world.

Creating good learning environment, we empower students to have necessary qualities for conducting their future business. The scope of the informative material presented in the form of presentations, cases and articles for discussion, fragments from films and special video materials makes it interesting for students actively participate and implement the acquired knowledge during the class time. On every lesson they practice both language skills and soft skills, i.e., using specific business vocabulary and grammatical constructions they make presentations, conduct meetings, have negotiations and deal with dilemmas. Listeners of our graduate school on the example of their companies or other organizations make research, which help them to develop presentation skills, leadership skills, communication skills, team management, problem solving skills, work ethic, adaptability and flexibility and interpersonal skills.

As a result of this experience our specialists are equipped for future business activities. It is noted to say that for the last 3 years during their scheduled internships to Korea they employed these language and soft skills and had good experience and feedback.

Conclusion

Concluding the article, we would like to signify that specialists with knowledge of international language and soft skills are demanded in the marketplace. The most important skills for teachers and learners are leadership, risk taking, competitive spirit, great communication skills, creativity, personal and professional skills. They are common for both teachers and business people. It is necessary to point out that learning and developing soft skills is vital for teachers, especially for Business English teachers as they deal with adult learners who need communication skills for making business successful. We recommend all English teachers to update their skills on the regular bases and implement in the classes. In order to improve learners' knowledge a teacher should develop his/her mastery in teaching language and soft skills. Creating opportunities for business English learners to achieve success in both educational and workplace environments and join a global academic and workplace community should be our everyday duty.

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Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling: Transnational Practices in the Saudi TESOL Teacher Education Landscape

Eman AlJuhani¹

*Royal Commission in Yanbu, Colleges and Institutes,
Yanbu University College¹*

Abstract

In the age of mobility – a mobility of knowledge, languages, cultures and practices – hundreds of female TESOL teachers from Asian, African, American, and Arab neighbouring countries and Europe are now teaching English language in Saudi higher education institutions. These teachers often join Saudi public and private schools with different language pedagogies and ideologies as well as various forms of capital (e.g., symbolic, economic, linguistics). Conceptually, these transnational teachers have created a learning environment in which transnational discourses have been deeply penetrated into the TESOL policy, curricula, and classroom pedagogical practices.

Through a 14-week ethnographic study, this paper critically examines the ways in which a number of 15 female pre-service teachers or student-teachers from the Department of Applied Linguistics at Union University (a pseudonym) negotiate, enact and justify their classroom pedagogical practices during their practicum course at public schools, where curricula, students, and teachers are all local (i.e., Saudis). Throughout the course of this study, the portfolios are utilized to document the empirical record of student-teacher's attitudes, teaching strategies, material design and management, and course expectations. Classroom observations, semi-structured interviews coupled with analysis of weekly experiential journals, bi-weekly reports, e-portfolios and reflective essays are utilized to further explore the underlying assumptions behind their classroom pedagogical practices. Before the analysis, this part of the study argues that due to the conflicting discourses between the transnational TESOL curricula these students had received at their university and the national English language teaching (ELT) curricula they are required to teach at public school, they have been put at multiple crossroads, including tensions, contradictions, paradoxes, ambivalent positions and other state of mind. It also highlights several inconsistencies between the student teachers' performance and the real-life teaching practice and models. Based on this paper a chapter will close with pedagogical implications for TESOL teacher education in the transnational world and some critical questions for the TESOL teacher education community.

Keywords: TESOL, ELT, Transnational

Conceptual framework

In the dynamic globalized social milieu of present times, the survival of the fittest tends to take precedence when it comes to the efficacy and remodelling of pedagogical designs. Hence, not merely a national income generator, higher education is also an indispensable tool for promoting intellectual exchange of international collaborators,

whereby asserting and integrating 'shared cultural identities and values' (Mok, 2012).

With highly proprietorial quotient of higher education in the realm of education without borders, transnational higher education (henceforth, TNHE) seems to be the 'the most visible manifestation of the globalization and trade liberalization'. (Caruana, 2016)

Traditionally, transnational education has been ascribed to be 'an umbrella term 'that transcends many international educational platforms such as 'distance education, online education, collaborative education, for-profit education, and satellite campus teaching.' (Banner, 2016). Though TNHE remains to be rooted in international educational campuses and more often, foreign teachers with international experience or indigenous educators with international academic exposure, Knight (2016) contends to formulate a universally applied definition of transnational education (henceforth, TE) as transnational students should not be taken only for international students studying away from their respective countries of origin. Kasun (2014) attempts to define transnational learners as those who do not confine their learning to any geographical and political boundaries.

Transnational educational mobility and the power of English

The nexus between English language and the scope of international and transnational education has long been documented by the extensive body of research as being indispensable as lingua franca and 'the' link to connect the various stimulations and dots of intellectual authority. It is not the magnitude of the speakers who make a language global but the vocation and communicative purpose of the speakers of any language create the most intimate link between the assertion of a language's dominance and economic, technological and cultural power (Crystal, 1997). Hence, drawing towards a singular language as the language of international education, Robertson (2003) identifies English as the significant tool in the homogenization and modernization mission, that evolved as 'a new mantra' in the United States and the UK after WWII to modernize former colonies and allies. Since , for the institutes of higher education, the key to internationalize is to modernize, where internationalization stands for the trajectory to reciprocate the impact of globalization in their respective educational areas. Since the aim of the 'borderless education' is to help prepare global citizens, which refer to "a type of graduate required in the global world" (Maringe & Foskett, 2010), the learner needs to respond to the deregulated, hyper-competitive, post-industrial, and globalized new economy (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996).

Crystal (1997) investigates why so many countries selected English an official language or chose it as their principal foreign language in schools, presents a variety of reasons why English has emerged as 'a favoured foreign language'. The first reason registers the impact of historical tradition and political expediency, as manifested by the colonization during the 1900s, and the second explanation is the wish to engage and integrate with the economic, social or scientific power blocs and think tanks. Hence, it can be observed that the 'presence' of English in the transnational circuits of higher education, is contingent with the scope to which respective governments are inclined to give adequate financial support to a language-teaching policy. If the environment of is a well-endowed in terms of dedicated resources through language access centers, media, libraries, schools, and institutes of higher education, there is a burgeoning of the number and quality of teachers able to teach the foreign language, which is in this case, English language. Conversely, if there is a lack of government led initiative, and if books, tapes, computers, telecommunication systems and all kinds of teaching materials are not readily available, the achievement of language-teaching goals will be delayed.

Transnationalism and TESOL teacher education

Koch (2014) surveyed a joint case study of the King Abdullah University of Science Technology (KAUST) and Nazarbayev University (NU) to illustrate higher education projects in two progressive economies, Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia, respectively.

These two resource-rich countries are symbolic of a broader movement across Asia to move toward 'a state-initiated model suitable for global competence. After drawing on an array of qualitative methods and through the examination of local discourse to promote knowledge-based economies, she argued that the cases of Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia are 'mirrors' of recent internationalization programs undertaken by 'elite' Western universities. Moreover, she highlighted the role of geopolitical context that created Saudi and Kazakhstani educational policy makers' planning to invest so heavily in these world-class university projects. In a similar vein, Yang & Cheng (2018), with the critical and cultural analytical perspective, reason that for the current state and future direction of scholarship on modern industrialization and higher education, the training of methods of delivery in English hold supreme significance.

In present times, it is vital to be having a certain level of English competence to be qualified as a citizen of the globalized economy with access to the most recent information and knowledge to have access to social and economic development.

Therefore, the English language teaching (ELT) business has become one of the major growing businesses around the world after the 1950s. Consequently, there is a snowballing call worldwide for skilled English teachers and for more operative methods to their training and professional advancement (Richards, 2008). The coinage of the term TESOL, standing for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, now encompasses what used to be called TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) and TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language).

Understandably, there is a massively expanding globalized need of a student body to undertake training in TESOL as more and more individuals worldwide are choosing to pursue postsecondary educations in English. For students whose former schooling has been in languages other than English, this would mean that it is imperative that they take courses in academic English before they embark on starting their formal postsecondary studies. With on-site, blended and online programs that would vary from diploma courses, to post-graduate taught and research degrees, the academic training of TESOL teachers has been evolved with much larger force since the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The learners of such programs are required to participate successfully at the postsecondary level by acquiring additional knowledge and expertise in content, specialized vocabulary, grammar, discourse structure, and pragmatics. They are trained to negotiate a new range of sociocultural situations such as student contact situations, intercultural harmony, team work, public presentations, and local and international deployment.

Transnational female TESOL teachers in the Saudi Higher education context

According to the current statistics on the website of Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia, there are 30 state universities, 13 private higher education universities along with 42 private higher education colleges. These public and private educational enterprises offer a diversified array of academic disciplines ranging from engineering, medicine, social sciences, arts and humanities. The universities and other institutions of higher education offer a wide array of courses, such as engineering and medical services among others. There have been competitive reforms in the educational policy of the

kingdom to align with the global needs of the intellectual and academic community. (Al Shannag *et al.*, 2013). English is the only taught foreign language by the means of a universal preparatory program across all the state and private institutions of higher education of the kingdom to strengthen the proficiency and competence of the target language.

Al-Nasser (2015) catalogued two challenges that are faced by an English language teacher in Saudi Arabia, where the former relates to the interference of Arabic language system with that of the target language in terms of orthographic, phonetic, semantic and metaphoric distinctions. The latter, that claims the clauses of cultural preservation as a reciprocator force, notices natural resistance towards learning English language albeit the reformation in education policy, curriculum and course syllabi. However, Faruk (2014) contests that during the current decade; the Saudi higher education system considers English as the language of modernity and liberation as the reigning requirement for the integration of global and local social discourses.

There are a number of native and non-native female English language teachers who provide a transnational experience of education to the female higher education students across the kingdom. According to the statistics issued by the Ministry of Education in 2015, Saudi women constitute 51.8 percent of Saudi university students, where there are 551,000 women studying bachelor's degrees compared to 513,000 men.

In tandem with the rise globalization, the burgeoning influx of native and non-native English language teachers enriched the transnational experience in the traditional higher education context of Saudi Arabia. Alharbi (2019) draws from the studies of Zohairy (2012), Rahman & Alhaisoni (2013), Al-Seghayer (2014, 2015), and Sofi (2015) to establish the trajectory of need analysis that reported the inadequacies in the preparatory programs for Saudi EFL teachers. The principal conclusion by this recent body of research advocates the implementation of systematic approaches to facilitate Saudi English language programs with emphasis on 'disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and technological pedagogical knowledge.' Hence, this aforementioned 'systematic approach' calls for a need-based in-service training and development of potential English teachers to equip them with confidence and the additional sociocultural skills required to manifest linguistic proficiency and competence.

The context of the study

A university college located in one of the two industrial cities that are found to lead the industrial future of Saudi Arabia has been started as human investment in the population of the city; the future generation of the Saudi students, which later expands to offer degrees in applied sciences to the students of the city itself and the neighbouring cities. Since the start in 2005, the English department has been the first academic department that has been framed as an academic department and a service provider to teach English courses in the foundation year. A proposal to develop the program to be Applied Linguistics; which is focused more on TEFL and Linguistics has been approved in 2014. During the four years, students build their theoretical knowledge in the field of Language and Learning, the science of the language itself, language acquisition, and TEFL and TESOL. Union University College, Women's Campus (henceforth, UUCW) is an affiliate of Union Industrial College, Saudi Arabia. After its inception 2006, UUCW has offered four major programs of specialization. Following the North American style of higher education, the terminal degree of Bachelor of Science is conferred upon the successful students at the end of a four-year-long study plan.

For the entry of the mostly Saudi national female high school students in UUCW, a

standard entry-test is administered two times a year for the intake in Fall and Spring semesters. A two-tiered year-long prep-year program is the first milestone of the prospective students before they can commence their study plan in their respective departments of specialty. The workforce of UUCW is a constitute of a diverse body of internationally qualified professionals of higher education. Though it is provisional that the teacher, learner and the course book may represent distinct social and cultural backgrounds, the transnational learning context of the students not only gets enriched but become wider (Hall, 2011). In tandem with the rise of globalization, the burgeoning influx of native and non-native English language teachers has enriched the transnational experience in the traditional higher education context of Saudi Arabia. Alharbi (2019) draws from the studies of Zohairy (2012), Rahman & Alhaisoni (2013), and Al-Seghayer (2014, 2015), to establish the trajectory of need analysis that reported the inadequacies in the preparatory programs for Saudi EFL teachers. The principal conclusion by this recent body of research advocates the implementation of systematic approaches to facilitate Saudi English language programs with emphasis on 'disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and technological pedagogical knowledge.' Hence, this aforementioned 'systematic approach' calls for a need-based in-service training and development of potential English teachers to equip them with confidence and the additional sociocultural skills required to manifest linguistic proficiency and competence.

A four-year journey of transnationalism at YUC

Before the initiation of a formal degree program in the department of Applied Linguistics, the students having completed a year long, need a point of departure of academic listening, speaking reading, and writing skills, along with a tacit introduction to the field of Applied Linguistics. With the core linguistics and applied linguistic courses, such as semantics, introduction to linguistics, discourse analysis, psycholinguistics sociolinguistics, translation studies, TEFL Methodology for both young and adult learners, students culminate their study plan by taking TESOL practicum and undergraduate dissertation. By the end of this four-year-old journey, the graduates of the Applied Linguistics Department of YUCW are able to fulfil the roles of pre-service teachers as they take refresher courses designed for them, partake in practicum teaching experiences by teaching a ten semester duration at Saudi public schools in Yanbu, and carry out experimental research in their respective pre-service teaching roles for their undergraduate dissertation.

Transnational TESOL teacher education

For students whose former schooling has been in languages other than English, this would mean that it is imperative that they take courses in academic English before they embark on starting their formal postsecondary studies. Hence, for a career in TESOL or TEFL, the students from the department of applied linguistics have an edge if compared to their counterpart from Colleges of Education, that offer degree programs in affiliation with the Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia. The students who graduate with the bachelor's degree in applied linguistics are required to participate successfully at the postsecondary level by acquiring additional knowledge and expertise in content, specialized vocabulary, grammar, discourse structure, and pragmatics. They are trained to negotiate a new range of sociocultural situations such as student contact situations, intercultural harmony, teamwork, public presentations, within the context of transnational higher education.

The practicum students are first inducted in three- week long orientation program where they receive workshops in the following domains: to design lessons based on the orientation provided by the schools with respect to instructional content, learners' profile (date provided after diagnostic testing and need analysis), to manage classroom effectively at primary, intermediate and high school levels, and to design and carry a research project based on the sample of the target learners

Assessment

In order to achieve a pass grade, a typical practicum student has to go through rigorous ongoing formative assessment modules, which are evaluated by an assigned Practicum supervisor. The salient items on the evaluation rubric are constituted of the following criteria:

- I. Classroom management (Evaluation by the Practicum Supervisor):
 - a. To demonstrate the ability to select and implement appropriate management procedures to minimise prospective problematic "group" behaviours.
 - b. To demonstrate competency in teaching and effective organization and management of the classroom resources using approaches supported by research, best practice, expert opinion, and learners' different learning needs.
- II. Online teaching portfolio:
 - a. To provide the quality and scope of the lesson plans, observation feedback, and assessments created and/or administered.
 - b. To develop appropriate instructional objectives and select materials related to planned units of study and based upon target learners' indicated ability levels and cultural backgrounds.
 - c. To design curriculum-based assessments that will allow ongoing monitoring of learners' progress after consulting the data from diagnostic testing and need analysis for the respective classes.
- III. Post-teaching reflective essay (Self-evaluation):
 - a. To document how the teaching methods and techniques were modified after need analysis over the course of the practicum.
 - b. To project how the learners in the taught classrooms progressed following the practicum student's instruction and assessment.
- IV. Reflective Log:
 - a. To document his/her perceived effectiveness (instructional and interpersonal) and the success of attempted modifications/ differentiated instruction

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Monitoring and Evaluation of Language Teaching and Learning

A Systematic Review and Annotated Bibliography of Second Language Learning Formative Assessment: An Overview

Skevi Vassiliou¹, Salomi Papadima-Sophocleous²
The Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus^{1,2}

Abstract

This paper is a summative overview of a Systematic Review and a descriptive and evaluative Annotated Bibliography (AB) of Second Language (L2) Formative Assessment (FA) covering the period from the very first published work on the subject in 2000 to 2017. The aim of the SR was to systematically research and examine work published over the 17-year period mentioned, describe and analyse the data and derive some conclusions. The SR synthesized different studies which were related to L2 Learning FA. From an initial search resulting in 2284 sources, only 108 met the predefined inclusion/exclusion criteria set. These studies were then systematically reviewed. The qualitative design findings gave insights into information such as the types of FA in L2 Learning research publications, the type of study designs, research tools, methods used in the studies, the research location, the level of educational institutions the research was carried out, the languages and the language skills researched and the role of technology in L2 FA. The SR was complemented and reinforced by an AB of L2 FA. The content of the AB was arranged chronologically from 2000 to 2017. The AB followed the same source research and inclusion/exclusion criteria processes. The AB consisted of a series of bibliographical entries and citations. According to the findings of this research, there is no AB in L2 FA for this particular period. This AB aimed to fill in this gap. The combination of the SR and the AB aimed to obtain more unbiased conclusions and give a more rounded overview of the research conducted during the designated period of time. It also aimed to enhance the validity and reliability of the research. The findings also identified some aspects of L2 FA of concern that could serve as topics for future research.

Keywords: systematic review, annotated bibliography, formative assessment, second/foreign language

1. Introduction – Rationale of the study

Despite the increased popularity of F2 in L2 over the last 20 years, further systematic research is still of great importance (Rea-Dickins, & Gardner, 2000; Tsagari & Michaeloudes, 2013; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014; Ismael, 2017). Therefore, an initial search aimed to identify the existence of any systematic annotated bibliographical reviews in FA in L2 Learning. The results revealed that there is no Systematic Review or Annotated Bibliography that is dedicated to the recording, describing and evaluating of the historical background of implementations of Formative Assessment in Second/Foreign Language Learning. The combination of these two research designs increases the validity and reliability of the research and provides a first systematic and detailed overview of the

current L2FA studies in almost the last 20 years to fill in this gap.

The main purposes of this paper are: (a) to provide researchers and practitioners interested in L2/FL Formative Assessment a substantial background in the area, and more particularly how this topic has been treated by other researchers over the 17 years under review; (b) to contribute to the development of critical thinking about the topic.

These SR and AB aimed to offer qualitative analysis of the specific L2FA research conducted from 2000 to 2017 by answering the following research questions:

1. What were the major publication types, research purposes, research types, methodologies, and outcomes?
2. What were the languages, educational levels studied and participants involved in the studies?
3. Which types of L2FA and technologies were used in studies?
4. Which language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) or language aspects (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) were formatively assessed?
5. What learning theories were used to support L2FA learning?
6. What were the geographical distribution of L2FA studies?

2. Formative Assessment in L2

Assessment can be considered as an essential part of the educational system and it can occur with two types of assessment, Formative and Summative Assessment. FA occurs during the learning process by giving instant feedback. On the other hand, SA is an evaluative process with tests and scores (Perera-Diltz, & Moe, 2014).

FA is a neglected type of assessment since language teachers' pay more attention to Summative Assessment that includes tests and scores than to FA (Fakeye, 2016). In 2000, Rea-Dickins and Gardner put emphasis on the characteristics of FA and focused on FA and ESL/EFL. They concluded that if teachers' decisions are made with responsibility during classroom, this will increase students' performance (Rea Dickins & Gardner, 2000).

3. Systematic Review

The main purpose of a SR is to synthesize different studies which are related to a specific research area in a qualitative, quantitative or mixed method (Sampaio, & Mancini, 2007). Moreover, a SR includes a specific structure body: To present one or more research questions, to define criteria for inclusion/exclusion of the relevant studies, to systematically evaluate relevant studies and then to synthesize, analyse and interpret all the data by making comparisons, associations or identifying new research areas (Hanley & Cutts, 2013). This SR aims to present a critical synthesis of L2FA studies from 2000-2017 and to encourage researchers to continue investigating the potentials of L2FA implementations.

4. Annotated Bibliography

An Annotated Bibliography provides an overview of the available research sources on a specific topic. It consists of a series of bibliographical entries and citations, organized chronologically or alphabetically (Engle, 2017).

This descriptive and evaluative L2FA Annotated Bibliography was organized in chronological order to illustrate the progress in Formative Assessment Language Learning during the specific period under study (2000-2017). Each entry consists of a

citation in APA style, and a 300-word evaluative annotation. The aim was to give more information of each entry, contribute to the development of critical thinking about the topic, and to the degree each entry is considered reliable and academically respected as a source.

5. Methodology

Both the Systematic Review and Annotated Bibliography follow a Qualitative research design. They both use the same search strategy/database method and inclusion/exclusion criteria, and a coding process.

5.1 Study Selection and Inclusion Criteria

The following search strings were chosen: a) Formative Assessment) AND (Second Language Teaching) OR (Second Language and only abstracts were accessed; b) (Classroom Assessment) AND (Second Language Teaching) OR (Second Language Learning), c) (Alternative Assessment) AND (Second Language Teaching) OR (Second Language Learning), d) Portfolio Assessment AND (Second Language Teaching) OR (Second Language Learning).

The review included papers dated from 2000 to 2017, which included an abstract and at least two of the search terms. A total number of 2,284 research articles were identified.

The number was considerably decreased to 108 after applying a set of inclusion/exclusion criteria. These were:

Inclusion Criteria:

Publications that...

- 1) suit the research questions;
- 2) are reviewed: article, conference proceedings paper, short paper, reviewed book chapter, or book; PhD theses published in English language
- 3) report the application of FA in L2 or FL Learning;
- 4) present FA in L2 Learning in a primary, secondary or tertiary context;
- 5) present quantitative, qualitative or mixed evaluation of FA in L2 Learning.

Exclusion Criteria:

Publications that...

- 1) we're not published between 2000-2017
- 2) did not suit the research questions;
- 3) hosted in web pages which are not freely accessed through the account of the university and only abstracts were accessed;
- 4) composed of only one page (abstract papers), posters, scientific events programmes and tutorial slides;
- 5) did not duplicate other publications by the same author (similar title, abstract, results, or text). In such a case, only one is included in this review;
- 6) were written in languages other than English.

5.2 Coding

Coding is considered as a qualitative inquiry, as a problem-solving technique. Usually researchers use coding tactics such as cycling, highlighting or bolding (Saldaña, 2015).

In this research study, highlighted and coded data included type of publication, type of research design, research methods, research tools, location, participants, level of educational studies, language skills and languages.

6. Results-Discussion

The following are the results deriving from research question 1:

- 1) Article was the major type of publication was used by researchers (73.40%).
- 2) Many studies (96%) investigated the advantages of FA in learning and teaching a L2 (Cheng, Rogers, & Hu, 2004; Leung & Rea-Dickins, 2007).
- 3) The major research type is study either as just study or comparative study, case study or pilot study. (49.5%)
- 4) The dominant research method was Qualitative (42.4%).
- 5) A total of 96.3% reported a positive impact of L2FA implementations on students' motivation and progress.

Based on research question 2, the following three outcomes were identified:

- 1) The dominant language that L2FA implementations were carried out was EFL/ESL (64 research papers).
- 2) The majority of the studies were carried out with participants as students (31.4%.)
- 3) Most L2FA studies were carried out at tertiary level (55/108), followed by 15 research papers at college level.

Based on research question 3 results revealed that:

- 1) the most common L2FA types researched were provision of feedback with 29.1 portfolio, self-assessment, peer-assessment, reflections, rubrics, questioning, tutorials, discussions and artefacts.
- 2) Also, 25.65% of the L2FA types were digital tools or applications (Socrative, Kahoot, Edmodo, Padlet, Storify, Quizlet, digital voice recordings, digital tools, iPod and iPad).

Research question 4 findings showed that:

- 1) 60.5% FA implementations were carried out for writing skills. Moreover, 76.4% of the research for writing skills was implemented in an academic writing environment and 23.6% at secondary educational level.

Based on research question 5:

- 1) Only 6.48% of studies mentioned the learning theories that support L2FA implementations in teaching and learning. The dominant learning theory mentioned is Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of learning.

Based on research question 6:

A total number of 31 countries detected in this SR for L2FA implementations. Studies took place in all continents except Antarctica. The following figure indicates the geographical distribution of the countries that indicated interest in L2FA implementations.

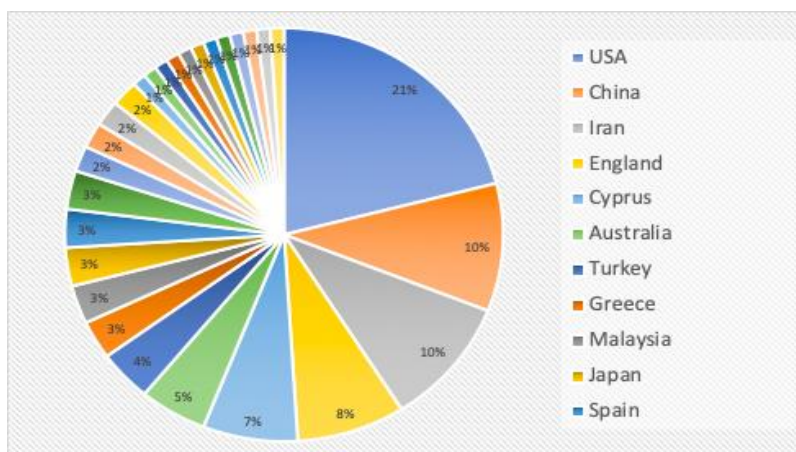


Fig. 1: Geographical distribution of L2FA in countries

Moreover, some additional interesting issues were also identified:

- 1) In most recent years, FA is gaining more ground in L2. It seems that after 2011, there is a bigger interest from researchers to explore the potentials of L2FA. In 2016 and 2017, we had the biggest number of publications.
- 2) The dominance of L2FA implementations is in higher education.
- 3) The significant role of technology in L2FA practices. Some examples include online quizzes (Socrative, Kahoot, Edmodo, Padlet, Storify, Quizlet), online portfolios, digital tools (iPod and iPad), online feedback and Google applications.
- 4) The data showed that Asia is being the most active continent than the others with China and Iran presenting 10% of the total amount of papers.
- 5) The necessity of L2 pre-service or in-service teacher training in Language Assessment Literacy.

7. Conclusions

The SR and the AB presented in this research paper gave an overview of the research conducted in the area of L2FA from 2000 to 2017. The inclusion/exclusion criteria used helped in systematizing the process and in drawing some concrete conclusions. Both the SR and the AB provide considerable background information to researchers, practitioners and L2 educators regarding research in the area. It also draws the attention for further research in the area and calls for research in some additional aspects such as teacher training and the use of new technologies in L2FA, which were noted during this research.

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Articulating Learning Objectives and Outcomes in the ICT English Language Classroom

Diane Boothe¹

Boise State University, United States of America¹

Abstract

The timeless continuum of learning often expands beyond specific and concrete building blocks of expectations for measurable outcomes and accomplishments. Language learning is rather a pipeline with essential connections welded together to transport knowledge and information that will serve the learner well and lead to pathways of success and achievement [1]. How do we measure these endeavours and ensure that we are achieving valuable outcomes and objectives, particularly in the online language integrated classroom? This study will explore the strong commitment to student success through educational experiences and the measurable attainment of specific outcomes and objectives. The spectrum of educational activities in the ICT classroom lends itself well to the cognitive development and personal success of students asking essential questions and incorporating engaging activities [2]. This study is divided into three sections that include planning and preparation for lessons in the online classroom, design and incorporation of specific course and learning objectives, and assessment of learning outcomes utilizing in-depth analysis models. Each one of these areas will be discussed as it relates to language learning and ICT focusing on priorities and student success. Further exploration and accompanying methodology explore the details and implications of these emerging expectations and are addressed by supporting materials, data, and recommendations focusing on the challenges of diverging language pathways as we articulate objectives and outcomes of online education in the English language virtual classroom.

Keywords: Articulating, Objectives, ICT, Outcomes, Language

1. Introduction

The measurable attainment of specific outcomes and objectives has often been a critical factor when identifying success in the online language integrated classroom, particularly in the ICT English language learning classroom. Clearly, student success is at the heart of lessons designed to enhance English language learning and benefit students in the global virtual classroom. Educational opportunities that support flexible learning and effective planning of pedagogy and methodology will result in positive outcomes and help to connect the classroom with the global learning environment. The literature on assessment of learning objectives and outcomes through various forms of assessment focuses largely on quantitative and standardized measurements of success.

Subsequent research and expanded definitions of assessment have made significant changes in these models. The online teaching experience has been valuable in its stress on engagement, discussion groups in learning, and providing professional insight in narrowing the learning gap and facilitating stronger support for flexible learning and

effective planning of pedagogy and methodology. This manuscript provides an overview of the value of learning objectives and outcomes among students in the online ICT English language classroom, and examines the literature and research addressing assessment in a variety of dimensions of cognitive and affective learning.

2. The value of learning objectives

Learning objectives are crucial for both the professor and the student, and well written objectives will contribute positively to the learning process through numerous measures particularly in the ICT English language learning classroom and online virtual settings.

Faculty who publish and communicate clear lesson and course goals and objectives that are identified and explained to students are successful in meeting their educational expectations for students. Learning objectives have the ability to promote and strengthen student learning along multiple pathways. Clearly articulated learning objectives enable students to differentiate among types of knowledge. Among the types of knowledge that have been identified in the research literature by Anderson & Krothwahl, 2001, two kinds emerge clearly [3]. One is declarative knowledge, or the knowledge of facts and concepts that can be stated or declared. A second type of knowledge is often referred to as procedural knowledge, because it involves knowing how and knowing when to apply various procedures, methods, theories, styles, or approaches. Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy [4] addresses writing learning objectives for the **cognitive** or knowing, **psychomotor** which is doing or skill, and **affective** or attitude domains. Bloom categorized the cognitive into the following six levels, starting from simple recall or recognition of facts, knowledge level, through increasingly more complex and abstract mental levels, to the highest order of **evaluation**.

- Knowledge
- Comprehension
- Application
- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation

Later, authors revised his taxonomy, particularly the cognitive domain and made edits that addressed current knowledge in the field [5, 6].

3. Planning and preparation for lessons in the online classroom

It is crucial for every instructor to provide educational programs; however, they are delivered, with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with the course objectives and culminate in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes.

Appropriate planning and preparation with timelines and rubrics are the key to a successful outcome. Adequate time and a clear understanding of the content and expectations for each lesson and component is essential. Creative curriculum and lesson plans are critical components for the achievement of learning goals and objectives.

Learning objectives describe the purpose of the activity, establish the expectations and results, and then identify the methodology used to accomplish these goals [7].

Numerous guides and suggestions for excellent online learning methods exist that educators can access to assist them with their teaching endeavours and lead to positive outcomes, particularly in an online educational setting. Many of the sample planning documents are adaptable by grade level and subject and contain key words leading to measurable outcomes. Lesson planning apps and websites will assist educators in the

efforts to bring lesson planning and design into the 21st century with the latest online tools and features.

4. Design and incorporation of learning objectives

Through creative design of learning objectives, students will be able to understand and accomplish the key expectations and measurable outcomes of the lesson in the ICT English language learning classroom. Evidence and supporting documentation must be provided indicating that students are meeting the specific objectives. Learning objectives that are clearly written and are well-organized across the lesson must be in place. The use of specific and measurable verbs should describe the behaviour and accomplishments at the appropriate level of learning. Vocabulary that is well understood and can be easily communicated is necessary particularly in the ICT English language learning classroom. The objectives should be clear to students who need to know what they are learning and why this is an expectation. Clear objectives identify the desired outcome of each activity and connect the steps of the lesson. Learning outcomes need to be present for course activities and meaningful feedback and assessment should be provided. An emphasis needs to be placed on student success, and outcomes and links made available to document this information. Curriculum aligned to program content goals and developed by qualified faculty that is learner-centered, focused on best practices, and consistent with these program goals and outcomes is tantamount to success. As lessons that are well organized, carefully constructed and focus on learning objectives are designed, students will benefit and lesson mastery is increased. Where two or more university instructors are teaching the same online course, collaboration and planning of course objectives among colleagues is valuable. The dedication and hard work of the faculty to ensure student success is always beneficial and faculty members who provide personal attention and educational experiences are recognized by students.

In addition to specific learning objectives, written instructions need to be provided for each lesson to accompany the objectives. It is also helpful for the instructor to designate a time frame or expectation regarding the amount of time that will be required to complete each task. In the case of assignments that include group discussions or feedback to other students' work, clear and concise directions must be provided that will guide each student through the discussion or reflection and ensures that students are actively engaged in the learning activities.

5. Assessment of learning outcomes

Assessment procedures must be in place to guide and provide oversight and focus on criteria to demonstrate breadth of knowledge and determine if learning objectives are effective and outcomes are in place in the ICT English language learning classroom. In order to put student learning at the forefront of the academic planning process, objectives need to lead to activities that will ascertain what a student knows or can accomplish following completion of the lesson. In this way, educators can alleviate any obstacles to learning and determine whether students are making the progress that is expected. It is helpful when student feedback is provided in written form and professors are responsive according to a specific timeline. There are guides both lengthy and brief that can be accessed on line and in hard copies to focus on the design of objectives that are measurable and will result in appropriate and valid assessment. Assessment that is beneficial can be further documented by concrete assessment activities as well as links to curriculum, various testing activities, and additional data. Course curricular

assessment initiatives should align with the overall identified outcomes and strategic priorities for the course. An emphasis placed on student centered learning activities and acquisition of knowledge will lead to an assessment framework that can be utilized to align program components with learning. It is helpful if students are provided with a rubric and clear expectations for each activity. Professors who take the time to provide detailed feedback that is meaningful while interacting with students on assignments will observe beneficial results. When students are required to do lengthy activities that have several components throughout the course and culminate with a final project, it is essential for the professor to determine the progress that the student is making and provide feedback at a series of levels and steps during the assignment.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

In the online educational setting, educational opportunities that support flexible learning and effective planning of pedagogy and methodology with clear, specific and measurable objectives will result in positive outcomes. Faculty who are clearly involved in the design and implementation, as well as decision making related to curriculum, will demonstrate an increased interest and effectiveness in online course design as well as the assessment of learning outcomes. Faculty autonomy and decision-making opportunities focusing on concrete objectives linked to course content and goals will result in evaluation of learning consistent with this valuable process of collecting information. As long as student success is central to the learning goals and at the forefront of the course objectives, appropriate assessment techniques and activities will support learning endeavours. The online setting, and then systematic solutions seeking emphasis on articulating learning objectives in the English Language Learning discipline, lend themselves uniquely to an ICT approach to learning the specialized English required for many fields, and the students, educators and practitioners in these fields will be the ultimate beneficiaries.

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Developing Digital Literacy in Online Grammar Teaching and Learning

Eva Duran Eppler¹, Christina Weichselbaumer²

University of Roehampton, United Kingdom¹

University of Graz, Austria / University College London, United Kingdom²

Abstract

The rise of network use as a global phenomenon entices language teachers and learners to modify acquisition patterns towards an increasingly learner centered approach, with grammar learning partly taking place outside the classroom. In this paper we present a digital literacy project which investigates the potential of audio-visual learning and teaching (L&T) resources for the acquisition of grammatical knowledge and understanding in mother tongue and foreign language education. We focus on evaluation literacy, the cognitive and social skills that determine the motivation and ability of individuals to gain access to, understand and use evaluative information in ways that contribute to achieving learning goals (adapted from Rogers, Kelly & McCoy 2019). To achieve this aim, we first administered two questionnaires to 28 linguists and EFL teachers to establish and adapt existing evaluation criteria for the selection of grammar resources. Second, we applied these evaluation criteria to 345 existing online audio-visual grammar videos. This resulted in illustrations of evaluation literacy, as well as ready-to-use information on such resources for both learners and teachers. This information includes learner level for both native and non-native speakers, previous knowledge required to benefit from the resources (e.g. terminology), and accessibility. Third, we developed concrete examples of learning activities which blend online instruction with face-to-face communication. This approach is expected to help learners generalize through use rather than memorizing, and thereby transform them from passive listeners to active learners. The concrete examples of L&T will furthermore function as a framework for further discussion about digital pedagogy i.e. ways of approaching digital L&T tools from a critical pedagogical perspective.

Keywords: learner-centred approaches, digital literacy, grammar.

1. Introduction

Jarvis *et al.*, (2010) describe freely available online grammar tutorials as ‘anytime, anywhere’ learning materials. Audio-visual online grammar learning and teaching materials (hence force AVOGL&TMs) are often favoured over print resources by digital natives as a way of engaging in explicit and self-initiated grammar learning. In this project we address the conundrum that online grammars are, on the one hand, used daily or at least regularly by 22% of foreign language learners (Trinder 2017) while, on the other hand, facing increasing criticism (Jarvis 2010). We believe that this criticism can be traced back to a lack of learning management systems that enhance users’ capacity to collate, access and critically respond to AVOGL&TMs (Jisc 2018). A learning management system – like the one outlined in this paper – is seen as a prerequisite for

individuals to take control over their learning process (Koulouris 2009). This information literacy project is designed to a) help independent learners make informed decisions about the quality and content of AVOGL&TMs, and b) encourage teachers to make use of the proposed criteria to review and analyse AVOGL&TMs in terms of their relevance, value and credibility for classroom use (Jisc 2018). Taking evaluation literacy one step further, the final section of this paper demonstrates how the underlying, implicit communicative function of one evaluated grammatical concept can be put to use in contextualized blended learning.

The aims of this information literacy project are to:

1. design a user-friendly and adaptable framework for evaluating AVOGL&TMs,
2. trial it on approximately 345 AVOGL&TMs associated with 28 grammatical concepts from the English Key Stage 4 Curriculum,
3. demonstrate how this framework can be used to select AVOGL&TMs suitable for individual learners' particular goals and needs.

2. Methodology

To achieve the first goal, we started with Swan's (1994) criteria for 'pedagogic language rules' (truth, demarcation, clarity, simplicity, conceptual parsimony and relevance) and modified them to accuracy, clarity, simplicity, use of metalanguage and conceptual parsimony. We added two further categories, namely quality of illustrating examples (range and contextualization) and appeal. In a first small-scale pilot study, the modified criteria were tested on grammar clips representing adverbs and clefts (two examples each) by an interdisciplinary group of 8 linguists, TESOL, ESOL and MFL teachers. Based on the feedback from this pilot, we reduced the rating scale from 6 to 4 and provided working definitions for the following evaluation criteria:

quality of definition

- accuracy: quality of definition
- clarity: clarity of terminology and structure

quality of illustrating examples

- range (of examples): from prototypical to exceptional
- contextualization: examples placed in a real-life context

use

- difficulty level: easy or difficult to understand
- use of metalanguage: use of grammar specific terminology
- prior knowledge: previous knowledge required to access video content

appeal

- how appealing is the material e.g., design, music, illustration?

In a second pilot study 20 participants (linguists, language teachers and students) were asked to apply these eight evaluation criteria to the AVOGL&TMs also used the first pilot. Respondents of the second pilot study provided information on their age and language background, the frequency with which they use AVOGL&TMs and the learning environment in which they use them. Participants rated the videos on a four-point scale and were given the opportunity to leave open ended responses. The two pilot studies served to establish a framework for the following audit, in which 345 sample videos on 28 grammar concepts were evaluated and embedded into learning contexts (classroom use vs self-study). The grammatical concepts were extracted from the glossary of the UK National Curriculum KS4 (Department of Education 2016). The audio-visual materials were identified through an online (Google) search for the respective grammar

concept. The first ten clips were selected; ones that did not meet basic quality standards (such relevance, quality of language use, sound and design) were excluded. In addition, the audit provides information on AVOGL&TMs' coverage and the learner levels they are suitable for – in correlation with the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001) and the English Key Stages. To increase the project's usefulness for teachers and learners, follow-up activities are suggested. 10% of the videos were independently evaluated by the Principal Investigator (PI). In a final stage it was decided to merge the categories 'accuracy' and 'clarity' and present their mean because the ratings of these two categories were not significantly different.

3. Results and Discussion

The most obvious result of the audit is that 'contextualization' has the lowest mean score (2.05) of all evaluated categories. This confirms the impression gained during the audit that – despite the much wider range of opportunities videos offer for contextualized grammar teaching than a classroom setting – few AVOGL&TMs utilize them.

The category 'range of examples', i.e., the variety of illustrating examples ranging from unequivocal to less clear cut, also has a low mean score (2.17). We attribute this result to a general human preference for prototypical examples (Rosch 1975).

Prototypical examples, however, tend to be intuitive and not to encourage (language) learners to actively engage with more complex examples or facilitate the honing of (language) analysis skills.

The next two results of the sample evaluation of AVOLTMs show that many of them require little prior knowledge to be accessible ('prior knowledge', 2.33); most videos also use limited grammar specific terminology ('metalanguage', 2.34). This result is unsurprising given that most of the AVOGL&TMs audited for this project are short stand-alone clips.

The difficulty level of the AVOGL&TMs, i.e., how easy or difficult they are to understand according to our evaluation, does not necessarily correlate with the difficulty level of the grammatical concept dealt with in the clip. The complement vs. adjunct distinction, for example, is notoriously difficult (Huddleston and Pullum 2002).

Complements are indeed the highest scoring grammatical category in terms of difficulty (3.11). The semantically transparent concept plural, on the other hand, has the lowest mean score (1.86). AVOGL&TMs on adjectives, on the other hand, seem to be more difficult (2.32) than those on adverbs (2.08), despite the former being arguably easier in English – the language most clips deal with so far – than adverbs.

The fact that accuracy and clarity have the highest mean (2.85) seems to indicate that quality criteria are the main aim of producers of AVOGL&TMs.

Appeal, despite being highly subjective, emerged as the most commented upon category from the open response section of the first pilot study. For this category only the individual rankings are meaningful. One generalisation we can, however, make is that the more AVOGL&TMs an individual produces the higher their appeal.

4. Example

Evaluation literacy is important when accessing and selecting AVOL&TMs. However, if the communicative function of a grammatical concept is not further taken into consideration, the full impact of evaluation literacy on the learning process may not emerge. Grammar learning needs to be given a broader communicative purpose by being embedded in a real-life context. Our results should not only foster evaluation

literacy in online (grammar) learning and teaching, but also show that there is a need to contextualize grammatical concepts. We therefore outlined some ideas for a possible transfer of grammar knowledge as presented in AVOGL&TMs.

At a teaching and learning workshop we, for example, asked participants to watch one of the evaluated clips on adverbs, providing them with a definition and prototypical examples. While at this point the participants might have been able to *define* this grammatical category, they had not engaged in any communicative situation in which they had *applied* this knowledge. We therefore asked the workshop participants to watch a sequence of a world-cup football match (Panama against England 2018) and produce a short audio-recorded sports commentary, using their mobile phones. Participants subsequently listened to each other's audio recordings and asked and answered questions based on the video they had watched (e.g. How did X play the corner? How did the goalkeeper try to stop the ball from going in? How did the referee handle the situation?). During the plenary discussion participants noted that through this contextualized activity they had implicitly gained the understanding that communicative function (i.e., giving further details about the manner, place and time of an action) can be performed by various grammatical forms – for example adverbs. AVOLTMs can therefore serve as valuable input for more contextualized grammar teaching if there is an opportunity for learners to personally respond to authentic language input after engaging with AVOGL&TMs on a self-study basis. In a follow up activity, we used a tweet for a reparsing activity, which demonstrates the different uses of adverbs and adjectives.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we presented a digital literacy project which examined the potential of audio-visual learning and teaching resources for the acquisition of grammatical knowledge and understanding in mother tongue and foreign language education. We adapted and developed criteria which can be used by both students and teachers to evaluate AVOGL&TMs in terms of quality of content, illustrating examples and use in various learning contexts. The application of these criteria to 345 clips revealed that clarity and accuracy take priority over contextualization and range of examples, which suggests potential for development in this area. We furthermore present a worked example of embedding AVOGL&TMs in a contextualized functional blended learning approach. In future, we intend to expand the project, making it accessible on an interactive platform and thus enhancing awareness about the need to approach digital L&T tools from a critical pedagogical perspective.

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Developing Web-Based Testing Software for LSP. The PUSTULKA Project

Aleksandra Łuczak¹
Kozminski University, Poland¹

Abstract

PUSTULKA is web-based testing software for foreign languages. It was originally developed to cater for the needs of ESP teachers. PUSTULKA emerged as there was no freely available, or inexpensive, software that would be ideal. The imperfections consisted mainly in the lack of cloze/gapped tests or let teachers create databases whose content they could use at any institution they teach.

With PUSTULKA we went even further, and the hidden agenda of the Project was to form a collaborative innovation network (COIN) where teachers learn from one another and develop their digital competence and which goes beyond the confines of one institution. Within the COIN teachers would contribute content and share their exercises with the other contributors so that they all benefit from the growing database of exercises, simplifying their own and one another's work and could use the content anywhere they run their courses.

PUSTULKA was created by a two-person team composed of a programmer, and an ESP teacher. PUSTULKA uses MySQL database, is hosted on Linux server (Debian), and has been written in .NET Core. It works in all browsers and on all devices. Students do not need to create accounts but do the tests on: pustulka.edu.pl.

PUSTULKA is flexible software with which teachers can create various types of exercises that comprise cloze texts, multiple choice, drop-down list, checkbox list, matching, listening, true/false exercises as well as short and long answers. A unique feature of PUSTULKA is that it saves all students' answers automatically and eliminates the risk of losing their work when the internet or equipment fail. PUSTULKA works on a website, so it does not require teachers to download it, to invest in a server or a web domain, and is not confined to the premises of one university.

Keywords: online language testing, computer-based language testing, English for Specific Purposes, ESP, collaboration, COIN, collaborative innovation network, innovation, web-based language testing, communities of practice.

1. Introduction

ESP practitioners perform various roles – from the one of a teacher teaching the right skills and, sometimes in the ESP context, the content knowledge, through the ones of a course designer and a materials provider, evaluator evaluating not only the students' performance but also courses they teach and materials they use, to the ones of a collaborator, cooperating with various groups of specialists including subjects experts, other ESP practitioners and students themselves, and a researcher conducting research into new trends in ESP, genre analysis, teaching methodology, etc. [1, 4, 8]

New advancements in technology bring new opportunities for teachers, helping them

to develop and exceed the confines of their traditional roles, very often crossing the borders of linguistics and drawing from other disciplines. The PUSTULKA project is an example of a venture in which an ESP teacher became an expert on language teaching and testing and collaborated with a software developer in a team working on the development of new web-based assessment software. Such combination seemed ideal, since according to Noijons [6] “to produce good CALT (Computer assisted language testing programs) a test developer must have the following areas of expertise: a) knowledge of language and language proficiency b) expertise in testing c) insight into testing programs, existing programs and programs that are to be developed.” In the PUSTULKA project the software developer possessed the expertise in programming, and a linguist – the ESP teacher/the Author with the knowledge of the language and expertise in testing, which guaranteed that the produced software would let the testers create valid and reliable tests.

Computer or web-based tests (CBTs/WBTs) have many advantages over paper-and-pencil tests (PPTs). According to Parshall *et al.*, [7] the benefits comprise cost saving, automated data collection, simplified scoring, immediate reporting, greater measurement efficiency, innovative item types, and technological provisions for visually impaired test takers. Lent [9] adds that CBTs “improve exam validity as they develop high-quality items and test forms, standardize test administration conditions and improve exam proctoring, ensure scoring and reporting accuracy, improve examinee access through offering more administration dates, more administration sites, safeguard exam security, prevent unauthorized access to test forms prior to administration, prevent examinees who have already tested from assisting those yet to test.”

All in all, the benefits of CBTs/WBTs far outnumber the drawbacks which according to Brown’s [2] analysis are associated with “computer equipment availability and quality, limitations in item types, the need for large item banks, expertise and training expenses, anxiety, cheating as well as issues with reliability and validity.” Malec [5] quoting various researchers proves that most of the above downsides are unfounded: the level of computer familiarity is unrelated to the scores in IELTS tests, the testing mode does not have a statistically significant effect, consistent automated scoring contributes positively to test reliability and the young generations of test takers are familiar with computer technologies and the anxiety or fear shall not be regarded as an obstacle.

The main objective of the PUSTULKA project was to create web-based testing software that would cater for the needs of ESP and originally legal English teachers by saving their time on tests scoring through its automatization and tests creation through creation of an easily accessible database of exercises.

The project was preceded with several attempts to find ideal, ready-made software, which unfortunately came to nothing. The reasons for that were varied: from imperfect options available (i.e., a very limited choice of exercises with the omnipresent lack of cloze tests which constitute a core of ESP testing, e.g., Edmodo, Google Forms, Class Marker; confinement of the content created to one institution, e.g., Class Marker, Inspera, Blackboard), through the need to invest in a server and a web domain (e.g., Moodle), to uncooperative university staff responsible for test implementation, editing and compiling the results.

The PUSTULKA project has also proven that collaboration with a software developer may be a solution for teachers who do not possess extensive knowledge of computer science but still want to participate in software development projects. And on top of that teachers do not need to possess extensive digital competence or even may have less computer knowledge than their students to use technology creatively in language learning.

2. PUSTULKA specification

PUSTULKA software uses MySQL database, is hosted on Linux server (Debian), and has been written in .NET Core. It works efficiently on computers and mobile devices.

Technical requirements to use it in the classroom are: the internet connection and standard internet browsers which use HTML5 and JavaScript (e.g., Google Chrome, Chrome for Android, Mozilla, Edge, Internet Explorer). To sit a test, students do not need to register or create an account but only go to a website: pustulka.edu.pl and enter a test code provided by their teacher. To see a sample test, go to PUSTULKA website and use test code: 5773.

Teachers who want to use PUSTULKA daily need to create accounts. To start using PUSTULKA they can set up a free trial account with which they can create private exercises, build and assign tests without any limitations but they cannot see or copy other teachers exercises. Trial accounts can be set up on: pustulka.edu.pl/Account/RegisterTrialAccount.

3. PUSTULKA functionality

PUSTULKA has been designed so that the teachers using it create exercises and out of the exercises stored in their database they build tests. Such model allows for flexibility and gives teachers a lot of freedom in building various versions of tests. The exercises the teachers create have four levels of access: private – where the exercise is only available for its author, teacher – where the exercise can be shared with other teachers who can copy it, edit and use for their own purposes, public – where the exercise is available to anyone who has a link, and public hidden – where the exercise is available to anyone with a link but is not visible on the list of public exercises. The whole collection of PUSTULKA public exercises is available on: pustulka.edu.pl. With public exercises students can learn or revise material outside the classroom which introduces the element of e-learning into the course. In summer 2018 the Author was carrying out a One Exercise a Day (OEAD) project which was designed to enrich the collection of PUSTULKA public exercises by creating one every day. Currently the collection of public exercises comprises over 250 items which can be done online or printed.

With PUSTULKA teachers may create cloze texts, multiple-choice, drop-down list, checkbox exercises as well as short and long answers. Exercise types have been carefully chosen to meet the needs of ESP teachers and ESP certificate preparation, e.g., TOLES (Test of Legal English Skills) examinations. The software has been adjusted specifically to the needs of the teachers who do not need to possess any knowledge of coding. To create the exercises, the teachers “parse” texts i.e., transfer them from plain text documents to the application. The texts only need to be previously properly formatted in a Word or any other plain text editor e.g., Notepad. The examples of formatting commands for parsing are presented below in Figure 1:

For inserting a picture:

[p;https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/15/Accipiter_nisus_-in_flight-8.jpg]

For bolding text: [b; From a lease agreement]

For underlining text: [u; From a lease agreement]

For italicizing text: [i; From a lease agreement]

For numbering items:

[n]From a lease agreement

[n]From a lease agreement

[n]From a lease agreement

For inserting a link: [l; http://pustulka.edu.pl/]

Fig. 1: PUSTULKA commands for text editing

The description below illustrates the procedure for creating a cloze test/gapped text exercise in which there can up to five correct answers. In a plain text document (e.g., Word or Notepad) or in a parsing window on PUSTULKA website testers:

- type or paste the text of their exercise,
- put square brackets around the words which constitute the maximum of five correct answers separating them by colons,
- specify the number of points to be awarded by typing it after the last correct answer in a bracket and a colon,
- the application automatically awards one point if testers do not specify the number of points to be awarded (the same can be pre-prepared in Word or Notepad and only pasted to the parsing window).

The text before parsing is formatted in the following way:

ADR typically includes, but is not limited to: negotiation, conciliation, mediation, and [arbitration]. Some of these programs are [voluntary]; others are mandatory.

While the two most common forms of ADR are arbitration and mediation, negotiation is almost always attempted first to [resolve;settle] a dispute. It is the preeminent mode of dispute resolution.

Fig. 2: Plain text version of a gapped text/cloze test

The exercise looks the following on PUSTULKA and can be accessed at pustulka.edu.pl:

ADR typically includes, but is not limited to: negotiation, conciliation, mediation, and (1 p.). Some of these programs are (1 p.); others are mandatory.

While the two most common forms of ADR are arbitration and mediation, negotiation is almost always attempted first to (1 p.) a dispute. It is the preeminent mode of dispute resolution.

Fig. 3: A sample of PUSTULKA cloze/gapped text exercise

To help teachers, the Author has recorded video tutorials on how to create various types of exercises. They can be found in HELP section on PUSTULKA website: pustulka.edu.pl. HELP section also contains a pdf manual where users can check how to use various functionalities of PUSTULKA if they prefer a text version of instructions.

4. Testing with PUSTULKA

Teachers using PUSTULKA build tests out of exercises they have prepared in advance. Such solution gives them a lot of flexibility in editing new versions of a test.

When assigning tests teachers can decide whether the students sitting the test will be able to see their answers or not after submitting the test. However, the students will always see their partial result after submission. PUSTULKA saves the results automatically and eliminates the risk of losing a student's work if the connection or equipment fail. A student can easily return to a test they have already started using a student code which is generated at the very beginning of a test.

Teachers can also select the closing date for a test which can be useful when assigning some tests for homework. They can also set the time limit for doing a test, after the lapse of which the test submits by itself. The exercises in the test can be shuffled so that each student does them in a different order to prevent cheating. Teachers may also disable previous button so that students cannot go back to previous exercises and they can only move forward during the test. A test prepared by a teacher can be exported to a WORD file where it is still editable and printed if the situation requires a paper-and-pencil version of the test.

With PUSTULKA testers may award additional points manually for minor spelling mistakes or correct, alternative answers not included in the answer key.

After grading teachers may export test results to Excel files for more detailed analysis, filtering them according to various criteria, as well as for mistakes (and errors) analysis.

A completed test can also be printed to show to a student and consult them on the mistakes they have made.

5. Conclusions

The assumptions behind the PUSTULKA project were to create software which would save teachers' time and develop their digital competence. Moreover, it was meant to inspire creativity, facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing through the function of sharing and commenting one another's exercises, and through joint forces to develop new products, provide innovative services and modify processes.

In fact, the hidden agenda of PUSTULKA is to build a teachers' Community of Practice by inducing cooperation among them. Communities of Practice (CoPs) refer to groups of people who genuinely care about the same real-life problems or hot topics, and who on that basis interact regularly to learn together and from each other. At present COPs evolve towards collaborative innovation networks (COINs) which according to Peter Gloor [3] are "groups of self-motivated individuals from various parts of an organization or from multiple organizations, empowered by the Internet, who work together on a new idea, driven by a common vision".

The assumption is that teachers contribute high quality content to the application and share some of their exercises with other contributors. In this way teachers benefit from the growing database of exercises, simplify their own and one another's work, save time on designing and evaluating tests. Teachers who use the coursebooks or teach similar courses may manage joint projects aimed at developing their own materials, digitalizing authentic materials, administer examinations, etc.

A competitive advantage of PUSTULKA is its feature which does not confine teachers to use the content they create at a single school/university only and lets them create the resources that they can exploit throughout their professional careers.

So far, the feedback collected among teachers has been very positive. They consider

the software as very useful and easy to use. Those who participated in an in-house examination at a university carried out by means of PUSTULKA appreciated the time saved on checking tests, since they had check one out of seven sections contained in an examination paper. The remaining six were graded automatically. All the teachers assessed the procedure of administering the examination as clear and efficient.

Another survey conducted among students proved that PUSTULKA fulfilled its task of a student-user friendly application. Only one student out of 61 respondents described their experience as rather negative but did not provide any specific reasons justifying such an opinion. Moreover, the comparison of PUSTULKA-based tests results with PPTs and other WBTs showed no significant discrepancies. Different groups of students achieved highest scores irrespective of the test mode. Therefore, some students' worries concerning being assessed by a machine and underprivileged because of the medium of assessment seemed unjustified.

PUSTULKA software is now up and running. Its content is still growing, new teachers join the network and learn using it. The PUSTULKA team is available and open to implementing new functionalities, repair bug, and resolve issues. PUSTULKA is currently used for testing English, Spanish and Polish languages.

Since October 2019 PUSTULKA users have created over 970 exercises and over 180 tests which have been assigned over 250 times to around 1700 students. Over 250 exercises are public ones, i.e. can be used by anyone who enters the website. Its Author was awarded Kozminski University Award for innovation in teaching in 2018/2019 academic year.

If you would like to become part of PUSTULKA, please contact the Author at: luczak.aleksandra@gmail.com or info@pustulka.edu.pl.

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Effective Learning Material for English (L2) Assessed in Terms of Brain Activation Using Functional Near-Infrared Spectroscopy (fNIRS)

Hideko Nakano¹, Masanobu Ueda², Kiyohisa Natsume³,
Masao Inoue⁴, Mari So⁵

Kyushu Institute of Technology, Japan^{1,3}

University of Kitakyushu, Japan²

Hiroshima Prefectural University, Japan⁴

Shimadzu Advertising & Communications, Co., Japan⁵

Abstract

In this study, an effective teaching method for Japanese students in tertiary English (L2) classroom lessons was assessed in terms of brain activation (BA) using functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS). Participants performed a word recognition task, listening task, oral task, and shadowing task in English (L2). Four factors presumably associated with cortical activation, the level of target words (higher/lower), task (listening/speaking/shadowing), and learner's English proficiency based on their TOEIC score (higher proficiency group/lower proficiency group, HG/LG) were investigated. The suggestions for effective teaching/learning are to choose an appropriate word level, to focus the target words or sentence with blanks, and to design the tasks depending on individual WM capacities.

Keywords: Effective learning method, task, proficiency level, brain activation, fNIRS

1. Introduction

How do learners process and store linguistic information in the brain while learning second and foreign languages in the classroom? A recent functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) study examined brain structures in Japanese L2 school students of English and showed a significant correlation between the performance of a syntactic task and leftward lateralization of a single region in the triangular part (F3t) of the inferior frontal gyrus (IFG), which has been proposed as the grammar center [1].

Working memory (WM) represents the immediate memory processes involved in the simultaneous storage and processing of information [2]. To measure WM capacity, the reading span test (RST) was developed. An excellent reader has more WM capacity to store information during text reading, which is significantly correlated with reading comprehension scores [3]. Osaka *et al.*, [4] measured WM capacity using an RST written in Japanese and English (English as a second language version) and found that the Japanese and ESL versions were highly correlated.

The non-invasive and continuous measurement of BA with functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS) was introduced more than 20 years ago. A major advantage of fNIRS over other neuroimaging techniques is its compact measurement system that puts less strain on participants, and it is less sensitive to motion artifacts [4], which enables

its use in a variety of experimental settings [5], [6]. With fNIRS, functional BA is measured noninvasively by recording changes in oxygenated and deoxygenated hemoglobin (HB) concentrations. The use of fNIRS has been spurred forward by validation studies using simultaneous fMRI and fNIRS and suggested that they are correlated across key visual WM regions in the frontal-parietal network [7].

In the present study we explored Japanese L2 college students' brain activation while learning English depending on factors such as the degree of difficulty of the target word (higher/lower), the task (closed/unclosed/target words blanked), and the learner's level of English proficiency (higher/lower) using fNIRS (Light NIRS, Shimadzu Seisakusho Co., Kyoto, Japan).

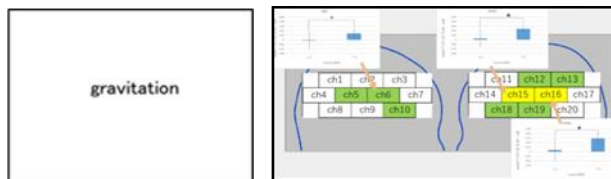
2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Participants

The present study was carried out on 16 healthy college male students who are all right-handed and aged 21.8 years on average. Participants were divided into two English proficiency groups, a higher score group and a lower score group (HG and LG, respectively), based on the TOEIC test scores. The average score of the HG group (n=8) was 574.4, while that of the LG group (n=8) was 441.6; there was a significant difference between the TOEIC scores of the two groups ($p < .01$).

2.2 Data acquisition – fNIRS

The fNIRS data were obtained using a multichannel spectrometer (LIGHT NIRS, Shimadzu Seisakusho Co., Kyoto, Japan). A 2x4 array of optodes consisting of 8 laser diodes and 8 light detectors, alternately placed at an interoptode distance of 3 cm to yield 2 channels, was applied on each side of the participant's head, matching the center of the lower row to the T3 (left) and T4 (right) position of the international 10/20 system (Fig. 1). Changes in oxygenated [oxy-Hb], deoxygenated [deoxy-Hb], and total haemoglobin [total-Hb] signals were calculated, and optical signals were sampled at a rate of 14 Hz.



2.3 Experimental tasks

Four types of tasks were tested in each participant in the two groups (HG/LG) in the fNIRS experiments as follows: a word recognition task using the words from the higher level and lower level of the CEFR (C2 and A1) (WRH/WRL); a listening a dialogue task with the sentences unclosed, closed, and, with blanked target words (LU/LC/LB); an reading-aloud a dialogue task (RA), with sentences unclosed, closed, and with blanked target words (RAU/RAC/RAB); and a shadowing task with an unclosed or closed script (ShU/ShC). In the RA session, participants first listened to the dialog contained in parts A and B, and then orally repeated the dialog in part B. In the shadowing task, the participants first listened to the sound and then started the shadowing exercise (LShU/LShC). The stimulus consisted of black letters against a white background and were presented visually at the center of the screen. The stimulus presentation was controlled using PPT2TTL software (Shimadzu Seisakusho Co., Kyoto, Japan). For

fixation, a white cross was shown at the center of the screen for 300 ms at the beginning of each task. The task directions were shown in Japanese for 200 ms, and then each stimulus was shown for 200 or 300 ms.

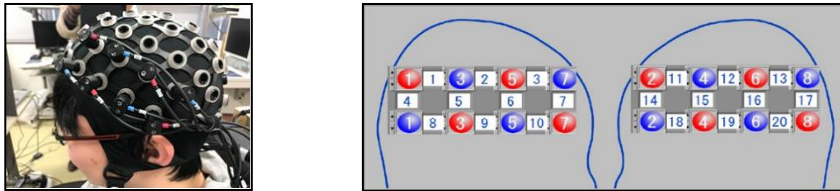


Fig. 1: Close up view of the fNIRS equipment and the location of the 16 channels

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Word Recognition (WR) task

There was no significant difference in BA during the WRL between the two groups (Fig. 2). On the other hand, BA during the WRH for the LG was significantly higher than that for the HG at channels 12^{**}, 13^{**}, and 16^{*} (Ch16), the area of which approximately corresponds to Wernicke's area ($p < .05^*$, $.1^{**}$). In addition, BA during the WRH for the LG was significantly higher than that for the HG at channels 15^{*} and 19^{**} ($p < .05^*$, $.1^{**}$), which approximately correspond to Broca's area. These results suggest that the linguistic areas, including those for vocabulary, for the LG were more activated in response to the target words that they did not answer correctly or took time to answer, whereas the same areas showed little activation in the HG because they knew the meaning of the target word and orally answered the correct meaning quickly. Moreover, BA at Ch10^{**} and 18^{**} for the LG was significantly higher than those for the HG ($p < .1^{**}$), and these areas approximately correspond to the prefrontal cortex, which is relevant for WM. This result suggests that the participants in the LG used more WM to process the encoded information through Broca's and Wernicke's areas, as well as through brain areas with roles in processing visual and auditory information and those that participate in long-term and short-term memory functions.

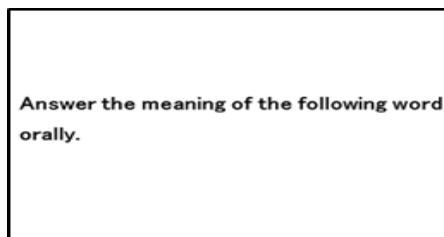


Fig. 2: WRH task and the differences in BA between the HG and LG groups according to each channel (HG < LG)

3.2 Listening and Reading-Aloud (L/RA) task

Fig. 3 shows that BA during the LU for the HG was significantly higher than that for the LG at Ch12, 15, and 19, which partially correspond to Broca's area (Ch15, 19) ($p < .05$) and Wernicke's area (Ch12^{*}, 13^{**}, 16^{**}) ($p < .05^*$, $.1^{**}$). Because the participants were informed about the following activity, i.e., speaking the line for B and communicating with the line for A, in the last task before the target task, they might have

highly focused on listening to and comprehending the line of B, such that BA at Broca's and Wernicke's areas for the HG was increased.

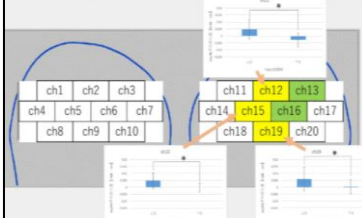
<p>First, Listen to the following dialog. Then, take the part of B and speak to A.</p>	<p>Listen to the following dialog. A: How do you like to spend your free time? B: I play golf whenever I'm free. It's so relaxing. A: I enjoy golf, too. I play almost every weekend. B: Me, too. I hate to go back to the office after a weekend of golf.</p>	
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Fig. 3: LU task and the differences in BA between the HG and LG according to each channel (HG>LG).

On the other hand, in the RAB task shown in Fig. 4, BA for the LG was significantly higher than that for the HG at Ch19* and 9**, which approximately correspond to Broca's area and the auditory association cortices ($p<.05^*$, $.1^{**}$), and at Ch12** and 16**, which approximately correspond to Wernicke's area ($p<.1^{**}$). Moreover, we found that BA for the LG at Ch18* and 10** was significantly higher than that for the LG ($p<.05^*$, $.1^{**}$).

These parts approximately correspond to the prefrontal cortex, which is relevant for WM. These results suggest that the participants in the LG used more WM while speaking to process the encoded information through Broca's and Wernicke's areas as well as through brain areas with roles in processing visual and auditory information and those that participate in long-term and short-term memory functions.

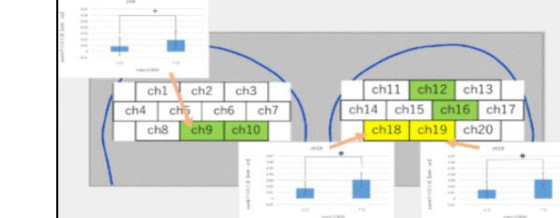
<p>Take part of B, then speak to A. A: How do you like to spend your free time? B: I play ___ whenever ____. It's so ____. A: I enjoy golf, too. I play almost every weekend. B: Me, too. I ___ to go back to the ___ after a ___ of golf.</p>	
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Fig. 4: RAB task and the differences in BA between the HG and LG according to each channels (HG<LG)

The data in Fig. 5 show that BA for the HG at Ch2**, 3*, 6**, 13**, and 20** was significantly higher during the RAU than that for the LG ($p<.05^*$, $.1^{**}$). Interestingly, Ch3 approximately corresponds to the prefrontal cortex, which is relevant for WM. These results suggest that the participants in the HG used more WM while speaking to process the encoded information through Broca's and Wernicke's areas as well as through brain areas with roles in processing visual and auditory information and those that participate in long-term and short-term memory functions. In the task prior to the RAU task, the participants focused on listening to the blanked target words and memorizing them; thus, BA was increased for the participants in the HG compared with those in the LG because they more actively used WM for long-term and short-term memory, auditory, and linguistic functions.

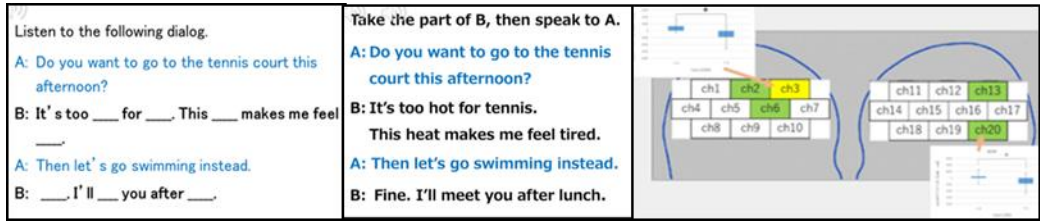


Fig. 5: RAU task after LB and the differences in BA between the HG and LG according to each channel (HG>LG)

3.3 Shadowing task

The LShU of the shadowing task session is the last listening task before the ShU, and during this task, BA for the LG was significantly higher than that for the HG at Ch6^{**}, 9^{**}, 12^{***}, 13^{*}, 15^{**}, 16^{**}, and 17^{***}, which approximately correspond to Brodmann's, Broca's and Wernicke's areas as well as the auditory association cortices ($p<.01^*$, $.05^{**}$, $.1^{***}$) (Fig. 6). These results suggest that BA for the LG is highly activated while listening to the test contents and that the word level used during the target test may be relevant to BA in the participants. On the other hand, the word level might be irrelevant to BA for the HG.

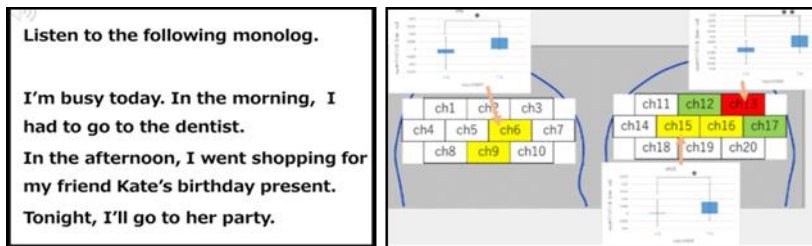


Fig. 6: LU task and the differences in BA between the HG and LG according to each channel (HG<LG)

BA for the HG during the ShU was significantly higher than that for the LG at Ch14 ($p<.1$) (Fig. 7). Ch14 approximately corresponds to the prefrontal cortex, which is relevant for WM. While listening, participants attempted to repeat, i.e., to "shadow", what they heard as quickly as they heard it. These results suggest that the participants in the HG more actively used WM to process the encoded information through Broca's and Wernicke's areas as well as through brain areas with roles in processing visual and auditory information and those that participate in long-term and short-term memory functions.

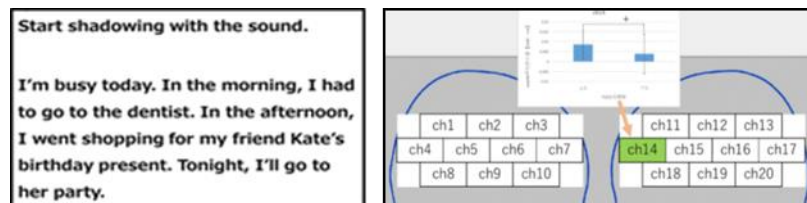


Fig. 7: ShU task and the differences in BA between the HG and LG according to each channel (HG>LG)

BA for the HG during the ShC was significantly higher than that for the LG at Ch3 ($p < .05$) (Fig. 8). Ch3 approximately corresponds to the prefrontal cortex, which is relevant for WM. These results suggest that the participants in the HG more actively used WM while concentrating on listening to the content of the closed sentences to process the encoded information through Broca's and Wernicke's area as well as through brain areas with roles in processing auditory information and those that participate in long-term and short-term memory functions.

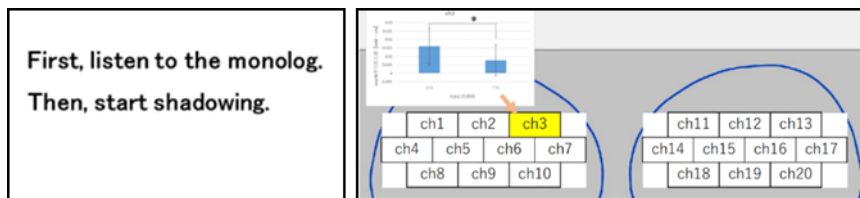


Fig. 8: ShaC task and the differences in BA between the HG and LG according to each Channel (HG>LG)

4. Conclusion

The present study showed several findings that might suggest SLA teaching/learning in the classroom could be more effective using BA data from fNIRS experiments. Some suggestions for effective teaching/learning are as follows: choose an appropriate word level, focus the target word or sentence by spacing them with blanks depending on individual proficiencies, and design the tasks depending on individual WM capacities.

Acknowledgement

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Online Learning

Sign Language Learning Material for Undergraduate Students: Brazilian Sign Language Glossary

Janice Gonçalves Temoteo Marques¹, Lucas Vieira de Miranda²,
José Mario De Martino³

School of Medical Sciences, University of Campinas, Brazil¹
*School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Campinas,
Brazil^{2,3}*

Abstract

In 2005, the teaching of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) became compulsory in Brazilian public universities for undergraduate courses that include a teacher preparation program (Federal Decree 5626). After the decree, the Brazilian universities had to adapt to the new reality. During the process of implementing Libras disciplines, a number of educational and pedagogical challenges emerged. One of the challenges was to provide easily accessible video material for the students since Libras is a visuospatial language. This project arose with the purpose of facing this challenge. The main objective of the project is the implementation of an online searchable video glossary of Libras – the Brazilian Sign Language Glossary. To facilitate the learning of the language the signs are searchable in two ways: by sign name or by semantic category. Currently, the glossary is composed of about 2,000 signs. The Brazilian Sign Language Glossary is publicly available on the Internet (<http://libras.fee.unicamp.br/>) and provides a meaningful platform for those who may teach deaf students after graduation and furthermore can be useful for research in the area of deafness.

Keywords: Sign Language, Libras, Glossary, Material, E-Learning

1. Introduction

The Brazilian deaf community has fought hard for the recognition of their language in the country and since the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) was recognized as a legal means of communication [14], new public education policies related to deaf people have been implemented in the last decade, among them, the inclusion of Libras as a compulsory discipline in teacher education undergraduate courses [13]. Due to the new legislation, Brazilian Universities had to adapt to comply with the law and offer the Libras discipline in the curriculum of their courses. Many challenges were faced in the process of change, from hiring Libras instructors to finding the best way to offer the discipline be it in face-to-face, online or mixed mode, and the legislation is also not descriptive about it. As it is a sign language, a visuospatial language, regardless of offering mode, the didactic material for studies is an issue to be resolved. The purpose of this project in the short term is to overcome the shortage of free, quality, hands-on learning material for students to use as a reference.

At first, the Brazilian Sign Language Glossary was developed and targeted for university students, but soon became clear that its use is not limited to the discipline at the university, but to any hearing person who speaks Portuguese and wants to learn

Libras. Therefore, the Brazilian Sign Language Glossary is publicly available, meaning that anyone can access its content on the Internet. Face-to-face teaching with material that enables subsequent distance learning (Sign Language Learning Material for Undergraduate Students) was a viable solution to complement students' education, since the student can access the practical content of the Glossary by computer, tablet or mobile phones, even after the end of the course.

The Brazilian Sign Language Glossary includes 2,000 signs covering general themes, such as daily communication, and also from specific areas related to school subjects.

The material helps consolidate the learning of Libras for hearing students in the teacher education undergraduate courses at university, a valuable tool that contributes to their formation and, by knowing sign language, will better prepare them to teach and include deaf students in school activities respecting their cultural and linguistic differences.

The Glossary development was divided into two steps, the first step is comprised of the linguistic research of signs, while the second step consists of the information system development and publishing on the Internet, both of which will be described in Section 2.

2. Method

2.1 Linguistic research to select signs to include in glossary

The linguistic research for the selection of the signs for the Glossary consisted of a search in the main dictionaries and manuals about Libras available in printed [2], [3], [4] or digital [8], [15] media in Brazil, especially the publication [4], which relates the use of signs in each region of the country. This step was essential for defining the linguistic scope of signs to compose the Glossary's corpus, and for organizational purposes the signs were separated by alphabetical order and by semantic category.

Finally, to legitimize the Glossary it was essential to find a native speaker of the language, that is, a deaf fluent signer that had Libras as their first language to record it.

The recording of the signs occurred at the video studio of the School of Medical Sciences (FCM) at the University of Campinas (Unicamp), and was supported by the FCM Didactic Support and Technical Scientific Disclosure Team. The process was carried out in stages and over several days, since signing for a long time is an exhausting task for the signer, and each day a semantic category was recorded. During the recording process the signs were presented to the deaf signer by slides on a monitor to facilitate and expedite the process. At the end of the recordings, we proceeded to the video editing process in which the signs were separated in specific videos and individually edited, which consisted of: image treatment, Portuguese subtitle insertion, and inclusion of the university's logo (Unicamp). After editing, the signs were added to the Glossary platform so they could be queried. Since all the remaining work required the proper execution of this step, a lot of care had to be taken to assure the signs were correctly recorded.

2.2 Brazilian sign language glossary development

The development of the Brazilian Sign Language Glossary platform was carried out by the research group Assistive Technologies for the Deaf (TAS) from the Department of Computer Engineering and Industrial Automation (DCA) at the School of Computing and Electrical Engineering (FEEC). It consisted of the following steps: requirement analysis, system design, technology selection, system implementation, system

evaluation and publishing on the Internet.

The functional requirements consisted of the following features: administrator user authentication (log in and log out), management of users, semantic categories and signs (create, read, update and delete), and finally, the searchability of signs by name, first letter of name, or semantic category. The non-functional requirements consisted of: capability to support a large number of student accesses throughout the semester (availability), restricted access to administrators for content management on the platform (security), responsive interface capable of adapting to screens of different devices such as computers, tablets or mobile phones, and facility to search signs or semantic categories (usability).

The technologies used in frontend development, that is, the graphical user interface were: Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) [9] responsible for defining the elements present in the interface, Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) [12] whose function is to control the appearance of elements, and React.js [1], which is a library of the JavaScript Programming Language [17] and is intended to include dynamic interface behaviour.

The technologies used in backend development, that is, the logic for data manipulation were: Node.js [10] and Express.js [7]. Node.js is a JavaScript language interpreter used to execute code on the server, while Express.js is a JavaScript library for developing Web Application Programming Interfaces (Web API) in the Restful State Transfer (REST) standard that allows exchange of messages between the user computer and the server.

Data storage is performed using the MySQL [11] database management system (DBMS).

Importantly, all technologies used during the development of the Glossary are open source and free to use without charge. The Glossary is hosted at the School of Computing and Electrical Engineering (FEEC) at University of Campinas (Unicamp).

3. Discussion

The Glossary development was only feasible due to the availability of a professional team from Libras, Audiovisual and Computing areas, who together could find solutions to challenges encountered during this project.

Regarding the Libras Team, the main challenges were: selecting entries (signs) to compose the Glossary's vocabulary and dividing it by semantic categories designed specifically to facilitate the learning of Libras by a hearing student, finding a fluent deaf person to sign as well as give input on the most commonly used signs among deaf people, and when appropriate, to record linguistic variations of a sign.

The main challenge of the Audiovisual Team was to record and edit the sign language without having deep knowledge of it. To do this during the sign's recording, as the deaf signer performed the signing, the audio with the sign's name was also recorded in Portuguese, seeking to reduce errors during the editing process. Following this strategy, the editing process went well, however, a lot of time was spent as it is a laborious process and requires a lot of concentration and attention to detail.

For the Computing Team, the most important issues involved the graphical user interface, support for large numbers of users, and video storage. During the development of the graphical interface some prototypes were developed and several tests were performed to ensure the proper functioning of the system on several devices. With the motivation of providing the service to both university students and outsiders across multiple device types, it was decided to develop the backend as a REST API, as this architecture allows you to scale the system horizontally, i.e., it becomes possible to

include more computers in parallel and use the load balancing technique to serve more users if necessary. As for video storage, several compression methods were tested, always seeking the best cost-benefit ratio between image quality and storage space.

The link <http://libras.fee.unicamp.br/> gives access to the Brazilian Sign Language Glossary which has about 2,000 signs distributed in 33 semantic categories: Manual Alphabet; Foods; Animals; Birthday; Personal presentation; Drinks; Calendar; Colours; Commemorative dates; Days of the week; School subjects; Documents; School; Sports; Family; Grammar; Hours; Age; Places; School supplies; Months of the year; Nature; Schooling levels; Notions of time; Numbers; Periods of the day; Professions; Pronouns; Greetings; Cheers; University; Monetary values; and Verbs.

The signs in the Brazilian Sign Language Glossary can be consulted alphabetically, by name (at least one letter), or by semantic categories, making it easy to search for signs. Due to the large number of entries, the Glossary can be considered as a useful signs database for research in the fields of linguistics, lexicology, and lexicography of Libras, as well as in computational research aimed at recognizing sign languages that seek to build systems capable of automatically translate these into oral or written languages [5], [6], [18].

When you first access it you can view the instructions for using the Glossary.

4. Conclusion

This project is the result of a partnership between the School of Medical Sciences (FCM) and the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering (FEEC) of the University of Campinas (Unicamp).

The Brazilian Sign Language Glossary records about 2,000 signs that are clearly and didactically divided into 33 semantic categories, which enables the user to query signs and makes it possible to learn Libras for any hearing person who speaks Portuguese being a university student or not.

It is also possible to use the Glossary's Sign Database in research related to Lexicology, Lexicography and Linguistics of Libras, as well as in computational areas [5], [6], [18].

In future work, it is planned to expand the number of signs and semantic categories present in the system's database to encompass greater vocabulary, to include signing activities that encompass the signs in a contextualized manner and to analyse their impact on student's teaching throughout the course.

5. Acknowledgement

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Teaching Teacher Students through Innovative Teaching Approaches in Online Learning

Katarina Lindahl¹
Dalarna University, Sweden¹

Abstract

Innovative teaching and new teaching and learning approaches are needed in order to prepare the language teachers of tomorrow. As an alternative to asynchronous online instruction, teacher students have teacher-led online seminars every week. In addition to these seminars, several different ICT-tools and language teaching and learning approaches are used in order to prepare the teacher students for a digital future. The purpose of this paper is to discuss how digital resources and online teaching are used both for teaching university students, but also as examples of pedagogical approaches that these teacher students can use in school. The net-based courses on English language learning and teaching for future primary, secondary or upper secondary school teachers are structured in a similar way around online seminar. An online learning platform with course information and assignments is used for communication with students outside of the seminars. What makes these courses different from other net-based courses are that the additional tools that are used are tools that can be used in language teaching with younger pupils as well. For example, multi-modal resources such as video and audio recordings are used both for giving feedback and as an alternative to written assignments. In addition, free, readily available online tools for flipped classroom are used both for teaching the course, but also as examples of what our teacher students can use them for with their own pupils. Through collaborative writing projects where shared documents are used, university teachers gain a better insight in how students work together. In the online seminars, the teacher students discuss how these pedagogical approaches can be used in primary, secondary or upper secondary school. The aim is to let the teacher students experience an innovative approach to language learning in addition to reading about it.

Keywords: net-based learning, language teaching, online learning, teacher training, ICT

1. Introduction and background

The opportunities for using innovative approaches for language learning has increased with the development of new technology. At Dalarna University, a relatively small University College in Sweden, online teaching is nothing new. We have offered online language courses since 2004 and out of our 14 000 students, around 9 000 (64%) study online [1]. The purpose of this paper is to describe and discuss how information and communication technologies (ICT), digital resources, and online teaching tools are used in courses for future English teachers. What makes these courses different from other online courses is that we use tools and pedagogical approaches that can be used when teaching younger pupils as well.

Both our campus and online courses are organized around our learning platform,

Blackboard Learn [2], where students can find information about their courses. The learning platform is also used for asynchronous communication, such as participation in discussion forums, and it works as a place for students to hand in assignments. In addition to using the learning platform, courses are structured around teacher-led, real-time seminars every week. The seminars can take place either on campus or through online meeting tools such as *Adobe Connect* [3] or *Zoom* [4]. At Dalarna University, we train primary, secondary, and upper secondary teachers. They all have different courses, and we teach different content, but we work in similar ways with their seminars.

Sometimes we have mixed online and campus groups, and sometimes all the student's study online. In this paper, the focus is mainly on a course called *English Language Learning and Teaching (ELLT)*. The aim of the course is to introduce central language learning theories, examine policy texts, and discuss how English can be taught in school.

2. What makes this course special?

Like in most of our courses, the students have teacher-led online seminars every week. What makes this course different from our other courses is that, in addition to these online seminars, we also work with digital resources and tools that the teacher students in turn could use in their own teaching. We constantly strive to connect theories and policy texts to the practical classroom work. The aim is to let the teacher students experience an innovative approach to language learning and teaching in addition to reading about it.

When teaching teacher students, it is both useful and interesting to discuss teaching practices openly. One thing I noticed when I started teaching at university, was that we rarely practiced what we preached. This also came up in course evaluations. Our teacher students had noticed that we taught them how to teach something efficiently, but did not always follow the same advice in our own teaching. One example of this was that that we let them read about how they could use digital tools in their teaching, while not actually using any of these tools or techniques ourselves. In order to change this, I started incorporating online tools that would be useful both for our own courses, but also for the students in their future profession.

In the course *English Language Learning and Teaching*, students experience first-hand how multimodal resources can be used in teaching. Video and audio recordings are used both by the university teachers as well as by students. At the beginning of the course, students are asked to record short videos where they introduce themselves in English. Students tend to be more comfortable with speaking English if they start out with video recordings. They have a chance of re-recording the video if they feel anxious about language or their performance. We also save time in the online seminar. We can now use the valuable teacher-led time for discussing topics such as how these pedagogical approaches can be used in primary, secondary or upper secondary school, or how this exercise relates to language learning theories or policy texts for school.

Videos are also used as make-up assignments for missed seminars. If a student cannot attend one of the online seminars, a common make up assignment is to record a presentation on the topic that was discussed in the seminar. It is not as good as attending the actual seminar, but much closer to what they missed than writing a text on the same topic. Students use a free online tool called *Screencast-o-Matic* [5] for making these recordings. The free version only allows 15-minute recordings, which is actually seen as a benefit by the teachers. This ensures that we do not end up with very long clips. Some project requires a little editing, and for that, another free tool is used. *KineMaster* [6] is

an app that is intuitive and easy to use on a smartphone. By using a free app, rather than an advanced editing tool, we show that the content is more important than flashy editing.

Teachers use videos to pre-record lectures on certain topics. The videos are uploaded to an online tool for flipped classroom called *EdPuzzle* [7]. By working with a flipped classroom approach, we can use seminar time to work on students' higher cognitive skills, with the support of the teacher. The benefit of using the site is that teachers know exactly who has watched what film, and how many times. In addition, teachers can add quizzes in order to check that the students have understood the contents of the film. Another feature is that teachers can control whether or not to allow skipping. We have previously noticed that students tend to skip ahead in pre-recorded lectures, now we can make sure they see the entire video. We have also moved away from long lectures to shorter clips and videos. By using shorter videos, it is also easier to update or replace parts of a lecture when needed. We tailor-make our own playlists by combining what is available online from sources, such as *YouTube* [8] or *TED-Ed* [9], with our own recordings. *TED-Ed* is a useful source of materials, both for finding original animated videos on a range of topics and finding interactive lessons. These videos are well suited for younger pupils as well as for older learners. Teachers can also use the platform for creating their own interactive lessons, and lessons can be shared between teachers.

Video recordings are also used for giving students feedback on assignments. Most of the time, students' hand in written work and receive written comments. Writing comments is a very time-consuming task for teachers, and we have found that giving oral comments is faster and sometimes easier for students to understand. Rather than commenting in writing, the teacher can record their screen with the student text and move whole paragraphs or sections, or point at parts of the text while explaining to the student what they need to do to improve their writing.

Another way we work with writing is by letting students collaborate on texts. We are currently working on bringing collaborative writing into our courses more and more.

Through tools such as *Google Docs* [10] or *Google Slides* [11], students can work together on documents or online presentations. *Google Slides* is very useful when presenting, since students can follow the presentation in real time on their own device.

They can also send questions directly to the lecturer through the chat, and these questions can be shown on the screen for the entire audience, if the lecturer chooses to do so. The main benefit of working with collaborative writing is that all the students in a group can participate and write at the same time. In addition, teachers can see exactly who has written what section of a text. Through collaborative writing, teachers gain a better insight in how students work together.

3. Summary

With new teaching and learning approaches, we prepare the language teachers of tomorrow. In our online seminars, we evaluate and discuss how the tools work, and how they can be used with younger pupils. We encourage the teacher students to develop a responsible and critical view of ICT-tools so that they know both what the benefits are as well as the possible problems. Our teacher students can combine what they now about learning theories with their practical experience of using the tools. By combining practical work with more theoretical seminar discussions, teacher students are much more prepared to work in an ever-changing technological future.

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- [8] <https://www.youtube.com>
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- [10] <https://docs.google.com>
- [11] <https://docs.google.com/presentation>

Technologies for Teaching and Learning Intercultural Competence and Interlanguage Pragmatics in L2 Italian. Experiences of Implementing an Online Language Course on Moodle Platform

Borbála Samu¹, Valentino Santucci², Talia Sbardella³
University for Foreigners of Perugia, Italy^{1,2,3}

Abstract

Pragmatic competence is one of the main components of communicative ability in a second language. Recently, a great deal of research has been done regarding the acquisition and teaching of pragmatics of Italian as a foreign language. However, resources and teaching materials dealing with this aspect of the Italian language are still very scarce. This article describes the experiences in creating an Italian online language course, focusing on the tools available through the Moodle e-learning platform, selected to enhance the learning of this ability in language learners. Finally, the study indicates some future directions for the development of an effective language teaching online.

Keywords: online Italian language course, Moodle, interactive language learning, intercultural pragmatic competence

1. Introduction

It is well known that learning the grammar and the vocabulary of a second language (L2) is not a sufficient condition to use it effectively in a variety of contexts. It is in fact necessary to acquire the capacity to link words to the context where we want to use them to interact and to achieve our communicative goals. Communicative competence has been analysed and described in various ways [1, 2]. The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* [3] indicates, as three main categories linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. Pragmatic competence is the ability to use language effectively in a contextually appropriate way, given specific situations, speakers, and content. In the last thirteen years a great deal of research has been done on acquisition and instruction of pragmatic competence. Concerning L2 Italian, there is now a large and fast-growing literature on interlanguage pragmatics, that is, learners' use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic ability and about the learning of L2 pragmatics in instructional context [4, 5]. However, resources and teaching materials dealing with this aspect of the Italian language are still very scarce. The main objective of this study is to give an insight into the resources able to enhance pragmatic and intercultural communicative competence in an online language course using Moodle. In this paper we first give an overview of some theoretical and methodological issues in teaching and learning pragmatics (§2), then we give a short description about tools provided by Moodle (§3) and we illustrate in some depth those we mainly used in the experience conducted in building our B1 Italian online course (§4). Finally, we indicate some possible ways to further develop language courses online.

2. Teaching pragmatics in the context of Italian as a foreign language

In order to be able to use language effectively in a contextually appropriate way, speakers need to know how to use speech acts, such as apologizing, complaining, complimenting, requesting. To communicate speech acts in L2, learners have to acquire linguistic expressions (for example, to apologize in Italian it is necessary to know the word *Scusi* 'sorry' or the expression *Sono mortificato* 'I am devastated') and they also need to have some knowledge about the rules of proper social behaviour, about social perception and values attributed to certain expressions (for example, to know if arriving 10 minutes late when joining a group of friends it is expected to express feeling devastated or not). As Kasper and Rose [6] note, "Speech communities differ in their assessment of speakers' and hearers' social distance and social power, their right and obligations, and the degree of imposition involved in particular communicative acts". So, learners of a foreign language must not only know the appropriate linguistics forms to achieve their goals using the language, but they must be aware of the sociocultural norms to speak and to behave "properly" in different communicative situations.

Pragmatic competence is, in fact, one of the core constructs of intercultural competence.

Adult learners have a considerable amount of L2 pragmatic knowledge: current theory and research suggest a number on universal features in discourse and pragmatics and other aspects may be successfully transferred from the learners' L1.

Basic orientation to communicative action, such as politeness [7], might be shared throughout communities, even though what counts as polite and how the principles of politeness are implemented in context varies across cultures. Similarly, specific communicative acts, such as greetings, requests, offers, invitations, refusal, apologies are available in any community, however their realization varies across cultures. The major realization strategies identified for some communicative acts have been found stable across ethnolinguistically distant speech communities [6]. For example, speakers may apologize directly, expressing regret or requesting forgiveness; or indirectly, admitting their own responsibility, giving an explanation, offering a repair, promising never perform the offence again, expressing concern for the hearer.

However, research shows that speech acts can manifest differently across languages and cultures. Comparing Italian and American and Australian English apology strategies Lipson [8] and Walker [9] show that Italians are more sensitive to differences of status, authority and social roles of participants, while American and Australian English egalitarian culture is reflected in avoiding displays of power through language.

As various studies demonstrate "many aspects of L2 pragmatics are not acquired without the benefit of instruction, or they are learned more slowly. There is thus a strong indication that instructional intervention may be facilitative to, or even necessary for, the acquisition of L2 pragmatic ability" [6]. Research has further shown that even advanced language learners often show imbalance between their grammatical and their pragmatic knowledge, with pragmatic competence lagging behind grammatical knowledge [10].

Kasper [11] cites three conditions for the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge: the pertinent input, noticing of the input and the opportunity to develop a high level of control. Particularly in the foreign language setting, where the exposure to the target language is limited to the language course, teaching of pragmatics gets even more importance.

The teaching of pragmatics requires specific methodological attention, the question of "rules" in pragmatics being rather complex. Turning back to apologies, the ways for apologizing are as many as the possible contexts where one could realize this linguistic

act; speakers may choose to attenuate or intensify the act according to the importance they give to contextual variables. So, the most reliable reference points will be authentic texts reporting the effective use of language by native speakers in real interactions. Apart from the appropriate input, awareness-raising and noticing activities should supplement the introduction of pragmatically relevant input in instructed L2 learning. Evaluation of pragmatic competence is also a key factor, “Especially in instructional contexts where formal testing is regularly performed, curricular innovations that comprise pragmatics as a learning objective will be ineffective as long as pragmatic ability is not included as a regular and important component of language test” [6].

3. Moodle as an online learning platform

Moodle is the worldwide most used learning management system (LMS) designed to provide educators and learners with a single, robust, secure and integrated system to create personalized learning environments [12, 13, 14]. At the time of writing, Moodle has more than 100000 active sites in educational institutions from more than 200 countries in the world (see <https://moodle.net/sites>). These data clearly explain why Moodle is often the first solution to consider in order to build a platform for e-learning and blended learning courses, as it is the case of our Italian online language courses.

Moodle provides a variety of tools and functionalities with a twofold objective: on the one hand the teacher can design the learning path and create the course content in a relatively easy way, while on the other hand Moodle delivers course contents to the learners without the need of any other technological tool (as it is the case, for example, of the SCORM packages). Therefore, Moodle covers the whole lifecycle of a course and all the aspects of a learning path: design, content creation, learners’ enrolment, delivery to the learners, how learners interact with the content, communications between teacher and learners and among learners, evaluation of the learning activities, issue of digital certificates, and measurement and analysis of the data produced by the learners.

For the sake of space, here we briefly describe the main tools and functionalities that, we think, are more useful in a language learning course developed using Moodle, keeping in mind our specific objective, that is, to develop pragmatic and intercultural competences. Moodle allows to create contents by means of the *resource* and *activity* modules. A resource is an item that a teacher can use to support learning, such as a file or a web page which can also contain multimedia content like video or audio-clips. More interesting are the activities, i.e., something in which a learner can actively participate and obtain a feedback, possibly preset, by the teacher and interact with other learners or the teacher. Among the variety of activities, the most useful for our context are: forums, chats, quizzes, lessons, wikis, assignments and workshops.

The forum and chat activities allow, respectively, asynchronous and synchronous communication among learners and with the teacher. In a self-paced learning perspective, forums are usually preferred (with respect to chats) and can have some interesting use cases. For example, a teacher may create a collaborative exercise about “how to apologize”: every learner is invited to open a new topic where she can upload an audio-clip, then the other learners and the teacher can reply such topics by indicating errors, suggestions, asking for an explanation, etc.

The quiz activity allows the teacher to understand the progress of the learners and it is also important for learners’ self-evaluation. Indeed, Moodle allows to preset some feedback comments that are displayed to the learners depending on the chosen answer or on the grade obtained. Moreover, the H5P plugin (see <https://h5p.org>) allows to embed questions inside a video lesson in order to restart or skip some parts of the video

depending on the answer provided to the quiz.

A useful activity to co-construct pragmatic knowledge is the wiki, where the learners, altogether or divided in groups, can build up step by step a content page. Possibly, the teacher can preset the format of such a page by providing some guidelines.

Lessons allow to build a series of multimedia pages, possibly interleaved by questions, and to connect them in predetermined alternative learning paths: the learner can choose its navigation path by clicking the desired button or depending on the answer provided in a question page.

Assignments can be delivered for evaluation to the teacher and can contain also video-clip that learners can record on the fly by using the online recording tool provided by Moodle. Peer evaluation among the learners is also allowed by means of the workshop activity.

Finally, it is worth to note that all the activities and resources allow to set completion criteria and conditions for accessing them. The combination of these two features is very powerful and allows to force the learner's trajectory among the resources and activities provided by the teacher. For example: a learner may be forbidden to advance to the next didactic unit until she has posted a given number of discussions/replies in the forum of the current unit, or until she has obtained a sufficient grade in a quiz, etc.

4. Some examples of learning resources in our B1 online Italian course

Our B1 online Italian course is organized within the Moodle platform and is divided into 12 learning units, articulated in six sections. Each section is divided into multiple paths that include tools to foster the building of a learning community in which students can explore language structure and function through text related activities, developing the ability to understand and deepening the use of linguistic forms and pragmatic aspects. Texts often consist in videos that are also used for developing sensitivity to meaning expressed by tone and words' choice, followed by activities where students are guided to discover social perception and values attributed to certain expressions and to understand in which pragmatic errors could potentially cause miscommunication.

Following this path is important because, as we mentioned before (§2), the pertinent input is not sufficient to acquire pragmatic knowledge: first of all, students have to notice the relevant aspects and then they need to develop control by practicing. In order to focus the attention of the student on the relevant parts of the didactic content of the video-lessons we have used the functionalities offered by the H5P plugin.

Conversely, for developing the control of structures and expressions discovered, we mainly use discussion forum: individual activities are accompanied by interaction on discussion boards, through which students negotiate significates, compare opinions, activating metacognitive resources that lead to reflection on individual and community knowledge and skills. In fact, among the collaborative communication tools above mentioned, the online discussion forum is one of the most used in our course: the discussions that take place in the virtual *agorà* are characterized by users' own thoughts and observations regarding a topic and the communication unfolds through messages which can be consulted at any time by each member of the community, providing learners with possibility to learn from others' experiences creating shared knowledge [15].

Research have demonstrated how discussion forums foster students' intercultural competence allowing at the same time the focus on grammatical forms [16] and how students' pragmatic awareness is increased as they notice that they may misunderstand or be misunderstood [17]. Due to the asynchronous nature of communication, learners

can spend more time reflecting on the connections between forms and functions and at the same time they can develop strategies in order to avoid miscommunication. Quoting Withworth [18], “Forums can be an effective tool for language learners and for language teachers. Learners can read and observe various pragmatic conventions used on message boards and become more comfortable with their second language. Teachers can guide their students to certain message boards, allowing their students to be more independent and assertive in their language learning”.

The constantly evolving scenario of the use of technology in language teaching is characterized by the use of approaches that emphasize and encourage the active role of students, that build and share contents by interacting and creating continuous opportunities for comparison. In online learning environments, on one hand student can learn autonomously without limitations of time and space, and on the other, is involved in a learning community that proposes continuous stimuli. In this direction, the variety of tools for computer-mediated communication offer great opportunities to raise socio-pragmatic and pragma linguistic competence providing new communicative contexts and enhancing the co-construction of knowledge. Moodle platform can be a tool to improve the pragmatic awareness of all the participants, that can both take advantage of the activities present in the course and of the mutual exchanges that take place on the various sharing spaces, created to expand the pragmatic learning venues.

5. Future directions

In order to assess our students, we chose to test all the aspects characterizing communicative competence, in which pragmatic competence is included. Pragmatic competence is a multi-aspected ability that involves many properties, e.g., adaptability, negotiability, variability. As a tool to evaluate pragmatic competence we use multiple choice quizzes in which students are called upon to identify the most effective strategy in the given context, avoiding miscommunication and effectively achieving the communicative goals. Every answer will be accompanied by a feedback, intended as a guided analysis tool that will help students to develop an awareness of their own way of acting.

Another interesting line of research is the use of learning analytics' tools to provide valuable information on what really happens in the learners' learning processes. We expect that such analytical process will offer to teachers and tutors detailed indications on possible intervention methods to make improvements, in order to understand and optimize both learning and the environments in which it takes place. Moreover, we also think that learning analytics will be interesting in order to perform statistical analysis on the data produced by the learners in such a way that it will get possible to derive learners' profiles useful for comparison purposes, both for the teacher and the learners themselves.

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Language Learning in Primary and Middle School

Gamification in a Homo Zappiens Class: Levels and Rewards to Improve Students' Behaviour and Increase their Involvement

Ionuț Căpeneală¹
Transilvania University from Brasov, Romania¹

Abstract

This paper looks into how an online-like game that is integrated during the English class can improve the students' behaviour and their involvement in learning. The target group of this research consists of 18 students, third graders (9-10-year-old), from Olga Gudynn International School from Voluntari, Romania. The children possess a very good level of English, but they have some behavioural problems and a lack of involvement in the class. The research was conducted during the school year 2018-2019. In order to address the class issues – behaviour and lack of involvement – a game was developed by drawing inspiration from the online games design. The game makes use of two categories of buckets and drops that “measure” good behavior and involvement. During the English class, the teacher draws a bucket on the board and, if the students properly behave for 10 minutes, a drop is drawn in the bucket. The students also have a paper bucket and five paper drops. At the end of an English class, five drops in the bucket on the board bring a paper drop in the paper bucket. When the students manage five paper drops in the paper bucket, they pass a level and receive an award. During the school year, the students' behaviour and involvement was observed with grids. All the students managed to improve their behaviour and 90% of the students were more involved during the English class. In order to explore the students' perception about the bucket-and-drops-game, a group interview was applied. Results show children were unanimously enthusiastic about it. There is also the case of two students who confessed that, because of this game, they find the English class funnier and they love English. Communication competence has been measured with a progress test and observation grids, that highlight an A2 level overall.

Keywords: behaviour, involvement, games, rewards

1. Introduction

Educating the homo zappiens generation can sometimes be very challenging, as their need for technology became a basic need, and, as some previous studies shown [2], [3], [4], the new media have changed the way the students learn.

Whether we speak about the interactivity that came with the WEB 2.0 [1], the speed provided by the apps the digital natives use on a daily basis [4], or about the short-term rewards offered by games when passing a level [3], they all have impacted the cognitive patterns of the homo zappiens generation [4].

Defined as the integration of games' elements in a non-game environment [5], the gamification strategy was analysed only from the perspective of the instructional content, and, as previous studies shown [6] that it can improve the educational content either

through a mediation or moderation process, but what does it happen when we use the gamification process to improve students' behaviour?

We know for sure that if we integrate the new media in learning, it become funnier, motivates students and increases their involvement, but can the new media also change the way in which students behave during classes? To answer this question, I have deigned an online-like game to measure their behaviour during classes. The idea of this project came when, facing a class with some behavioural problems, I needed to find a way to make them improve their behaviour and increase their involvement.

Defined as the integration of games' elements in a non-game environment the gamification strategy was analysed only from the perspective of the instructional content, and, as previous studies shown that it can improve the educational content either through a mediation or moderation process, but what does it happen when we use the gamification process to improve students' behaviour?

2. General data about the project

2.1 Methodology

The target group of this research consists of 18 students, third graders (9-10-year-old), from Olga Gudynn International School from Voluntari, Romania. The children possess a very good level of English, but they have some behavioural problems and a lack of involvement in the class.

The research was conducted during the school year 2018-2019. In order to address the class issues – behaviour and lack of involvement – a game was developed by drawing inspiration from the online games design.

The game makes use of two categories of buckets and drops that “measure” good behaviour and involvement. During the English class, the teacher draws a bucket on the board and, if the students properly behave for 10 minutes, a drop is drawn in the bucket.

The students also have a paper bucket and five paper drops. At the end of an English class, five drops in the bucket on the board bring a paper drop in the paper bucket. When the students manage five paper drops in the paper bucket, they pass a level and receive an award. During the school year, the students' behaviour and involvement was observed with grids.

To measure students' perception about the bucket-and-drops game, I have applied a group interview.

2.2 Examples of activities

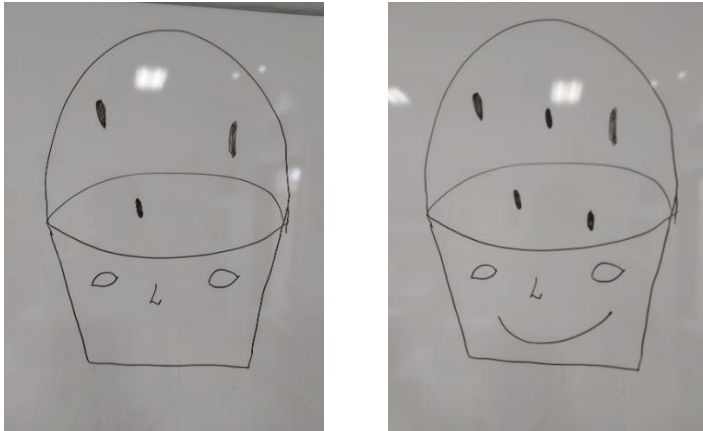


Fig. 1: Drawn buckets at different stages



Fig. 2: Paper bucket

3. Results

Improved behaviour. As the observation grids have shown, the students' behaviour improved. Challenged by the game, the students' behaviour improved. They have also developed their sense of belonging to the group, knowing that a mistake in their behaviour would affect the whole class progression in the game.

Involvement increased. Thanks to the game, the students became more involved in the English class. Their involvement increased by 70%, especially for the children with a very low involvement, because now, the class is quieter and they have more opportunities to answer.

The class became more challenging. As the students confessed, with the bucket-and-drops game the English class became more challenging, because now they have to face the challenge of being quieter. It is also the contribution of the surprise challenge which makes the class more challenging, as the students always tried to find what the reward for the running level would be.

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Learning English through Drama – A Partnership Project

Rina Rachel Sondhi¹

British School of Orvieto/Scuola Media Luca Signorelli, Orvieto, Italy¹

Abstract

A practical experience in Creating a Partnership with the local Middle school, students were exposed to a variety of Drama workshops to enhance their vocabulary. As a result, they were presented with 8 plays over a period of 8 weeks, with over 5000 key words and sentences in English written by the British school of Orvieto. The students took each play and performed all plays at the local theatre in Orvieto, Italy. A total of 200 students performed. The Project was a huge success. The Partnership was developed through Teacher training sessions. The teachers observed lessons and carried out workshops as part of their teaching and learning process. The Students were exposed to a variety of scripts written for them, around the theme of Sherlock Holmes. They were asked to learn all scripts to ensure a deep understanding of all vocabulary, sentence structures and tenses. The middle school students rehearsed the pronunciation of words through recordings and practice with native mother tongue English speakers. The Plays became a huge part of the school community, students made constant references throughout the 8 weeks. Songs were incorporated throughout the 8 weeks to also enhance the learning of English. The process was extremely successful. The enthusiasm of the whole school community prompted a performance at Teatro Mancinelli, as well as the creation of a film trailer. The Partnership project is an example of excellent practice between The British school of Orvieto and the local Scuola Media in the town. It is an innovative project which needs to be celebrated and shared.

Keywords: School Partnership, Drama, learning English, creative teaching, Theatre, confidence

The Learning English through Drama – A School Partnership Project

Being approached by local teachers and parents, discussing the fact that their children and students do not speak any English, prompted the organization of the Partnership Project.

Preparing a culture of Partnership Projects.

Orvieto is a beautiful city, sitting on the top of a rock controlling the road between Florence and Rome: its population was about 30,000 at the end of the 13th century.

Orvieto is considered to be one of the most striking, memorable, and enjoyable hill towns in central Italy. Orvieto sits majestically high above the valley floor on top of a big piece of *tufo* volcanic stone, overlooking cypress-dotted Umbrian plains. It is a delightful, perfectly preserved, and virtually traffic-free world with an amazingly beautiful cathedral and some of Italy's best wine.

Orvieto has an Elementary School on the top of the rock of Orvieto.

Scuola elementare – Via S. Rocco, 1 – Orvieto and a Middle School Scuola Media Luca Signorelli – Piazza Marconi – Orvieto, both comprising, of 250 students approximately respectively. The British School of Orvieto is a teacher training centre, as well as a small English Language school and a major Study abroad Conference centre for International University groups.

After an initial Teacher training session with All of the English (Heads of departments) across the region, the local Scuola Media requested the support of the British School of Orvieto staff to help encourage their students to speak English.

Little did they know what they were letting themselves in for. After some careful planning, the focus of the school project was under the theme of “Mysteries.” A few weeks later, Sherlock Holmes became the assigned theme, due to the initiative of the British School of Orvieto’ creative teaching approaches.

Initial Stages

The initial stages of the project saw an excitement of the student’s involvement after a “Golden ticket” introduction through chocolate and surprises hidden within, to inspire a whole school enthusiasm and general “buzz” about the British School of Orvieto coming in to teach in a creative style. The students had been exposed to “text book based” English lessons, so BSO’ Principal Rina Rachel Sondhi (that’s me) decided to “create a buzz” through a completely imaginative and highly energetic style of learning. My general belief about the conversational use of language promoting fluency and engagement through learning a playscript, ensures students to be encouraged to listen, read and repeat their lines with intonation and expression. Through the constant repetition of the words and phrases, a familiarity with the language is created and in turn develops an understanding with increased fluency. In addition, my personal belief within my own teaching practice across UK schools, schools throughout the UAE, China and Russia over the past 30 years of teaching and training teachers, has led me to see the immediate acquisition of language developed through drama as well as developing a students’ confidence, ability to interact effectively, have fun and be able to enunciate their words effectively and learn to project their voices through self-expression, in turn allows them to become clear and confident speakers of the English language. Using drama to teach English also helps students to improve the understanding of a key vocabulary in context.

Students’ are required not only to read, but to rehearse and act out scenes with a key focus on their individual characters, thus it enables them to remember their lines and recall situations, therefore never forgetting them. This is not the case if the word had been rote learned and memorised for an isolated test. Each week commenced with key vocabulary being introduced through various games in pairs and each week I wrote a new script about Sherlock Holmes in different contexts, significant to the students’, for example, The Scuola Media Robbery Act 1 and 2, inspired by the school location and surroundings, or The Treasure on Bolsena island, where I was able to incorporate fun Pirates with repetitive songs. The Capitano del Popolo was inspired by a local story but with a twist on the importance of self-belief. Over the course of the 8 weeks, over 250 students were exposed to 8 plays incorporating over 3000 new words. The energy and enthusiasm of the students’ and the quality of the students’ acting, intonation and characterisation prompted me to hire out the local Teatro Mancinelli, where the students’ performed their plays for an audience of over 600 people from the local community. The project involved Ex pat English and American Volunteers combined with 3 Scuola Media Italian/English teachers and additional parent volunteers from the school. All 250 students were involved either on the stage or back stage through making costumes,

designing sets and props or being Front of House greeting parents in English. The Partnership Project was a huge success with happy, confident students' speaking and performing in the English language. The British school of Orvieto will continue the Partnership Projects of learning English through Drama both locally and Internationally.

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Let's Get Motivated!! Teaching Languages in Changing Scenarios

Mario Pace¹
University of Malta, Malta¹

Abstract

Over the past 15-20 years the world has changed immensely and if we look back, we realise that today the world is a completely different place than it was then. Changes have occurred in all aspects of our lives, from the society we live in to the family, from the way we communicate with each other on an individual basis to mass communication, from the characteristics of youth then and now, from mobility to employability. Needless to say, all these changes have left a huge impact not simply on the composition of our classrooms but, above all, on the teaching and learning processes and the everyday demands and realities language teachers have to face in class. There has been a change in what “learning a language” implies, moving from simply learning the grammatical/linguistic notions to learning how to use the language in everyday life, to learning a language as a life skill for integration purposes. All this has enormous implications on the changing role, or rather roles, that the teacher of languages plays within a scenario where technology has literally taken over. At the same time students long for personal contact. As a consequence, more than ever before, the teacher has become essential in class, not to impart knowledge but to create a stimulating environment in which the students feel empowered and motivated to learn a relevant and practical language that addresses their needs.

Keywords: motivation; changing scenarios; language teaching; empowerment

1. Introduction

Understanding the changing scenarios taking place around us and the ability to measure their effects on the teaching and learning processes in class is essential if we want to remain relevant to the students' needs. The world has changed. So have the students and the educational institutions. Education has seen some radical changes in the past few decades, moving from chalkboards to whiteboards and to Smart Boards.

Notebooks and textbooks have been replaced with mobiles, laptops and iPads.

Online courses, hands-on learning, overseas exchanges, collaborative spaces, all have become the order of the day. We have moved from very traditional and formal educational systems, characterised by passive instruction and repetitive practices, to flexible, creative, and agile classrooms, with students logging in and learning from anywhere and at any time of the day.

2. Changes and new realities within the Classroom

Teaching a language can present quite a number of challenges and difficulties given the changing scenarios in today's society. Pace (2019) argues that “The social changes

that have taken place over the past decades have left their mark even at classroom level and teachers of languages have to take note of these new socio-cultural and linguistic classroom realities” [1]. Gone are the days where all students in class spoke the same language, had the same values, came from similar cultural backgrounds. Apart from the fact that classrooms today are characterised by multiculturalism and multilingualism, other issues like the presence of technology in class and its use cannot be ignored. Even the students have changed. For most of them, the social media has become the main source of communication and of forming social and interpersonal relations. Web 2.0 has transformed the teaching and learning process, enabling youths to collaborate and share information online via social media, blogging and Web-based communities. As a direct consequence of this, today’s youths have become multitaskers but at the same time find it difficult to concentrate on a specific task; they have become more autonomous and prefer active participation to being passive recipients.

Society has changed too. Mobility and competitiveness are no longer the exception but have become the rule. The notion of “learning a language” has changed. Today young people are no longer interested in just knowing a language but they are eager to know how to use it in different circumstances as this helps them to integrate in society and become autonomous learners. This has obvious implications on the teaching of languages. Very often students argue that what is presented in language classes is not relevant to their needs and that they do not find it practical, meaning that the teaching/learning process must be more student-centred and personalised, taking into consideration and respecting students’ diversities.

Such issues, as well as many others, have to be looked at from a particular point of view, namely how can we, as educators, transform what appears to be a challenge in class into a motivational tool. Very often, when speaking about motivation in class, most people think of the students/learners and how these can be motivated to learn. But what about the teachers themselves? Need they not be motivated too? Is it possible to find ways and means of motivating both at the same time? When thinking and speaking of motivation there are various aspects that have to be taken into consideration. These include, among others, the type of input given in class, the quality of the teaching/learning over quantity, variety of teaching/learning materials, active participation, attitude and self-motivation. Although this might seem to be a tall order, it is surely achievable and is the key to success in language teaching and learning. It is fundamental to discuss ways and means of how both the learners and the teachers of foreign languages become more enthusiastic in class given that various reports show that in many countries interest in languages is waning.

3. Main challenges in the language classroom

The social changes mentioned above that have occurred in recent years compel educators to adapt to new social, cultural and linguistic realities: young people’s language use, their way of doing things, their way of studying today are very different to what they were some years ago. One of the main challenges faced by teachers in class today is that they have to provide the necessary emotional and cognitive “filters” that are missing in their students as a result of the absence of parents (for various reasons) from their lives. Furthermore, the fact that at home one has access, at a very early age, to unlimited information and to unpredictable virtual experiences and relationships puts pressure on teachers who feel they have to carry the burden of problems and issues related to matters that are not directly linked to their profession like personal pains and sufferings and relational discomfort.

Another big challenge teacher of languages has to face in class is how to use, in the best possible manner, the technological resources available. Very often most teachers are conscious of the fact that whereas they themselves struggle hard to come to terms with the technological tools present in class, the students in front of them are so-called “digital natives”. The vast majority of the students in class have a very intimate relationship with technology, being the only means by which they are able to create social and interpersonal relations, and constituting their everyday way of communicating.

Most, if not all of them, can interact well using a computer even before they learn how to swim, to ride a bicycle and to tie their shoe laces. Needless to say, such a reality puts added pressure on teachers who are eager to use the technological tools available but know well enough that they can never match the students’ skills when it comes to the day to day practicalities of it.

A third challenge stems from the fact that the idea and notion of language learning has changed too. For many years language teaching was heavily influenced by the ‘grammar-translation’ approach, which involved learning new words or grammatical structures, translating them into one’s native language and memorizing them, giving very little importance, if any, to the practical aspect of learning a language, its relevance to the students’ lives and enjoyment. Today the focus and ultimate aim of language teaching & learning is “communicative competence” – i.e., being able to communicate successfully in real-life situations, with tasks and exercises targeting students’ needs.

Such an approach facilitates immediate spoken practice which in turn helps students increase confidence and motivation to study more. This was helped in no small way by the introduction of online applications and products that are versatile, adaptable and affordable and which have transformed the language classrooms, making it extremely easy for students not simply to share notes, worksheets, handouts, and other documents seamlessly but also to discuss, chat and communicate with their classmates as well as with other students coming from different countries and having different backgrounds and cultures. Such virtual social networks definitely provide greater opportunities for meaningful and authentic language use than are available in the classroom while forums and social media integration to language learning applications provide an incredibly powerful tool for new learners.

4. Motivation

One of the key predictors of success in language teaching and learning is motivation and the biggest challenge for a language teacher is how to motivate students to become autonomous lifelong learners. Pace (2017) argues that sustaining learners’ motivation in class is indeed the biggest challenge for a language teacher [2]. Schunk *et al.*, (2008) state that motivated students are more likely to pay attention during course activities, take the time to use effective learning and study strategies, and seek help from others when needed [3]. Shipp (2011) on his part, defines motivation as what happens inside a teen when someone helps them discover who they are and what they want to do. He argues that if teachers want to help teens motivate themselves, they must engage, inspire, and empower them [4]. To do this it is necessary that teachers get to know their students well enough to be able to motivate them. Unlike a number of years ago when teachers mainly imparted information, today they not only have to present tasks/activities that are “attractive” but, above all, they need to get to know who the students are and respect and value the differences and needs that might exist in class, which can be of a personal nature or the result of family problems, special educational needs, etc. The driving motivation behind learning a language is intrinsically “human,” and more often

than not, emotionally driven – whether it's for career advancement, for travel or to be able to communicate with friends or family. Language isn't simply about words and phrases, grammar and pronunciation. Language is deeply rooted in culture, and vice versa. This explains why, as Lightbrown & Spada (2006) state, language teachers need to be flexible enough to adopt and/or adapt different teaching methods according to the demands of their immediate teaching context [5].

Conclusion

Put in very simple terms, educators need to pass on to the students the love and passion for the language they are learning by making them become the real protagonists in class. This is only possible if the language presented is useful and relevant to their everyday needs and in tune with their emotions. And if we truly believe that by learning a language we mean learning how to interact in that same language and being fully immersed in a continuous changing context, then Web 2.0 is innately ideal for language learning given that the social web is not simply a network of persons and contents with the main aim of interaction using language but also a whole set of connections and relations between contents and persons. This can only be implemented if the educator him/herself is self-motivated, as this empowers students to become active participants in the learning process. The teachers' projection of enthusiasm, a strong interest in the subject matter and the amount of effort exerted in teaching are central to help motivate students in class and help them become autonomous learners.

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School Box Office, Season 2: The Past and the Future of a Project within a Project to Teach Middle School Students

Cerassela Anghel¹, Alina Crina Terinte²

Nicolae Iorga School, Ploiesti, Romania¹

Sanduleni School, Bacau, Romania²

Abstract

Our paper is a “sequel” to a previously presented research in the 11th edition of the Innovation in Language Learning International Conference. The teaching approach that started in 2017 with two grade 5 classes focuses on contextualized meaningful learning that evolve around films for youngsters. The latter engage students in authentic communication while scaffolding their A2.1 level. During the school year 2018-2019, the project has been revisited for two new grade 5 classes and progressed with grade 6 for the previous two groups. The methodology has been preserved to a large extent: a group of teachers share a project design around a film that is a context and pretext for communication; the project is discussed and amended according to the various groups characteristics (rural disadvantaged school and average urban school); learning resources are developed and applied in order to support students design their own exploratory projects; students work on their projects and present them. In the second year of implementation more autonomy has been given to the students who select their project topic under the umbrella of the respective film theme as well as the product/artifact they are to develop and present after a month’s work. At the same time, the progression of the language acquisition within the A2 level expanded on the time axis: according to the Romanian curriculum for grade 6, past and future references determine students to make plans and also to do some storytelling. In order to contextualize these abstract grammar matters we used films like Alpha or The Martian that dilate the time frame from the beginning of the human civilization to some future space adventure. Our conclusion is that, beyond the glamour of “Season 1 applause”, “the producers” should periodically review and adapt their project to the “market” dynamics and decide if/ how the show could go on.

Keywords: project work, film-based methodology, student-centered approach

1. Season 1 recap

In 2017 we started a research in order to teach the new competence-based curriculum for middle school English as a foreign language [4] in which we applied a project-based and film-based methodology. We called it *School Box Office* [3]. We developed our approach by relying on the social dimension of learning, building on the fact that more student – student interaction can bring a positive outcome and foster the learning process. The project tasks are part of a common plan and framework agreed upon by our team who represent various school backgrounds (rural disadvantaged

school and average urban school students). Nevertheless, participant students can choose how to respond to a stimulus according to their group perspective and personal preferences as opposed to textbook practice that is more uniform [2]. We thus highlight the idea of a meaningful project for communication (and preparation for life!) where more often than once we need to relate to co-workers within the common ground of projects of various sorts and solve lots of problems. [1]

According to our previously presented research, the students' response to SBO was positive during the last school year. Both grade 5 classes enjoyed the activities; motivation for the English class as well as for the home assignment increased. Students' engagement in developing their projects was fantastic and their communication improved. We know that when films are successful, they get a sequel. This is why we thought it legitimate to continue SBO in the 2018-2019 school year with the two groups (grade 6 then!) and revisited the planning for two new grade 5 classes.

2. A revision and a new script

For the new 5 grade groups (one in the disadvantaged rural community, one in the average urban area) we kept the framework that had been used a year before. We decided on giving up one of the films (and projects) based on the Cinderella Disney live action movie which was not liked by the participants. Nevertheless, the methodology was identical, i.e.: same films that were successful in terms of audience interest a year before, a common framework for the project tasks that meet the curricular requirements in grade 5 with gradual exposure to A 2.1 levels. The support materials were revised and updated in order to be better adapted to the students' learning needs, to sustain children design their projects, to help them express their creative propensities while exploring a common topic. We also kept the presentation format: at the end of the project work, the teams present their outcomes in authentic public speaking fashion! Table 1 summarizes the plan that underlined the project work for grade 5 during the school year 2018-2019.

Table 1. Grade 5 plan: films, highlighted ideas, curricular focus and students' artefacts

Film (idea to highlight)	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 on the topic: "I can do it" and a trademark sign for excellence
Water horse (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/a different ending
Wonder (Everybody deserves a standing ovation)	Describing Identifying qualities and values Presenting (very simple monologue)	You are the BEST – awards for everyone
Dolphin's Tale (Against all odds!)	Revision	List of possible "save the nature" activities to carry out in the future

For the grade 6 groups, we had to comply with the curriculum requirements that stipulate the expressing of past and future events. Consequently, we selected recent films that support the extension of the time axis – from the beginnings of the human tribes (Alpha) to the exploration of Mars (The Martian)! The methodology follows the design presented above with the exception of very open choices for the development of the group projects. Committed to the idea of progressive autonomy in the learning of our students, we allowed the project teams to decide on the particular product format of their work. Table 2 below summarizes the plan that underlined the 6th grade projects, with the last column highlighting the suggestions and open choice for the team product.

Table 2. Grade 6 plan: films, highlighted ideas, curricular focus and students' artefacts

Film (idea to highlight)	Curricular focus	Final project team product
Dolphin Tale 2	Revision Expressing ability and permission, telling a story in the present.	Initial test, discussion
The Martian (Leave your mark!)	Expressing plans (Future/going to), describing the favourite character, describing food, diet, schedules (numbers by the thousands!)	What are you going to do? (problem solving within a space travel challenge – on poster, ppt, etc.)
Max (The best hero is...)	Describing, telling a simple story in the past, writing short messages	Simply the best project: best dog/ hero/ friend/ story/ film script etc.
Alpha (It started long ago...)	Comparing, telling a story in the past. Describing relationships Revision – 1 st term	Amazing dogs – A presentation/ collage/ picture book/ etc. to highlight how special dogs can be
A Street Cat Named Bob (Everybody deserves a second chance)	Past activities, used to, daily schedule, past tense negative/ interrogative	Make a difference in a positive way! Pick a situation where you can change things for the better: a poster/ a story/ a clip/ a ppt/ etc.
Miracles from Heaven	Telling a story. Describing unusual events/ characters Time axis – discussing in the past, present and future Functional reading: schedules	A story/ a short film/ a ppt/ a small picture book/ a drawing/ a poster/ a small play/ etc. for the topic: <i>Rejecting/ accepting miracles.</i>
Bears (Disney Nature Documentary)	Reading for information. Working with a presentation leaflet/ webpage. Search for further information. Present findings	A ppt/ collage/ poster/ flier with images and short text to tell about bears or Libearty Sanctuary.

3. SBO Reception in Season 2

Some students' response to SBO has been positive. They continued to like the project, but overall the reception was under the expected results.

Rural school students responded enthusiastically in the first year of project. In the 6th grade, they continued their high fives for the Martian project. They were interested by the novelty of the theme – space travel. Nevertheless, the amount of information was too much for them. They generally enjoyed the class, but they considered the amount of work a standard too high. They started to minimize the necessity of learning, not just being present during the classes. It became even harder when they were introduced to past events. There were difficulties in understanding the forms of irregular past forms of the English verbs, as well. The students actually avoided using them. We realized that past reference teaching requires a blending of 'old school' with 'the new SBO approach'.

The rural students needed more practice at home, so their commitment to the English class diminished. Their expectations are not very high, regarding the future, their wish being to pass the grade. In this context, all new material following the curriculum requirements proved to be difficult. Another drawback in the knowledge acquisition was students' feelings that the English class became a routine and they asked more use of technology for their projects. Also, the feedback from the 6th graders influenced the younger students. It set the mood, and consequently the level of interest of the new 5th graders diminished in Season 2.

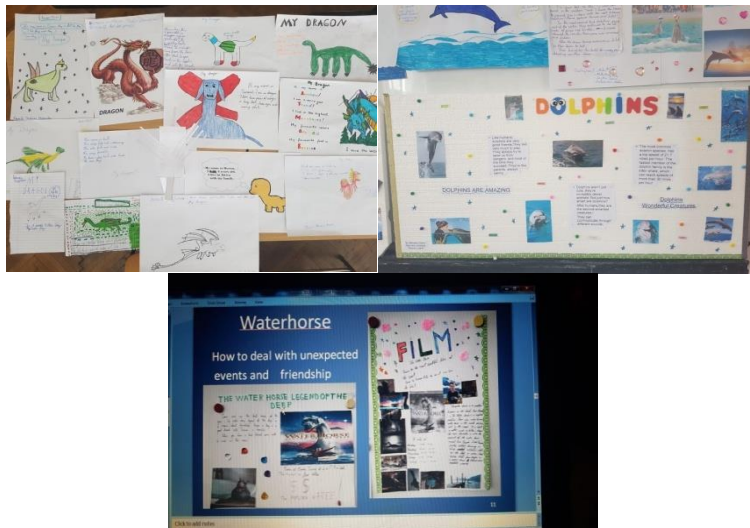


Fig. 1: Grade 5 students' products

In the urban school, some of the 5th graders' parents suggested that their children should have more grammar lessons, more difficult exercises for homework, grammar rules explained in their notebooks, because they will have the National Evaluation and also, because the traditional way of learning English is better, from their point of view.

There were also a few students who asked for more grammar exercises and more homework.

There are differences of perspective in the 6th graders, too. The urban students have asked to have at least one class of grammar per month and more role plays, to prepare the final projects alone, to have more homework, the traditional style.



Fig. 2: Grade 6 students' products

The team is committed to end the SBO project. Our plan is to find a solution to embody the project-based learning within the traditional way of teaching, in order to develop student's communication skills. We can use the SBO methodology in order to guide students to design new projects. The themes of the projects will be assigned at the beginning of the school term and they will be connected to the units of their textbook.

Students will work in groups; they will have autonomy, they will interact to solve problems, search for information and practice public speaking. For example, the 5th graders will make a poster-sized travel brochure. Each group will try to convince their classmates to visit a place that they choose. The 6th graders will present a poster about an environmental problem in the area where they live, and will suggest two solutions to the problem.

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**Quality and Innovation in Language Teaching
and Learning**

A Digital Storytelling Laboratory to Foster Second Language Acquisition in Higher Education: Students' Perspectives and Reflections

Annalisa Raffone¹, Johanna Monti²
"L'Orientale" University of Naples, Italy¹
UNIOR NLP Research Group, Italy²

Abstract

Today's technology-suffused society is inevitably changing and transforming the learning process as the role of technology in our lives is progressively increasing, thus making 21st Century teachers and educators face the challenge of both learning and understanding how to best integrate technology into the classroom and equipping students with the skills necessary to live and work in our digitized world. These skills, described by the Framework for 21st Century Learning are especially critical thinking, learning motivation, information literacy, media literacy, and language competence, considered as key competences for lifelong learning.

In particular, as "The Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages" has recently stated, nowadays the lack of language competences represents a barrier in increasing productivity and collaboration across borders. As a consequence, to attain contemporary educational objectives, second language pedagogy needs to be integrated by the use of today's digital tools that should not be considered as replacement of the traditional teaching method but as powerful, active support in fostering Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Specifically, Digital Storytelling (DST) is progressively emerging as an innovative instructional tool to enhance SLA together with students' motivation, collaboration, reflection, and academic achievement. In fact, by combining traditional storytelling with digital multimedia, DST perfectly embodies the constructionist idea of learning by making, thus making students active participants in their learning process instead of passive agents as in face-to-face learning. Although various researches describe the use of DST in primary and secondary language education, to the best of our knowledge, very few studies have been conducted on the use of Digital Storytelling in Higher Education, especially in Italy where DST is a major innovation. As a consequence, a Digital Storytelling Laboratory has been enacted at "L'Orientale" University of Naples starting March 2019. It was addressed to 24 Bachelor's students in the second year of their course in English Language and Linguistics. Firstly, the students have been introduced in the field – almost completely new to them – and then involved in a Digital Storytelling Process that required the assimilation and completion of goal-oriented tasks, finally resulting in the production of a series of Digital Stories. This paper aims at exploring the impact of DST on academic development, learning motivation and collaboration of University students learning English as a second language. To that end, quantitative data were collected describing students' perspectives and reflections about the effectiveness of DST in learning.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling, Second Language Acquisition, English as a Second Language, Multi-Word Expressions, Innovative Learning Environments, Higher Education.

1. Introduction

In May 2019 “The Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages” was adopted by European Education Ministers stating the importance of acquiring language skills not only to study abroad but to enable exchanges between foreign cultures, so to make people broaden their perspectives and be able to live and work in today’s world [1].

As a consequence, by considering the never-ending developments in technology, there is a need to ensure today’s students the actual possibility to develop their language proficiency through innovative and inclusive ways.

To that end, the practice of Digital Storytelling seems to respond to these needs as, by combining traditional storytelling with new media technologies, it offers today’s students a tool able to both engage and motivate them with their studies and also foster their cooperation and social skills.

Nevertheless, even if some studies addressing the potential of DST in enhancing student learning already exist, to the best of our knowledge, little research has been conducted on the use of DST at the university level with Italian learners of English. Accordingly, this paper aims at presenting the results of three-months research involving DST and conducted at “L’Orientale” University of Naples where a Digital Storytelling Laboratory was purposefully enacted in March 2019 to evaluate the effects produced on students’ motivation with their studies and acquisition of digital skills.

2. Digital Storytelling: main features, theoretical framework and relation to language learning

Storytelling is present in every aspect of human life and it is what helps us give sense to and better comprehend complex ideas, concepts and information. Due to today’s media, both interaction and assimilation of different types of content are empowered as the digital medium offers diverse codes of communication and can reach larger audiences.

This is the idea upon which is based the CALL approach (Computer-assisted Language Learning) usually characterized by task-based activities in which the goal is something completely different from language learning but where the L2 is essential to complete the task. In this way, DST seems to perfectly embody the CALL approach as educational DST does not simply consist in representing a story via digital multimedia but it is a complex process of task-based activities relying on the constructionist idea of *learning by making* according to which by constructing personal artefacts students learn more quickly and better retain knowledge as they feel engaged by the fact that they are not completing a traditional scholastic task but they are utilizing their digital language for something educational.

As a consequence, DST allows to encompass the limitations imposed by *face-to-face* teaching where the learning process is guided by the teacher, students act like passive agents, and advice and feedback are not enhanced as well as collaborative learning.

For instance, when using DST in class and the teacher asks the students to create their digital stories by working in groups, even collaborative learning is fostered as, from one side, they find themselves using DST as tool to both construct and reinforce their identity by confronting themselves with others’ ideas and perspectives while, from another side, they learn how to act as a team as they need to reach the same goal (the completion of a task), thus limiting competition and experiencing sense of responsibility as each student plays a special role in the DST process.

Many researchers have stated the potential of DST in actively involve students in their language learning process as by narrating their stories they enhanced their speaking skills [2], improved their digital literacy (i.e., the ability to communicate in an ever-changing society by gathering information, discussing issues and seeking help) [3], fostered their writing skills [4], [5] and information literacy (i.e., the ability to find, evaluate and synthesize information) [6].

3. The Digital Storytelling Laboratory

This study mainly aimed at exploring the effects DST has on fostering ESL learners' motivation in the English classroom and the development of traditional and digital literacies.

The DST Laboratory has been purposefully enacted at “L’Orientale” University of Naples to conduct this research as part of an Innovative Industrial Ph.D. Research Project.

The Lab lasted three months and addressed 24 Bachelor’s students in their second year of the course English Language and Linguistics of the Undergraduate’s Degree in Comparative Languages and Literature.

The “Aula Informatica” of the same University was chosen for the research as it is equipped with computers, a projector, amplifiers, and a Wi-Fi connection. Nevertheless, students also used their laptops, especially during the steps of the creation of the digital story.

To investigate the effects of DST on EFL students an online survey was conducted before and after the course.

3.1 Implementation

At the beginning of the course, none of the 24 students involved in the research knew the actual meaning of the term “Digital Storytelling”, its implications and possible effects.

As a consequence, the instructor slowly involved them in the process by carefully explaining to them what they needed to do to create their digital stories while, at the same time, taking the role of the *facilitator*. In fact, DST allows students to be the co-constructors of their knowledge, in the sense that the instructor gives them the tools to carry out the learning process and helps them when needed but students have to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills to complete the tasks.

Since the beginning of the course, all of the students showed great participation and enthusiasm as they are not accustomed to this kind of learning process. Moreover, everything was realized in English, so that students had the opportunity to experience continuously with spoken and written language.

Also, they were shown some existing digital stories so to make them familiarize themselves with the product and then they were asked to work in groups. Groups were self-selected, even though the instructor supervised this activity so to make students form heterogeneous teams as each student had specific personal attitudes (e.g., artistic, literary, linguistic, etc.).

The Laboratory was organized by paying attention to all of the steps needed to complete the digital story, in this way students had the time to choose the topic (at this point discussion and feedback both between the students and the instructor was enhanced), select digital and non-digital material (i.e., appropriate images, video and music for the story), write the script, mix the material and develop the final product.

At the end of the course, each group showed their digital story to the whole class and

the instructor promoted feedback and comments. Moreover, a YouTube Channel¹ of the Lab was created by the instructor so to make students able to share their stories on the web and receive feedback from a wider audience which gave them a sense of satisfaction after their hard work.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 A look at MWEs

The DST Lab was born to analyze the effects that DST – and so the combination of traditional teaching methods (e.g., storytelling) with new technologies – has on ESL Italian students' motivation and engagement.

However, a particular look at Multi-Word Expressions (MWEs) was given during the lessons as the ability to convey our thoughts by using a variety of linguistic expressions is what determines our language proficiency.

Although there is no universal definition of MWEs, they are generally regarded as lexical units derived from the combination of two or more words whose meaning is different from the meaning of its constituent parts.

Moreover, there exist different types of MWEs, such as idioms, phrasal verbs, light-verb constructions, routine formulas, etc. that form part of everyday spoken and written English.

At the beginning of the course, the students were asked if they knew something about "Multi-Word Expressions" and the result was that 70,8% of the students did while 29,2% did not. This result was quite surprising as students in their second year of their Bachelor's degree in English Language and Linguistics should be at least at a B2 Level (according to CEFR). Nevertheless, when the instructor asked them to give a particular example of each category of MWEs they were not able to categorize them.

As a consequence, one of the lessons was dedicated to the use of MWEs in English and the instructor asked the students to try to use them "in context", that is to develop their stories so that they would be written according to the appropriate register for the chosen topic and the MWEs that could better fit it.

At the end of the course, the survey showed that students improved their knowledge about MWEs and agreed in having learned how to appropriately research for and use them.

4.2 Development of Digital Skills

21st Century Learning demands, among others, for the development of *Digital Literacy*, which is defined as the ability to communicate in an ever-changing society by finding information, discussing different topics and seeking help when needed. *Digital Literacy* requires, at the same time, the development of *technology skills* that is the ability to appropriately use informatics tools such as audio, video, and photo-editing software.

At the beginning of the Laboratory, 39,3% of the students attested to be able to use *at elementary level* at least one of these tools: writing processors (e.g., word, excel), multimedia tools (e.g., iMovie), audio, video and image editing software (e.g., video cameras, microphones, Photoshop), peaking at 60% for Power-Point presentations (PPT) and 12% for image-editing software such as Photoshop.

Indeed, they declared they never used these kinds of tools for academic purposes (apart from PPT) and participant observation also showed that students struggled in

¹ For more information, please visit:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNgmjdc_EPoGq8mlMdywFiw

trying to individually learn the software after the explanation of the instructor.

On the contrary, at the end of the course, although 58,3% of the students declared that one of the difficulties encountered in creating their digital stories regarded the use of the software, 87,5% of them attested to have improved their digital, language, research, social, and organizing skills and that what they acquired could help them in the future:

Student A: I gained new skills both in using new computer programs, both in language and I think it would be helpful for me in the future.

Student B: I improved my digital and language skills and I used new software that I think could help me in my future career.

Student C: I've learned a new way of working step by step using the pattern taught for the creation of digital content that can be easily applied in other situations.

Student D: Thanks to DST I now know how to pass on a message in a different way, I know more about MWEs and I better work in a group.

In fact, 79,2% of the students stated that DST could be an effective (language) learning strategy.

4.3 Cooperative Learning (CL) and development of Social Skills

Digital Storytelling also seems to enhance Cooperative Learning (CL) which, at the same time, could benefit from this kind of learning environment as, when working in groups, ESL students not only become more confident when speaking or writing in English but also they acquire new learning methods by looking at their peers solving language problems.

In effect, a task-based project like DST helps students develop a sense of responsibility because they are aware that each of them is fundamental for the completion of the assignment. This leads to better cooperation, as students know that they need to be able to manage time and material which forces them to reduce competition to reach the same goal.

Students in the Lab affirmed that they were not accustomed to this kind of collaborative projects and that DST gave them the opportunity to understand what it really means working in groups which, on one side, helped them improve self-confidence and awareness of their abilities, while on the other one, could be helpful for their future career.

Student E: DST represented a new way of learning for me since we had to prepare a project and we had to work and cooperate and it is not so common for my educational background to be able to use the things learned.

Student F: DST was a new way of learning not only from a cultural point of view but for everyday attitude because I could work in a team and we supported each other and compared multi-disciplinary connections.

Student G: DST was really helpful because it showed me how to better interact with others and it gave me a wider sense of responsibility.

Students' statements allow claiming that apart from the effects on the learning process, DST can foster social skills which are essential for students to acquire for their personal and professional lives.

Thanks to DST, students can learn more about themselves and the others, they learn how to manage discussions and arguments and how to give constructive feedback.

In this way, the *student-centered learning* provided by DST acquires a wider sense in which each student is the co-constructor of his/own knowledge but, at the same time, he/she takes something from the others and gives something to the others.

5. Conclusions

Today's learning processes are rapidly changing thanks to the development and spreading of new media technologies. E-learning and blended learning are becoming common practices in schools of different grades where games and fun activities help teachers motivate their students.

However, at University level it is sometimes difficult to engage students, above all when it comes to language learning. Moreover, today's students are different even from that of the '90s because, due to the availability of new technologies, they easily get what they want thus requiring educators to make them constantly stimulated and involved.

Digital Storytelling seems to offer today's educators a great tool able to combine traditional teaching methods with contemporary needs.

This paper aimed at exploring the effects that DST has on ESL Italian students at the university level.

The results showed that students benefited from different points of view by developing their social, cultural, digital and language learning skills.

Nevertheless, future work intends to focus on the effects that DST could have on academic improvement.

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Applying the “Project Method” in Second Language (L2) Teaching. A Multidimensional Interaction with Authentic Input in Autonomous Modes

Maria Skiada¹, Ifigenia Georgiadou²
Hellenic Culture School, Switzerland¹
Hellenic Culture Centre, Greece²

Abstract

Learning through the Project Method is somehow like an individual traveller walking in an unknown city following her/his own map. It is not even a method neither a philosophy. It offers merely a structure on which to build your knowledge and experience, a way to work, not a ready-made recipe for learning. It is only an “approach” in the essential meaning of this word: coming closer to the learning objective, with a strong will to learn, to conquer the unknown city you always dreamt of traveling to. In this sense, it represents a student-centered pedagogy, and, at the same time, it embraces multidimensional interaction with authentic input of any kind, as vital component of second language acquisition processes.

This paper presents the Project Method, as an authenticity and autonomy - centered approach and as an experiential learning tool within L2 acquisition context. It describes the implementation stages of this method, and analyses the way each project is prepared, designed, realized, presented and evaluated. The role of the teacher as facilitator, as well as the skills developed throughout the project, are epigrammatically presented. In order to illustrate, as clearly as possible, the terms and conditions for integrating Project Method in second language settings, this paper is enriched with specific examples from the Hellenic Culture Centre (HCC), a leading educational organization, where the Project Method is deployed as a beneficial approach in teaching Greek as L2. HCC has applied hands-on projects to insert creativity into the L2 curriculum.

Keywords: project method, second language acquisition, authenticity, autonomy, experiential learning, student-centred

Introduction

What at the eve of the 20th century made the appeal of authenticity so strong as to have become “the predominant paradigm” for the language teaching classroom is, in part, a consequence of a broad movement in language pedagogy: the gradual shift towards learner autonomy and thence self-direction in learning, which passed the responsibility of the learning, and the access to information and knowledge, from the teacher to the learner (Mishan 2005: Introduction). In light of this pedagogical shift, today’s learner has higher expectations of authenticity – of target language and culture input and of interactions applied to obtain and process it. In fact, in language learning context, autonomy and authenticity are interconnected and interdependent within a symbiotic relationship where, as Mishan points out, the one is “feeding” the other: “The

“ideal” effective autonomous learner will utilize a wide variety of authentic sources in his/her learning and it is an autonomous learning environment that such texts can best be explored” (2005: 9).

At the same time, findings in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research advocate the integration of authenticity into the language learning process and emphasize its motivating effect on learners (Bacon & Finneman 1990, Little *et al.*, 1994).

Authentic input as “a stretch of real language by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey real message of some sort” (Morrow 1977: 13), provides a much richer source of input and have the potential to engage learners into language and (inter)cultural raising-awareness processes (Gilmore 2011: 791).

Therefore, vital to language acquisition is considered the exposure to and interaction with this sort of “enriched input”, which has been flooded with exemplars of the target structure in the context of meaning focused activities. (Ellis 1999: 68, Widdowson 2000, Tomlinson 2003: 6). Particularly, in response to the current quest of autonomy in learning, there are case studies on learner-experiences in self-instruction, which confirm that learners benefit from interacting with authentic texts in autonomous modes (Fernandez-Toro and Jones 1996: 200) and, conversely, that activities based around authentic texts enable students to work independently of the teacher and thence enhance autonomy (McGarry 1995: 3, Egan 2014).

Historical and Theoretical Background

The Project Method was engendered within the philosophical movement of Pragmatism, which appeared in the middle of the 19th century in the U.S.A. and represents an important legacy of John Dewey’s work (*ibid.*). Dewey situated projects (already known and applied in educational contexts in Italy in the 16th century) within a constructivist-based theoretical framework and advocated them as a means of “learning by doing”. In this sense, students are actively engaged in authentic tasks, “solving real problems, and generating knowledge and skills in dynamic interaction with their physical and social environment, thus creating meaning of themselves and the surrounding world” (Knoll 2014: 668).

In 1918, Dewey’s student, William Kilpatrick, in his world-famous article *The Project Method*, conceptualized project as a “wholehearted purposeful activity”, thus making the student’s intrinsic motivation the decisive criterion of project method. Kilpatrick’s idea of the project was not identical to Dewey’s. In his concept of project learning there was no proper place for traditional educational features such as teacher, curriculum, and instruction.

The Implementation of the Project Method in L2 Classroom: Stages, benefits and Teacher Role

On the practical parameters of Project Method implementation, a project is undertaken by students after teaching hours and outside the classroom walls and includes search through different channels and disciplines and interaction with native speakers. The duration as well as the number of students who participate in a project varies. Students choose a subject they have a personal and strong interest in, often facilitated by a teacher, through brainstorming. To complement their research students are provided with different resources: books, websites, photos, CDs, DVDs, films, songs, etc. Some students are not familiar with interview methodologies and the language teacher offers her/himself to support this process by organizing a meeting with a native

speaker who could answer questions, by giving the vocabulary and the ethical instructions for an interview and by providing different equipment (a recorder, a video camera, a photo camera).

This procedure is developed in five implementation stages which constitute a practical guide for the sequencing of project activities for teachers who want to implement projects in their classrooms (Kriwas 1999):

- **Stimulus:** This stage includes selection of project topic and “sensitization” about it, aiming at raising interest and developing a climate conducive to speculation and investigation that will lead smoothly to the research process (Fragoulis 2009: 114). The initial stimulus may emerge from the curriculum or after an exchange (among all members of the group, and the teacher) of ideas and comments on local or wider topic of interest, on a newspaper or magazine article (Brinia 2006: 79).
- **Designing the project:** At this stage all methodological issues are clarified: formation of groups, assigning of roles, sources of information, material and tools, places outside the classroom that students will visit. Moreover, practice of specific language skills, as a preparation for doing the project, may take place.
- **Implementation:** At this stage the groups implement the tasks designed in the previous stage. Students gather information (research in libraries, interviews, questionnaires), process, structure and categorize it. They also dedicate time to organize materials in order to reach the synthesis of the final outcome. Implementation stage is for developing the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking, organizing writing data search, filling in application forms, teaching the interview planning and carrying out, arranging the survey making and teaching the report writing (Lytvyna 2015). If needed, there may be feedback discussions, in which students examine issues related with cooperation among group members, problems of personal relations, and possible changes in group composition (Fragoulis *ibid.*).
- **Presentation:** At this stage the final products are displayed in the school or the wider community (oral, written, audio-visual presentation, drama show, exhibition, etc.) and become a stimulus for thought and action for other students, teachers and local community.
- **Evaluation:** It is the assessment of the activities from participants and discussion about whether the initial aims and goals have been achieved, about implementation of the process, and final products (Brinia 2006: 82). At this stage, Stoller (2002) points out that learners can reflect on the language they want to master to complete the project because the teacher provides several opportunities to recognize weaknesses and thus strengthen skills. Evaluation also entails assessment of the experience gained at individual and group level, self-evaluation, identification of errors and problems, but also appraisal of the rich cognitive, experiential and cultural material acquired.

Inevitably, this process has a direct and significant impact on the role of teacher who is now required to abandon the dominant teaching model as constant source of knowledge and solutions provider and assume a new role as trainer, coordinator and facilitator (Levy 1997). In implementing the project method, the focal point of the learning process shifts towards learners, therefore teacher should try to become “invisible”, acting only as guide and advisor and remaining an indispensable source of inspiration and encouragement. Through this new pedagogical relationship, teachers may allow themselves to be surprised by their students. For instance, when they realize that their

students decide to explore themes and topics different than their chosen ones. Another behaviour a teacher should exercise, especially in long-terms project cases, is to stay calm under the given time pressure. This means to ignore the voices which call for productivity and immediate results, in order to avoid the trap of rough and hasty decisions. On the contrary, teacher should give learners concrete guidelines and clear orientation regarding the steps towards completing their work, always in a more free context, where decisions have to be ratified by the learners themselves: how many articles they have to read, which CDs and videos to study, how many interviews or photos they should take, and also how many of these materials they should present to their classmates. For this purpose, organization and proper time management skills should be exercised and deployed by the teacher.

Many benefits of incorporating project work in second language settings have been suggested. First of all, Project Method proposes a learning process out of the “artificiality” of the classroom (Hughes 1981: 7) and thence out of the conventional classroom language learning situations, which can be stress-inducing and put the students under the pressure of performing on the spot (Mishan 2005: 6). The gradual implementation of the project allows the students a silent processing of input and a psychological interaction with it, both vital to language acquisition (Little *et al.*, 1989).

Equally favourable terms for language learning are created by the engagement of students in language, cultural and pragmatic awareness activities throughout the project (Bolitho & Tomlinson 1995, Tomlinson 1994b, 2001). The contact with authentic language input of any type (written, oral, audio) is a source of new language, cultural and intercultural elements. At the same time, the self-directed and interactive way in processing this input, involves students in awareness raising processes where learners eventually work things out for themselves, a fact which can considerably increase their self-esteem and independence, create positive attitudes toward learning (Stoller 2006:27) and thence facilitate language acquisition and development (Tomlinson 2003: 171).

Examples of Project Work at the Hellenic Culture Centre

Derived by the Hellenic Culture Centre’s experience, certain project topics are proposed.

- A creative presentation of a song in the target language: visualization, miming, acting.
- The flora of the target culture: A student who has a special interest walked around and collected plants, she painted them, she made photos of them, she found their latin/scientific names and the names in the target language, instructions about how to cultivate, recipes with them etc.
- The traditional children games of the target culture: we were all more than happy when the students taught us how to play.
- A specific kind of theatre of the target culture, where students researched its history, wrote their own theatrical play, chose music, and played the roles.
- Some special words or idioms in the target language that students have to discover their meanings and use. They find a plethora of ways to discover the meaning without looking up a dictionary or searching online. Especially at lower level students, it is moving to see beginners (the most unprivileged ones as far as their exposure to authentic discourse inside the classroom is concerned) make use and coordinate in a creative way their knowledge, however minimal, or invent smart and often witty ways in order to overcome linguistic obstacles,

applying often theatrical play techniques and focusing more on the knowledge and skills acquired.

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Applying the SPEAKING Model to Classes of Immigrants for Residence Permit in Italian Formal School for Adults

Damiano Longo¹
CPIA Lecce, Italy¹

Abstract

This paper, by taking into consideration the experience of the author as teacher and researcher, deals with the challenges in an illiterate and uneducated adults class at CPIA (formal school for adults) where immigrants have to learn Italian language as a second language in a short term course in order to obtain a certificate for residence permit in Italy. The typical class at CPIA is strongly heterogeneous in terms of literateness and vehicular language. Most of them are considered vulnerable population. Other critical aspects are the limited number of hours (200) defined by the Italian Education System (IES) and the difficulty in attending the lessons even if they are provided with e-learning tools, due to long working hours, distance from the school and lack of devices. Finally, teachers are not always adequately prepared. To cope with these difficulties, a lesson plan is proposed by considering some basic theoretical principles: speaking model to try and increase the percentage of success in achieving the level A2 according to CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference).

Keywords: Language education for adult migrants, Italian L2, Second Language Acquisition, Migration and Language Testing

1. Introduction

This paper concerns with adult migrants that are provided with language classes in adult formal schools in order to obtain valid certifications involving language testing which is compulsory under the law [1], [2] to obtain permanent residence status.

Two perspectives will be considered: the role of migrant motivation (linked to the language competencies) and the opportunities provided by CPIA school (Local Centers for Adult Education). If it sometimes happens that administrative or juridical sanctions are used to encourage adult migrants to stay in language courses, it is also true that they look for chances of finding a job, helping their family integration process, improving their skills or simply approaching to a learning process for the first time, since they never had the opportunity to do it [3].

This kind of courses present a variety of problems concerning both students and teachers in terms of heterogeneity and intercultural aspects [4], [5]. In this paper, in particular, a syllabus of CPIA made up of only 200 hours and performed by teachers with few or no experience in the field of Second Language Acquisition is considered and analysed through a survey carried out in 2019 at the Cpia Lecce.

An example of lesson plan will be discussed in order to cope with these difficulties by considering the specific language and literacy programmes that have been set up [6].

2. The Typical class at CPIA

The CPIA centres aim at certifying the literacy of Italian citizens and the Italian language teaching to foreign citizens as well as to organize courses for the achievement of middle school success and general education courses by assuring the acquisition of competencies (Presidential Decree 263/12, and supported by Laws 92/2012 and Law 107/2016). Unlike of a standard high school, the CPIA system is characterized by classes composed by teenagers up 16 years old and adults and proposes a variety of curricula. In the present investigation only Italian language courses, denoted as AALI in Italian language (*Alfabetizzazione e Apprendimento della Lingua Italiana*), are considered.

The typical classroom of such courses is quite heterogeneous, being composed of unaccompanied minors of low schooling level, students from international communities (often refugees or asylum seekers), people in a state of uncertainty fleeing from tragic events, regular worker migrants integrated into the surrounding areas and willing to improve the Italian language, illiterate and semi-literate adults, people with learning difficulties, students with serious differences between pre A1 level in writing and an intermediate level in speaking, international university students beginning the courses from A1 in order to carry on their studies till B2 level. Many of them come from Bangladesh, India, China, Brazil, Russia, Ukraine, though the vast majority come from Western African countries such as Gambia, Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Guinea-Bissou and Sierra Leone.

In this context the lesson plan process can be the right key to answer to the majority of requests from students and to assure the validation of the course. The first step is, therefore, the analysis of their motivations.

2.1 *Extrinsic and intrinsic motivations*

Some students (cultured, residents) want to build their learning path, i.e., the tasks which they are called to carry out every day, particularly in the context of the class.

Others, forced by the migration status, do not commit themselves if they do not have at least some hope of succeeding. As Schumann [7] wrote in 1998, the perception of the quality of learning experiences is a fundamental variable of motivation. So we can say that language habits, the attitudes towards language and at least towards language learning of the receiving society is determined by very different factors which cannot be brought into a simple relation [6], [8]. However, we can identify five dimensions on which individuals evaluate the stimuli they receive from the environment:

1. the novelty (the degree of originality/familiarity);
2. pleasantness (attractiveness);
3. the meaning of purpose or need (the extent to which the stimulus is instrumental in satisfying needs or achieving goals);
4. the potential for self-efficacy (the extent to which the individual expects to be able to cope with the event);
5. the image of the self and the social image (the extent to which the event is compatible with the social norms and the self-concept of the individual).

In order to design a typical lesson plan for this context, some of these dimensions will be considered in the paper after listing the “Ten competencies” to be reached after the 200 hours syllabus at CPIA [9]. These competencies are classified in Table 1 according to the five linguistic skills.

Table 1. Ten competencies to plan an Italian Second Language Course for level A2 CEFR [9]

Listening	Reading	Oral and written interaction	Oral production	Written production
1. Understanding instructions given as long as you speak slowly and clearly.	3. Understanding very short and simple texts, gathering familiar names, familiar words and expressions and eventually re-reading.	4. Ask and answer simple questions about yourself, daily actions and places where you live. 5. Using numbers, quantities, prices, times in a communicative exchange. 6. Complete a simple form with your personal data.	7. Describe yourself, the daily actions and the places where you live. 8. Expressing simple expressions, mainly isolated, on people and places.	9. Write your personal data, numbers and dates. 10. Writing simple isolated phrases and sentences.

2.2 Italian L2 teachers: skills and competencies

The skills and competencies of the teachers of CPIA are analysed on the basis of the author's experience as coordinator of the L2 department. In this role, the author performed an analysis of the percentage of success of immigrants in achieving the required certification in the last school years (2017/18 and 2018/19). It was found that only 46% of the 845 students enrolled in 2017 and 61% enrolled in 2018 AALI courses achieved the final certification.

According to the author, the limited didactic skills of the teachers are one of the causes of this limited degree of success. Therefore, a short training course (ten hours) of Italian Second Language Teaching was held by the author and addressed to all teachers of CPIA involved in multicultural classes and AALI courses. The limited knowledge of second language acquisition theory resulted, qualitatively, from the discussion with the participants and quantitatively from a survey administered to the 33 teachers involved in the short course.

The results of the survey revealed that most of the CPIA teachers have taught in AALI classes in the past but only 24% of them had attended specific courses from centres for Italian Language certification or masters in Italian as second language. Note that only recently (2016), the Italian Ministry for Education has allowed each CPIA to enrol two qualified teachers that passed open competitive exams in Italian for international students.

3. The lesson plan: a possible proposal

Before planning a model of lesson plan, some factors can be considered. Firstly, the language acquisition outside the classroom depends on different language contacts.

Standard Italian language is rarely practised because of the interaction with dialect speakers and it is essential for surviving.

Secondly, the CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning) principles cannot be applied to migrant's language courses due to the heterogeneity of languages.

The third element concerns with the question of testing for residence or citizenship.

On the one hand, testing stimulates assimilation but on the other hand it can discourage illiterate students or students with motivated difficulties in attending courses.

A typical lesson plan should weigh possibilities of facing the factors mentioned above.

The adaptation of the speaking model complies with these necessities.

3.1 Applying the speaking model

In order to face the different needs of adult students, differentiated teaching techniques (mostly based on cooperative learning approaches) were proposed in literature but with pros and cons because illiterates could show “distress”, “discouragement”, “confusion” [10]. In this work a concise lesson path is proposed according to Hymes’ speaking model [11]. The acronym stands for setting and scene, participants, ends, acts sequence, keys, instrumentalities, norms and genres. It focuses on analysing the speech events, but in this investigation the acronym is considered to manage the classes in presence and on distance without focusing only on specific techniques or methods but by considering the basic theories on second language acquisition.

3.2 Embedding the speaking model with Input Hypothesis and Interlanguage steps

Let’s start with the “S”, setting and the “P” participants at CPIA: a classroom where a group of heterogeneous adult immigrants meet and where didactic equipment are limited (only in lucky cases it is possible to have a traditional black board). As already pointed out, the addressee are students with different backgrounds and motivation and teachers can have little expertise in adult teaching and Italian language for foreigners. In this case, according to Dörnyei, [12], it is necessary to create basic motivational conditions by assuring a class atmosphere that involves pleasure and support, taking care of the cohesion of the class as a group. If the teacher takes out an adequate cohesion of the group, he/she can ensure the relevance of his/her teaching materials even if the classroom has lack of devices because the focus is the increasing of successful students’ expectations. The warm up phase plays an important role in motivation. It is possible to use different materials: realia, pictures or short video clips to promote learning strategies for less motivated students. At the end of the warm up phase every student should have the perception to be ready to learn more. Thus, the different learning styles present in the group should be known from the teacher. For example, analytic-style students prefer strategies such as contrastive analysis, rule-learning, and dissecting words and phrases, while global students use strategies to find meaning (guessing, scanning, predicting) and to converse without knowing all the words (paraphrasing, gesturing). Stephen Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis [13] concerns with the connection between attitude and motivation. He argues that learners with high motivation, self-confidence and a low level of anxiety regarding the target language have better conditions to learn a second language. On the other hand, if the motivation and self-confidence are low and the learner is more anxious, it will aggravate the process as the affective filter is raised and creates an obstacle to learning.

The “E” ends stand for goal and outcome. A successful communication at level A2 must be guaranteed to students both in oral and written form. To manage this effort, it is important that teachers have a clear idea about the process involved in the formation of Interlanguage. In particular the “language transfer” process is few considered at CPIA setting by ignoring that in the process of language acquisition the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (sometimes incorrectly) acquired is a key issue for future steps [14].

The “A” act sequences involve all the participants at the new input that is proposed and discussed. The adult learners bring with themselves a wealth of linguistic and cultural experience that allows them to have an active role in the presentation phase of a new part of the lesson. Moreover, at CPIA context, the learner lives immersed in L2 itself, so the teacher has no control over the input, nor how much the learner has learned spontaneously (sometimes with errors). A fundamental psychological characteristic of the adult is its metalinguistic need, which is far superior to that of the child or adolescent.

Superior abstracting and systematizing ability of the adult mind and desire for “fixed” rules to refer to. Teaching materials are often designed for adolescents, hence the need to integrate on the basis of the needs of their group. In this phase the input hypothesis $i+1$ is crucial to produce results. According to “Natural order”, $i+1$ «proximal development zone» i is the part of the linguistic or communicative task that we are already able to perform based on the acquired competence, $+1$ is the area of potential development.

The first of the conditions for the input to be acquired is placing it on the step of the natural order immediately following the input acquired up to that moment. For $i+1$ to be acquired it is necessary that the affective filter is not inserted, otherwise what is understood is placed in the short-term memory.

The “K” refers to the clues that establish the “tone, manner, or spirit” of the speech act. According to Rogers, [15], the adult is reluctant to continually question the architecture of his knowledge, therefore the teaching process can be successful only if the student himself/herself decides to change his/her knowledge. Adult learners do not make acts of faith but feel “equal” to the teacher except for the teacher of foreign mother tongue. This is a strong point at the CPIA context because the learner tries to imitate the teacher’s voice and gestures. In this case, different keys should be used in different situations. Intonation can provide additional linguistic input and social behaviour in formal and informal context. For example, a conversation at the doctor differs from a conversation among friends at the cinema.

The “I” denotes Instrumentalities. In the worst-case scenario that the school does not have adequate devices and equipment to allow differentiation of learning, given the heterogeneity of the levels of language knowledge present in the classroom of adults, it is necessary to resort to techniques and teaching strategies that can be the emergency tools for the teacher. A short example is briefly illustrated in

Table 2. The development of receptive and productive abilities

Receptive abilities		Productive abilities	
<i>Techniques</i>	<i>Educational impact</i>	<i>Techniques</i>	<i>Educational impact</i>
Cloze	It does not insert the affective filter. The mistake can be discussed and the mental path that led to the error can be reconstructed. It is also used in testing.	Dramatization (oral ability)	To recite by reading or by heart a prearranged text. It is useful for phonological and paralinguistic aspects.
Linguistic puzzle	Students are asked to put together a sentence, a text, etc. There is no affective filter. The Gestalt theory globalization-analysis-synthesis is applied. The mistake is immediately evident and discussed.	Chain dialogue (oral ability)	A student starts the dialogue and the partner responds and restart. In the playful aspect, at every wrong answer the team member is eliminated.

Multiple choice	It does not require written production and allows students to reconstruct the path that led to the mistake.	Text transformation (written ability)	An adult learner prefers to exercise by himself with dictation in cloze structure, writing notes, translation by using his/her own devices.
Transcodification	Switching from one code to another. It does not require written production. He has a clear pragmatic indication (he understood / he did not understand).		

The “N” refers to Norms, that is, social rules governing the event and the participants’ actions and reactions. Since all the UDAs (Unità di Apprendimento – teaching by learning units) are linked to skills as indicated in Table 1 and as required from the Ministry of Education for adult system [17], it is necessary to include in this aspect of the rules, the definition of communicative competence in the sense of “knowing how to do with the language” which includes the social, pragmatic dimension and cultural. To this end, it is useful to emphasize the use of paralinguistic and extra-linguistic elements to foster the acquisition of linguistic-communicative competence. The more properly paralinguistic traits, such as the type of voice, the tone of voice used, the rhythm and intonation of the teacher are not to be overlooked because the teacher is the reference point for those adults immigrants that live in their community and are in contact with the Italian language only when they are at school. Nevertheless, extra-linguistic traits are important too. The perlocutionary acts of socio-communicative actions illustrated in the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR) and in the syllabus for A2 level addressed to immigrants [10] (for example: introduce yourself, talk about yourself, greet and respond to greetings, etc.), should be encouraged by supporting the social actions that occur between and among learners that take advantage from their different origins.

The “G” Genre, The kind of speech act or event. At this point it could be useful to focus on the speech acts that occur in a heterogeneous and difficult class. If teachers are interested in learning more about his/her students communicate indoor and outdoor, a particular attention should be addressed on this aspect. It happens that during a class the high percentage of talking belongs to teacher who, involuntarily, does not allow students to have time to organize his/her speech and talk both with classmates and with teacher [18].

4. Conclusions

This article proposes a lesson plan based on the speaking model in a heterogeneous class of Italian L2 composed of adult migrants to be used in the 200 hours syllabus defined by the Italian Ministry of Education to cope with several difficulties that usually emerge during the classes. The didactic model was developed with continue references to the basic theory and takes into account the adult learner difficulties (and their different motivation in learning Italian language) and the results of a survey conducted during a training course by the author and addressed to the teachers of the CPIA. The lesson plan proposed by the author can be a useful tool of reference for all the teachers who approach the Italian L2 teaching and also to all those who have faced the emergency of

teaching without having received adequate preparation in the field of Second Language Acquisition.

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Changes in Intensity of Primary and Secondary Motivation in a Senior Language Learning Programme

Eva Homolová¹, Zlata Vašašová², Renata Vajdičková³
Matej Bel University, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia^{1,2,3}

Abstract

Seniors as a target group of our research are considered to be specific in terms of needs and wants influencing their decision to take on the role of a learner. Our aim is to analyse their approaches to learning a foreign language. The study focuses on four factors that influence differences between approaches of senior learners to English language learning. These are: lecturer's personality, age-related social aspects, processes and techniques in language teaching and the personality of the senior learner. A questionnaire of 25 closed response items was designed and respondents chose a point on the scale from strongly agree, partly agree, partly disagree to strongly disagree which best represented their view. On the one hand the results we obtained showed a very positive approach of seniors to language learning. On the other hand, senior learners have very low self-confidence negatively influencing their progress in language learning. Due to the size of the sample, our results are informative but can be considered a challenge for further research in the field of senior education. The study is the outcome of the research project KEGA 003UMB-4/2018 Language education of senior learners.

Keywords: specifics of language education, approaches to learning in senior age, factors of change in approaches to learning

1. Introduction

Ageing is characterised as a natural and lifelong process. Every organism is exposed to changes; those changes do not start simultaneously, therefore, ageing is characterised as an individual and variable process. The ageing of society is a problem of European society caused by higher economic standards, advances in medicine and population crisis.

1.1 Late Adulthood – Silver Generation

Late adulthood is one of the life stages of ageing. WHO distinguishes early old age (between the age of 60 and 74 years old) and old age from the age of 75? In this period, three distinct ages can be distinguished: biological, psychological and social age.

According to the experts, factors affecting longevity are as follows: the first ten years of an individual's life (15%), genetic factors (25%), and such factors as living conditions [2]. We distinguish biological age including the anatomy and the structure of a biological organism; psychological age dealing with functional changes in mental processes, and social age reflecting social aspects of an individual such as family, work and social needs. Although the general characteristics of this stage indicate a number of changes, the ability to learn a foreign language is still present.

1.2 Factors influencing senior education

Drawing on their experience and knowledge, seniors aim to maintain their physical and mental health and are looking for specific activities that will support it. They want to engage themselves in activities they did not have time for earlier, including pursuing further education in various fields, e.g., learning of English language. Assuming the role of learners, seniors know what interests them and what they want to learn. They are very sensitive as to whether a language course will meet their needs, and expect success and make efforts to reach their goal. Seniors need to experience success and increase their self-confidence.

1.2.1 Motivation of seniors

The basic precondition of success in any activity is the motivation of an individual to commence the activity and persist until the goal is achieved. The motivation has to match the mental and physical characteristics of an individual. There are many factors in each learner's personality affecting what and how they learn. Seniors can be considered a very heterogenous group because of their experiences of different family, social, and work environments. Many authors mention several motivational factors based on the current needs of seniors [4].

Educational needs

Social needs

Personality needs

Educational needs include the effort of seniors to comprehend and learn something new in their working field or pursue education in a field they are interested in during their leisure time. Social needs include the saturation of social relations and contacts. After retiring, many relationships established in work environment do not last and the parenting and elderly roles gradually diminish as well. Personal needs include increasing self-confidence, proving to yourself and your networks that you can still learn something new, and receiving acknowledgement. The desire to spend leisure time meaningfully can be included too [1].

An English language course enables all these needs to be met, and based on these needs, motivational factors can be further specified into:

Primary motivational factors:

1. Educational needs:

- To gain communication competence
- The ability to understand discourse in written and oral form
- The ability to translate texts to & from English
- To understand the similarities and differences between the mother tongue and a foreign language
- To learn about the foreign culture

2. Social needs:

- Regular contact with other individuals
- Establishing new relationships
- Saturating the need for human co-existence
- Spending leisure time with new friends

3. Personality needs:

- To see whether I can learn a new language
- To prove to myself and my networks that I am able to learn a language
- To be a modern senior

- To overcome my own laziness
- To use leisure time meaningfully
- To get a sense of success and satisfaction

Based on the particular experience, the spectrum of motivational factors is expanding. This is related to the initial feelings experienced while entering a classroom (environment, group, and overall atmosphere). On the other hand, the teacher's personality and professionalism play an important role as it can eliminate negative feelings and strengthen positive feelings.

Secondary factors:

1. **environment-related factors:** nice, bright, and warm classroom, comfortable furniture, safe classroom movement, classroom location, lift and toilet proximity, equipping the classroom with teaching aids and equipment, timetable
2. **group-related factors:** making new friends, pleasant group, rituals after class, sense of belonging, encouraging each other, helping, pleasant atmosphere, sharing success, willingness to cooperate in pairs and groups
3. **learning material-related factors:** content and form-suitable textbooks and other learning materials, available non-textbook exercises, possibility to monitor progress
4. **teacher's personality-related factors:**
 - *Professional skills:* choice of subject matter and learning tasks, appropriate methods of presentation and practice of a language, using various forms of work cooperation (in pairs, in a small group, in a class as a whole, individual), integration of activities focused on communication goal
 - *Personality traits:* flexibility, ethical behaviour, respect for the senior personality, providing feedback and adjusting the learning process to seniors' requirements, self-reflection.

It is assumed that some factors are permanent and remain as strong at the beginning as throughout the course of education. The intensity or absence of other factors will cause seniors to stop attending the course, which may have a negative impact on the individual [3].

2. Research

Learning is one way in which to efficiently spend the period of old age. Many seniors visit educational institutions offering various courses. Learning a foreign language in this particular stage of life is a challenging process that leads to many new life situations.

The aim of the research was to find out how motivational factors influence the attitudes of seniors towards learning English language.

Research questions:

- VO1: Do seniors have a positive attitude towards learning a foreign language?
- VO2: Do seniors have a positive attitude towards social aspects of education?
- VO3: Do seniors have positive attitude towards being a learner?

2.1 Research sample

The research sample comprised 68 seniors (63 women and 5 men), aged 60-68, attending an English language course at the University of the Third Age.

2.2 Research method

A custom attitude questionnaire containing 25 statements was designed as the applicable research method. Respondents answered on a four-level scale (strongly

disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree). Respective statements pertain to the following areas:

- Factors related to the teacher's personality
- Factors related to the senior's personality in a learner's role
- Factors related to education
- Factors related to social environment

SPSS software and basic descriptive statistics were used for the evaluation of questionnaire.

2.3 Research results

The obtained results showed that our respondents have a positive attitude towards foreign language education.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of all items

Statements	AM	SD	Med
1. The teacher asks if we are satisfied with her style of teaching.	3.565	0.712	4
2. I am worried if I will be able to respond correctly.	2.681	0.985	3
3. I like attending the course because I am among people.	3.174	0.867	3
4. I made new friends and we also meet outside the class.	2.478	1.002	2
5. Being in a group is more important than learning something.	1.812	0.821	2
6. I feel good about doing well in my classes.	3.377	0.592	3
7. I feel uncomfortable when the teacher corrects me.	1.449	0.808	1
8. The textbook selected by the teacher works for me.	3.493	0.792	4
9. Other classmates have a good relationship with me.	3.551	0.671	4
10. I am interested in the topics we work with.	3.623	0.567	4
11. I think I am getting better in English.	3.159	0,754	3
12. I think I make lots of mistakes.	2.478	0.714	3
13. I like communicating in pairs and groups.	2.986	0.712	3
14. I want to be better in English than other classmates.	2.362	0.834	2
15. The teacher's compliments are important for me.	2.754	0.923	3
16. We are informed about the course of the class at its beginning.	3.652	0.534	4
17. I am worried if I will be able to answer correctly in class.	2.652	0.930	3
18. I hope for a good relationship with the teacher.	3.580	0.600	4

19. I look forward to English class, because I will learn something new.	3.783	0.446	4
20. The teacher takes into account our comments and opinions.	3.797	0.437	4
21. I try to have a good relationship with the teacher.	3.58	0.549	4
22. I consider the activities we do appropriate.	3.768	0.455	4
23. We help each other during classes.	3.696	0.597	4
24. I like the idea of using information technology in class.	3.420	0.858	4
25. The course meets my learning requirements.	3.536	0.527	4
Items in total	3.136	0.914	3.435

Legend AM = arithmetic mean, SD = standard deviation, Med = median

Research results (AM = 3.136 on 4-stage-scale, SD = 0.914, Med = 3.435) show that respondents have positive attitude towards learning English language.

Four specific areas that could influence senior's attitudes towards learning were observed in the responses (Table 2):

1. Factors related to teacher's personality

Based on the results, it was found that seniors engaged in learning activities have a positive attitude towards the teacher leading their English language course.

2. Factors related to senior's personality in learner's role

The results show that seniors in the role of learners have a rather negative than positive relationship with themselves.

3. Factors related to learning process

Seniors have a rather positive than negative attitude towards learning.

4. Social factors

Seniors understand social factors rather negatively than positively.

Table 2. Descriptive data on individual factors

Factors	AM	SD	Med
1. <i>Factors related to teacher's personality</i> (items 1, 8, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21)	3.489	0.571	3.507
2. <i>Factors related to senior's personality in learner's role</i> (items 2, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 17)	2594	0.888	2.638
3. <i>Factors related to learning process</i> (items 10, 19, 22, 24, 25)	3.626	0.373	3.725
4. <i>Social factors</i> (items 3, 4, 5, 9, 13, 23)	2.949	0.913	3.116
<i>Total</i>	3.136	0.914	3.435

2.4 Discussion

The results show that seniors willing to learn have a positive attitude to learning a foreign language (VO1). Seniors voluntarily decide to pursue further education and try to saturate their needs. Their attitudes are influenced by rational, conative, and affective

components; if they are in balance, a positive relation to learning is established. The research also focused on the social factor of education (VO2) and assumed the emergence of new relationships. Seniors perceived this factor rather negatively, and there were more negative responses in items 4 and 5. It was observed that no friendships were formed between the participants of the course. The cause is the fact that the data were recorded in the middle of the course, so friendships were probably not created yet, or the need of social contacts was saturated sufficiently with family relationships.

Age decreases a senior's self-reflection and self-confidence. Although the senior's self-understanding has solid grounds in terms of life experience, self-understanding in a learners' role is different and may not correspond with the reality of educational environment. This mismatch will be negatively reflected in the level of communication competence. Seniors are worried about making mistakes, do not feel confident in language production and do not believe in themselves. The respondents have a rather negative than a positive attitude towards themselves (VO3). The teacher can have a positive impact on seniors, support them, react sensitively to their mistakes and create a supportive environment in a group. Our respondents expressed positive attitude towards the teacher.

2.5 Conclusion

In lifelong learning, the teacher is responsible for the entire preparation and implementation phases of the lessons. If teachers respect the needs of the seniors and respond flexibly to their specific requirements, seniors ought to feel comfortable in the role of a learner. This is a good starting point for developing their communication competence.

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Cooperative Learning as an Engaging Strategy among Compulsory Education Students

M.^a Elena Gómez-Parra¹, Cristina A. Huertas-Abril²
Universidad de Córdoba, Spain^{1,2}

Abstract

Research agrees on the need to help students develop relevant skills and abilities, such as intellectual curiosity [1] (Baehr, 2013); openness to the world [2] (Conole, 2013); autonomy and responsibility [3] (Boud, 2005); creativity [4] (Cropley, 1995); critical thinking [5] (Strohm and Baukus, 1995); and teamwork [6] (Kyprianidou, Demetriadis, Tsiatsos, and Pombortsis, 2012). More specifically, cooperative learning (CL) is widely accepted as an effective educational practice [7] (e.g. Peterson and Miller, 2004; [8] Kirschner, Pass, and Kirschner, 2009, among others). In this context, the educational opportunities of CL are recognised by the scientific community [9] (Gillies, 2014), whose practice is encouraged in the 21st century classroom. This work explores the impact of cooperative learning on a heterogeneous group of 100 Spanish compulsory-education students (aged 8-14) who participated in a project-based implementation of a specific CL technique (Lesson Study) on the frame of DICO+ (2018-1-FR01-KA201-047904). The study research questions focused mainly on students' answers to a questionnaire (pre- and post-) regarding their opinion on their preferred disciplines for CL. By applying quantitative research method students' views were analysed. Findings revealed that students prefer Maths over any other subject (among which first and second languages were included). Overall, data provide evidence that the adoption of CL practices enhances teamwork, leadership skills and critical thinking. Our discussion draws on the idea that teachers should implement CL more frequently in line with the results of this research, as the importance of structuring cooperative work benefits learning [11] (Buchs, 2017).

Keywords: Cooperative Learning, DICO+, Quantitative Analysis

1. Theoretical backdrop

European society is currently going through a major value crisis when it seems crucial to implement educational measures to promote work on “living together” and, even more so, on “building together”. International research agrees on the need to help students develop relevant skills, such as intellectual curiosity [1] (Baehr, 2013); openness to the world [2] (Conole, 2013); autonomy and responsibility [3] (Boud, 2005); creativity [4] (Cropley, 1995); critical thinking [5] (Strohm and Baukus, 1995); and teamwork [6] (Kyprianidou, Demetriadis, Tsiatsos, and Pombortsis, 2012). More specifically, cooperative learning (CL) is widely accepted as an effective educational practice [7] (e.g., Peterson and Miller, 2004; [8] Kirschner, Paas, and Kirscher, 2009, among others). In this context, the educational opportunities of CL are recognised by the scientific community [9] (Gillies, 2014), whose practice is encouraged in the 21st century classroom.

The DICO+ project (2018-1-FR01-KA201-047904) has been purposefully designed to develop cooperative working practices among international European students (Primary and Secondary Education) to enable them to learn together and thus get ready for professional and civic cooperation. This project also aims to increase social inclusion and limit early school leaving. [10] Plante (2012) shows that cooperative learning has a positive impact on student achievement and is inextricably associated to desirable academic attitudes such as effort, motivation and self-esteem. A final category of the beneficial effects of cooperative learning is also included: the development of social and relational skills, which is deeply related to languages and communication.

2. Methodology

The main methodology of this study was designed within the framework of DICO+, by applying it to all focus groups within the project (a minimum of 2 groups per country).

The process was placed within a mixed research paradigm, and relied on the data obtained from the participants through the application of the QUAL-QUAL model [12] (Johnson and Christensen, 2008).

The research questions focused mainly on students' answers to a questionnaire (pre- and post-) whose content and reliability had been previously validated according to the Delphi method until it reached consensus. For this paper, respondents' answers from the Spanish focus group (n=100) were collected regarding their opinion on preferred disciplines for CL.

2.1 Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in two state schools and one high school located in the province of Córdoba (Southern Spain), which formed the Spanish focus group. The respondents were distributed into 5 Primary and 2 Secondary Education groups for the subjects of English (n= 48 of Year 3 of Primary Education, 7-8-year-old pupils), Mathematics (n= 19 of Year 6 of Primary Education, 10-11-year-old students), and Mathematics (n= 33 of Year 1 of Secondary Education including 5 repeat students, 12-14-year-old students). Out of these, 63 participants were boys (61.2%; mean age 10.32) and 37 were girls (35.9%; mean age 10.56).

2.2 Data Collection

The application of mixed methods research allowed the employment of several types of methods and instruments for the purpose of both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. The research employed a survey as data collection method. This allowed both quantitative and qualitative data to be obtained through the use of Likert-scale and open-ended questions. The questionnaires – originally in French and English – were translated into and distributed in Spanish to assure younger students' understanding of the content of the questions, and to speed up the process of filling it up within the class time.

2.3 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the Likert-scale items in the questionnaires were processed through IBM SPSS (v. 24 for Mac). As a result, 100 students' pre-test and post-test questionnaires were considered for further analysis. Descriptive statistics were calculated. SPSS was also used to perform Students' t-test, which determined the statistical significance of two key correlations: students' genre and moment of the questionnaire (pre-test vs post-test).

Qualitative data from the open-ended questionnaire items, translated from Spanish into English, underwent a two-step coding process. Firstly, open coding was carried out to identify all the topics responded by the participants answering a given question.

Secondly, the frequency of each code was counted and categorized according to their recurrence.

3. Results

In the pre-test, the analysis of participants' responses to the question 'Do you like working in class with other students (i.e. working either in groups or in pairs)?' shows that 59% of all respondents (59 out of 100) 'always' liked collaborative work, while 26% answered 'usually', only 15% answered 'seldom', and none responded 'never'. However, there were some minor changes in the post-test, where 51% of all respondents said that they 'always' liked it, 27% answered 'usually', 21% 'seldom,' and 1% answered 'never.'

After this item, the participants were asked to choose from a list the three subjects where they like to work the most in a group. The results from both the pre-test and the post-test are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Multiple-choice question: Subjects where students like to work the most in a group (in percentages)

SUBJECT	CHOSEN IN THE PRE-TEST	NOT CHOSEN IN THE PRE-TEST	CHOSEN IN THE POST-TEST	NOT CHOSEN IN THE POST-TEST
Mathematics	59%	41%	67%	33%
Sports	52%	48%	42%	58%
Arts & Crafts	40%	60%	43%	57%
Foreign Language (English)	38%	62%	30%	70%
Mother Tongue (Spanish)	38%	62%	30%	70%
History – Geography	28%	72%	28%	72%
Science	27%	73%	30%	70%
Music	26%	74%	21%	79%
Computer Technology	8%	92%	12%	88%
Religion	8%	92%	11%	89%
Ethics	7%	93%	5%	95%
Civic Education	3%	97%	4%	96%
None	1%	99%	1%	99%

Source: Own elaboration

Although t-test showed no significant differences between pre- and post-tests, they were found ($p < 0.05$) in two subjects according to students' genres: English and Civic Education. While the former (English as a Foreign Language) was mainly preferred by boys to work in groups, the former (Civic Education) was preferred by girls.

The following question was a dichotomous question, followed by an open-ended question: asked 'In general, you like working in a group in any particular subject' (Yes/No), and 'If yes, which subject/s?' Most of the respondents of the Spanish focus

group in both the pre-test (78,4%) and the post-test (76%) answered 'yes.' A comparison by t-test showed no significant differences between pre- and post-tests, as well as between students' genres. Table 2 shows the responses to the open-ended question organised per frequency.

Table 2. Free responses to the preferred subjects for CL

SUBJECT	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST
Mathematics	22%	22%
Sports	11%	14%
English as a First Foreign Language	10%	13%
Arts and Crafts	9%	8%
Spanish Language	8%	5%
Social Science	8%	7%
Natural Science	7%	3%
Music	7%	6%
Religion	7%	5%
Ethics	4%	3%
Science (bilingual subject)	2%	1%
French as a Second Foreign Language	1%	1%
Digital Culture	1%	3%
Workshops	1%	3%
Tutorship	-	2%
Curriculum Enhancement	-	1%
Technology	-	1%
Maths Reinforcement	-	1%
All the subjects	3%	3%

Source: Own elaboration

The results from the open-ended question are in accordance with the previous multiple-choice questions, as both Mathematics and Sports are in the two first positions (in percentages). Nevertheless, there is a change in the third and fourth position, as English as a First Foreign Language overtakes Arts and Crafts in the free-response question.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This research has provided data contributing to the understanding of students' preferences towards CL. As can be seen, in both multiple-choice and open-ended questions, major findings revealed that most students prefer to do Mathematics on CL over any other subject (among which first/main and foreign languages were included).

Nevertheless, and despite almost all the respondents (pre-test= 100%; post-test= 99%) liked CL – although frequencies varied –, this does not have a direct correlation when identifying the preferred subject for these strategies, as the highest score found in Mathematics (67%) is still limited. This should also be considered for foreign language teaching, whose outstanding position in the whole pool of subjects is far from positive results regarding CL.

Data provide evidence that the adoption of CL practices enhances teamwork, leadership skills and critical thinking. Moreover, cooperative learners enjoy when working together, develop a sense of responsibility when assuming their different roles,

and see differences as a positive element [13] (Smith, 2017). In this light, teachers should implement CL more frequently in line with the results of this research, as the importance of structuring cooperative work benefits learning experiences at all levels.

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Digital Language Teaching and Learning: A Case Study

Viviana Gaballo¹
University of Macerata, Italy¹

Abstract

Digital learning is reshaping education in unprecedented ways. However, as far as language learning is concerned, the burden of innovation has mostly relied on the good will of individual teachers who have decided – sometimes in perfect isolation – to take advantage of the new technologies made available. Although institutions have increasingly offered their support so that language teachers could incorporate new technologies into their syllabi in a more organic way, e.g., by making use of either open-source or proprietary platforms installed in the institution’s systems, the “interaction” between the “container” and the “content” has been left to the individual teacher’s expertise until recently. Language textbook publishers have previously been reluctant to join the digitization of the learning experience, providing only a limited set of online tools (e.g., flashcards and tests) linked to their own textbooks, and waited until numbers would justify their complete involvement in the business. Some of them have now made up for their delay or absence, offering language teachers an integrated set of tools capable of relieving them from the most demanding and time-consuming tasks. This paper draws on the English classes taught to BA students in Economics in the past two years, and analyses the fully-fledged platform provided by the publisher of the adopted textbook, investigating its research-based design, ready-to-go activities and customizable content, and evaluating its impact on the development of digital learning and teaching skills.

Keywords: Digital learning, online learning, language learning platform, language learning innovation, technology-enhanced language teaching and learning, CLIL

1. Introduction

In the context of digital language teaching and learning, greater emphasis has been placed on the learning half of the process. Recent developments in the field of computer-assisted language learning proved the positive effects of technology used in promoting learning [1], [2]. An open argument, though, relates to the significant difference in the way learners and teachers have access to technology in educational settings. Learners’ access may take place in either or both of these two ways: “learning from” and “learning with” technology – where the former underlines the instrumental use of technology and the learner’s relative passivity in the process, while the latter hints at a more active participation or interaction from the learners [3]. Quite the opposite is the case with teachers: “teaching with” technology generally implies an instrumental approach to the use of technology in language classes, while “teaching from” technology reflects the interactive, immersive experience of teaching from within a learning environment [4].

Whether using online, blended, or class-based learning, teachers are faced with the challenge of combining a more informal learner-centered approach – giving learners

control over their learning process – with the prevalent practices of teacher-centered modes – based on set goals and standard forms of assessment. In order to balance learner autonomy, personal choice and the affordances of LMS tools, teachers (as all the stakeholders in the learning process) need to master the complex triangulation of the pedagogical, methodological and technological levels [5].

In this setting, moreover, we have recently witnessed the digital shift of educational publishers, who have sort of re-invented themselves as educational technology providers. The shift from hard copies to software solutions has opened new possibilities, facilitating tech-savvy teachers' work while moving the most technophobic teachers out of their comfort zone.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the interrelationships arising from these dimensions of innovation in language learning in order to contribute to the conceptual understandings that underpin university teaching approaches to technology integration [6].

2. The role of educational publishers in technology integration

Introducing change is not easy, especially in rather traditional systems such as the educational publishing industry. Language textbook publishers have taken their time to implement the digital transition of the learning experience. From the limited set of online tools (e.g. flashcards and tests) linked to their own textbooks, they now offer language teachers an integrated set of tools capable of relieving them from the most demanding and time-consuming tasks.

This digital shift is, however, of greater significance than it appears at first sight. As far as language learning is concerned, the burden of innovation has mostly relied on the good will of individual teachers who have decided – sometimes in perfect isolation – to take advantage of the new technologies made available. Although institutions have increasingly offered their support so that language teachers could incorporate new technologies into their syllabi in a more organic way, e.g. by making use of either open-source or proprietary platforms installed in the institution's systems, the "interaction" between the "container" and the "content" has been left to the individual teacher's expertise until recently. The result is some sort of dissociative experience that can be placed on a continuum from *total disconnection* between the two – e.g., resulting from time scarcity due to increasing administrative burdens on teaching staff – to *perfect integration* at the cost of long hours and time-consuming activities that sometimes do not simply pay back, for a number of reasons. Quite obviously, there are 256 shades of grey in between the two extremes, but all seem to be flawed by the same basic defect: design inconsistency. The issue needs to be addressed from a theoretical perspective first.

Changing practices require thorough reconsideration of the nodes involved in the triangulation of pedagogy, methodology, and technology. For technology to be fully integrated in the teaching and learning system, it needs to be the mediating instrument for cognitive simulation, skills development, ad-hoc learning and knowledge construction/co-construction, i.e., it should take full account of the pedagogical and methodological instances, and translate and incorporate them into the learning environment so as to achieve a seamless whole. In order to do that, drivers and enablers should be used that can trigger or facilitate a process of change intended to introduce a positive outcome in the system – in this case, technology integration in language classes.

The drivers and enablers that educational publishers were used to employ until recently took only partial account of the pedagogical and methodological instances, and, in the case of language textbook publishers, were mostly focused on technological tools

(e.g., CDs/DVDs, online quizzes, flashcards) that could serve as “nice-to-have additions to the core paper offering” [7].

The digital turn forced many educational publishers to reinvent themselves as digital solutions providers: some remodelled their portfolio of textbooks creating personal online products to provide top-notch, 21st-century education for specific targets of learners: e.g., Macmillan Education’s English language courses for young learners are accompanied by Navio, a new digital platform that provides teachers with a seamless transition between the coursebook and digital teaching activities, and makes learning more engaging with game-based language activities for young learners.

A case study [8] on tertiary education [9] is discussed in details in the next section.

3. A case study

As a result of the regular annual screening of useful, updated resources for use in my courses, after reviewing and evaluating a number of textbooks, including their digital “add-ons”, I selected for adoption in my courses for BA students in Economics a textbook that particularly impressed me for being based on the latest research on business communication.

3.1 Resource details

The title of the selected resource is “Business Communication: in person, in print and online” – 10th edition, authored by Amy Newman and published by Cengage Learning in 2016.

The resource uses a realistic approach to communication – with examples and situations demonstrating how principles work in the real world [10] – and covers the most important business communication concepts in detail – from traditional channels to technology-based media, from verbal to non-verbal communication, from oral to written communication, from ethical issues to intercultural communication – to help learners navigate complex relationships and use current, sophisticated technologies to manage their online reputation, engage customers using social media, lead web meetings and conference calls, and more. Self-reflection questions throughout the book help learners develop a deeper understanding of what they are learning through making new connections and relating different ideas [11].

3.1.1 Pedagogical framework and methodological foundations

The pedagogical design of the resource relies on constructivist and socio-cultural theories, as declined in the learning goals that are spelt out at the beginning of each chapter and – throughout its sections – next to the corresponding learning focus.

3.1.2 Learning and teaching management platform

To some extent, the virtual platform connected to the resource (formerly MindTap, now simply Cengage) is supported by the theories posited in 21st century learning. It covers the gap between the way in which students engage with new media and technologies in their daily lives and the way in which learning practices rely mainly on print media. Cengage platform is far from being just a simple digital version of the textbook. It is specifically designed to be actively used and bring measurable teaching and learning results. It can also be used as a blended learning tool that can easily integrate with course materials, and its educational materials are accessible to users of all abilities. The available content authoring tools provide ready-made interactive activities while the revision resources provide teachers with the support needed, allowing

them to focus on student development. Teachers can personalize learning with instant feedback and bookmarking/commenting tools, and save time with the automated scoring, gradebook and data reporting to check progress quickly and easily.

3.1.3 LMS Integration and Mobile App

Another type of integration that can be achieved is with Blackboard or Canvas courses on which links to the Cengage activities can be added. This provides learners with a seamless learning experience while they carry out their tasks on their institution's LMS.

Cengage is also available for iOS and Android devices. While learners can use Cengage Mobile to view activity statuses and details, read the textbook, view grades, review flashcards, and take practice quizzes for their Cengage courses, teachers can use Cengage Mobile also to take students' attendance, view their grades, and create class polls to fuel learners' interaction and engagement.

3.2 Course description

Reference is made here to two courses given to BA students in Economics in 2017-18 (LIN113) and 2018-19 (LIN115). Each was attended by more than 100 students (LIN113 totalled 110, while LIN115 reached 109 registered students), which required extra effort on my part in order to meet the students' and my own expectations, considering that classes met for a total of 10 weeks (40 hours) for each course, and that the relevant syllabi also included short modules on English grammar and collocations.

This paper will only reflect the module on business communication, in which the resource under consideration was used.

3.2.1 Course activities

Cengage (former MindTap) courses are structured as a hierarchical sequence of activities – readings, media, homework, assessments, and other activity types – and have many ready-made activities available to students (See fig. 1), which teachers may want to rearrange, hide, or select to count toward grades in order to support the course they are teaching: I have decided to stick to the publisher's suggestions during the first year of adoption of the textbook/LMS, then opted to hide a couple of written activities the next year as they were particularly difficult to administer to such huge cohorts of students.

Altogether, Cengage/MindTap offered – for each chapter – three (sometimes four) types of activities (but also various tools to create more): 1) a Practice Quiz consisting of 15 multiple choice questions to get a quick check of students' understanding of chapter concepts; 2) an Assignment consisting of a varying number of more complex multiple choice questions based on micro-cases that required a longer decision-making process; 3) a Video Activity, generally linking to external resources, that required students to analyse the situation at issue and respond to it by video-recording themselves answering the questions, either directly on the Cengage platform or uploading the recorded file. A couple of chapters also included a Writing Activity requiring students to write different types of documents. I was able to grade and give feedback on spoken and written activities, quickly and discreetly, online. While assessment for the first two types of activities is automatically provided online, Video Activities have been graded according to their individual rubric, provided by the system. When needed, I was able to change the due date or give extra time for individual students, based on pedagogical, methodological, technological and psychological grounds.

Chapter 1: Understanding Business Communication

<p>Chapter 1 Self-Assessment: Communication Skills PRACTICE</p> <p>Complete this self-assessment to evaluate how you feel about your communication skills. Understanding how you feel about your communication skills at the beginning of this class ...</p>	93% submitted	100% avg score	3 points
<p>Chapter 1 Reading: Understanding Business Communication</p> <p>Highlight and take notes throughout this chapter's reading to create a custom study guide accessible in the StudyHub app. Estimated time on task: 30-45 minutes.</p>			
<p>Chapter 1 Assignment COUNTS TOWARDS GRADE</p> <p>In this problem set, developed for Newman, Business Communication, 10e, Chapter 1, you will learn about the components of communication, the major verbal and nonverbal barriers...</p>	83% submitted	56.7% avg score	31 points
<p>Chapter 1 Video Activity: Introducing Yourself to the Class PRACTICE</p> <p>In an individual video, introduce yourself to the class. In less than two minutes, share your name, hometown, and some other relevant information about yourself. Estimated time on...</p>	68% submitted	80.8% avg score	10 points
<p>Chapter 1 Video Activity: Identify Communication Components In A Current News Story COUNTS TOWARDS GRADE</p> <p>In an individual video, discuss a current story from www.bizcominthenews.com.</p>	68% submitted	63.9% avg score	15 points

Chapter 1 Study Tools

<p>Chapter 1 Flashcards</p> <p>Study with existing flashcards and make your own.</p>			
<p>Chapter 1 Lecture Slides</p> <p>Walk through these slides to review the key concepts covered in this chapter. Estimated time on task: 15 minutes.</p>			
<p>Chapter 1 Practice Quiz COUNTS TOWARDS GRADE</p> <p>Take this quiz to get a quick check of your understanding of chapter concepts. Estimated time on task: 15 minutes.</p>	78% submitted	83.1% avg score	15 points

Fig. 1: Extract from the learning path of the digital course “Business Communication: in person, in print and online”

3.2.2 Course records

The gradebook was automatically populated with data from Practice Quizzes and Assignments, or any other closed-answer activity, while open-answer activities were tagged as pending for assessment after students had submitted their answers. The gradebook system made students aware of their learning and kept them motivated.

Progress

Home Analytics **Gradebook** Settings Roster

CLASS AVERAGE: 73.1% Edit Scores Gradebook Actions

Filter by **Jump To:** **Display Settings**

	Overall Performance	Chapter 1: Und...	Chapter 2: Tea...	Chapter 2: Team and Intercultura...
<p>Name (Show Student ID) ↑</p> <p>Filter by Student Name</p>	<p>Calculation by Average Percentage</p> <p>Overall Performance ↑↓</p> <p>View All</p>	<p>Chapter 1 Video Activity: Introducing</p> <p>MANUALLY GRADED</p> <p>10</p>	<p>Chapter 2 Self-Assessment: Your Outlook On</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Chapter 2 Assignment</p> <p>Chapter 2 Video Activity: Comment On a Peer's</p> <p>MANUALLY GRADED</p> <p>26</p> <p>15</p>
<p>C [redacted] L [redacted]</p>	<p>95.4% 424.6 of 455.0</p>	<p>10.0</p>	<p>3.0</p>	<p>23.3 14.0</p>

Fig. 2: Extract from the gradebook of the digital course “Business Communication: in person, in print and online”

At the beginning of each class I used to set a time limit for students to check in on their devices so that I could take their attendance effortlessly until the timer ran out.

I was able to view, edit, and export or sync students' activity scores and calculated overall grades, as well as attendance records, which I exported as a .CSV file.

Although the student response system in Cengage Mobile is available for teachers to create and customize their own questions and answers, including polls, multiple choice, or true/false, and results can be made to count towards students' grades if they are imported as an activity, I preferred not to take this option, because managing classes and performance assessment is much faster on a computer or laptop than it is on a smart phone.

In Cengage Mobile students were able to view activity statuses and details, read the textbook, view grades, review flashcards, and take practice quizzes for their Cengage course, while I used Cengage Mobile to view activity details, read the textbook, view students' grades, and take their attendance. Furthermore, I could use at a glance data and statistical reports to get a quick and easy overview of how the platform was being used.

4. Conclusion

Based on current practices in the application of information and communication technology (ICT) in language education [13], we can now draw some conclusions out of the discussion and case study presented above.

Firstly, the motivation for research and development around the concept of PLEs must be primarily pedagogical, rather than technological, even though much of what it encompasses is related to or results from the development of ICTs [2]. Combining the triangulation poles of pedagogy, methodology and technology is a good premise for effective digital teaching and learning.

Secondly, "teaching from" technology confirms itself as making the difference in improving student learning skills as it provides learners with a virtual leaning environment which departs from the formal teacher-centered approach and gives way to a more informal learner-centered approach.

Thirdly, educational publishers need to rebuild their model of thinking from creating books to creating eCourses [7]. Students need to focus and practise specific areas of challenge identified by formative assessment and reflection. This is what Cengage Learning has successfully achieved through their fully integrated virtual platform that facilitates task-based communication and interaction, and that also provides students with a flexible and convenient mobile learning and practice tool while relieving teachers from many of the most time-consuming activities allowing them to focus on student development, and bringing measurable teaching and learning results [14].

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Digital Storytelling as Support for Teaching Greek as FL/L2 to Adolescents. A Teacher Action Research Project

Panayiota Georgiou¹
Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus¹

Abstract

Teaching Greek as a Foreign Language can be a challenge for every educator. Students usually lose motivation because they cannot bother to practice all skills, especially writing. This was observed from six foreign language students' academic performance which included tests on essay writing, grammar and vocabulary exercises as well as daily feedback received from the instructor. This Teacher Action Research Project aimed to investigate whether six Secondary School students who attended a Private Secondary School in Cyprus, benefited from the use of new technologies for the creation of digital stories and whether working in pairs to write their stories motivated and encouraged their experience. Data were collected during the three weeks of using Microsoft Sway, Microsoft's latest presentation tool as well as word clouds. These technologies were employed because students needed to use vocabulary they had not used before along with correct use of sentence structure. The new features that Sway provides in comparison with PowerPoint Presentation, can be used to create interactive presentations and content that enables students to write their stories in a more fun and engaging way. From the observations, semi-structured in pair interviews and follow-up questionnaires, two emergent themes were the main findings. Theme one was referring to the benefits of utilizing a technology approach to create digital stories for enhancing the learning of foreign language and theme two pointed out how much students enjoyed working together. The main output of this Teacher Action Research Project is that Digital Storytelling and specifically Microsoft Sway can be used to support students' writing skills when learning Greek as a Foreign Language. In addition, when students work in pairs to create their digital stories, they learn how to work cooperatively, which is a substantial competence for the 21st Century.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling, Microsoft Sway, Word clouds, Cooperative Learning

Chapter one: digital storytelling

Introduction

In the recent past, rapid changes in technology have led to many new discoveries.

Education is one of the sectors positively impacted by new technological developments (Timucin, 2006). The importance of technology assisted learning as a medium of instruction for various communities throughout the world indicates demand has been increasing. Therefore, the focus in the classroom must shift from promoting technology integration to promoting technology-enabled learning, aimed at preparing students for future academic success and careers (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2013).

The technological advancements witnessed in the educational sector have resulted in gradual development of new teaching and learning methods (Park & Son, 2009).

According to Shin and Son (2007), the changes have contributed to significant improvements in the field of education. Most of these modifications have been observed in technology assisted learning, where reforms have been done to curricular and pedagogical designs (Alshumaimeri, 2008). Implementation of Computer Assisted Learning in a classroom focuses on teachers and boards of education concerned with adoption of the technology to aid in the teaching and learning processes (Baskaran & Shafeeq, 2013). The process of utilizing technology to create digital storytelling is one area which utilizes technology in large part.

One aspect of this digital learning is the collaborative/cooperative patterns and processes students use when working in groups creating digital stories. "Digital storytelling is the process of creating a short, emotional, and compelling story through the combination of different technological modes" (Christiansen & Koelzer, 2016, p. 2).

A digital story is a "2 to 5 minutes movie-like digital production that teams create using one of several readily available software programs" (Rance-Roney, 2008, p. 29).

However, for technology to be used effectively in schools to create digital stories, it must be developed within a framework allowing technology to be used fully by students, especially in the current structure of student led learning (Prensky, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

This Teacher Action Research project is designed to investigate how the use of digital storytelling enhanced the teaching of Greek as a Foreign Language and what benefits and challenges learners experienced when creating digital stories together.

The aims of this research were to look at how using Microsoft Sway assisted students with writing their digital stories in Greek and if by working in pairs they learned how to work cooperatively, which is a significant skill for the 21st Century.

Necessity of the Study from a Teacher Action Research Perspective

This study will provide first hand experiences of students as they create digital storytelling within a Greek language classroom where non-Greek speakers are learning the language using different technological approaches. To the best of my knowledge, no specific study has been conducted on how digital storytelling works in the Greek language classroom, so this is an important contribution to the literature on digital storytelling in this area. Specifically, it examines how students used Microsoft Sway to create their digital stories in pairs and learned to work cooperatively to produce good pieces of writing in Greek; therefore, the activity framework used in this project, guided the researcher to investigate the method of teaching and to explore this method through activity in which students participated rigorously. It enabled the researcher to examine how students accomplish efficient learning experience using new technologies and working cooperatively.

Research Questions

1. What benefits did learners experience from using technology to create a story?
2. What benefits and challenges did the learners experience working cooperatively during the creation of their digital stories in the foreign language?

Chapter two: literature review

Introduction

This chapter is designed to review the relevant literature supporting this investigation.

Reviewing the literature creates a platform where the reader is provided with a detailed explanation of previous research work on the topic. The primary objective of conducting a literature review is to avoid intentional as well as accidental reverberation of what has been covered by previous research. For this reason, the literature will be reviewed from the existing journals, published books, and electronic sources if any (Sabti & Chaican, 2014) and a review of relevant literature that supports this investigation of digital storytelling and its advantages. This chapter will begin with an overview of key ideas of the integration of technology along with educational integration of information technology. The chapter will then investigate the history of digital storytelling. The chapter will end with an overview of digital storytelling examples and studies of digital storytelling (L2) which have been conducted and the conclusions drawn from these studies.

Significance of DST in Language Teaching and Learning

Overall, digital storytelling is a beneficial and valuable mechanism for improving the four-skill areas of English and other foreign language competency (Brenner, 2014). It is extremely important teachers utilize digital storytelling in foreign language learning (Sadik, 2008). Moreover, with regard to technology use in today's classroom, Bryan and Brown (2005) insisted on a strong foundation of different types of literacies affects student learning: digital, global, visual, information, and most notably, technology.

Therefore, digital storytelling, as a method of teaching, highly supports active engagement of the learner. This way of learning is based on independent pupil's work, gaining of experience, analysing, and interpreting them, and on this basis, the effective construction of own knowledge (Brenner, 2014). The students through the collaborative activities participate actively in the learning process and manage to direct their own learning, which is a significant skill of the learning communities (Papadopoulos & Griva, 2014).

Implementation of Digital Storytelling in the Classroom

Teachers should consider the integration of technology, pedagogy, and content leads to "a deeper understanding of the different and more powerful roles digital media can play in both teaching and learning" (Robin, 2008, p. 227). Furthermore, as Iannotti (2005) suggested, having fewer projects to manage would make it more feasible for the instructor to provide substantial feedback to students. When there is relevance to students' lives and their interests, students can actively engage in the creating, understanding, and connecting with the attainment of knowledge (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). Storytelling in the classroom can be a beneficial and valuable mechanism for improving the four-skills area of L2 language competency (Trondheim, 2011). The benefit of the digital nature of the story cannot be forgotten as well. The use of IT tools allows an affordable and easy way (using the Internet) to reach an unlimited audience for stories (Sapanro, 2014). But what is more important from an educational point of view, this makes it possible to work together on a project for students from different countries, speaking different languages, raised in different cultures. In consequence of

direct contact, they exchange not only their stories, but also the experiences, thoughts, ideas (Picardo, 2012).

Digital storytelling has been found to be beneficial for improving the four-skill areas of English and other foreign language competency (Brenner, 2014). “Digital literacy is an emergent form of a literary practice in which learners draw on different technological resources to interpret, research, analyses, and produce information critically (Koltay, 2011, as cited in Christensen & Koelzer, 2016, p. 1). Christensen and Koelzer (2016) insisted “digital storytelling (DST) are a great tool to help EFL students develop language and literacy skills through authentic and meaningful ways as well as help them master the skills they need to effectively interact and communicate with other speakers in online and offline contexts” (p. 2). “In the EFL classroom, teachers do not only face the challenge to help their students develop the necessary reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in their second language (L2) but they also face the challenge to provide learners with meaningful and authentic opportunities to apply and practice such skills.” (Christensen & Koelzer, 2016, p. 2). According to the research conducted so far, there is evidence to support the effects of digital storytelling on the development of writing skills among second language learners through collaboration and teamwork (Sarıca & Usluel, 2016). Collaborative writing very often involves collective authorship (Sevilla-Pavón, 2015). What really matters is the actual collective effort toward meeting a common goal or toward achieving a final product. Shared digital stories facilitate connections with others through shared experiences (Robin, 2016).

The opportunities to write collaboratively and to benefit from collaborative autonomous language learning are enhanced by the use of technology and multimodality, which allow students to develop their creativity, linguistic skills, and 21st century literacies (Castañeda, 2013) when producing, adapting, and combining different elements such as audio, images, video, sound or visual effects, textual materials, etc.

These elements are put together to create stories from a very personal and in-depth perspective, the creation of which requires the students to work collaboratively while developing a set of linguistic and non-linguistic literacies. In Castañeda’s (2013) words, the different elements are combined to create a “compelling, emotional, and in-depth story” which helps students “build 21st century literacy skills in the foreign language” (p. 1).

Tolisano (2015) discussed what she believes digital storytelling is and what it is not. She outlined digital storytelling writing it:

- is NOT about the tools... but IS about the skills...
- is NOT about creating media, but IS about creating meaning...
- is NOT only about telling a story, but IS about contributing and collaborating...
- is NOT about telling an isolated story... but IS about sharing and connecting...
- is NOT only about the transfer of knowledge... but IS about the amplification...
- is NOT about substituting analog stories... but IS about transforming stories. (p. 18, 19)

Digitally collaborative writing has been found to empower students to write together regardless of time limitation and restriction of in-class communication (Hewitt & Scardamalia, 1998). Using collaborative online story-writing platforms (e.g., Storybird) promotes students’ imagination, literacy, and self-confidence (Menezes, 2012).

Similarly, using other multimedia-authoring software, including PowerPoint and HyperStudio provide instruction and support from teachers and peers and help language learners become more successful in writing, especially in planning and presenting digital stories (Rahimi, 2017).

More importantly, including digital storytelling as a part of literacy instruction assists

students in experiencing discovery learning in which they use their personal experiences to construct knowledge through meaningful learning (Mayer, 2003). As students create a context to practice using language meaningfully, they practice intermediate and advanced level language functions by narrating stories in a second language and engaging in the presentational mode of communication as their project is presented to an audience of peers. Moreover, with the use of technology to create a final product, digital storytelling gives learners the opportunity to advance in what Davis (2004) and Sadik (2008) term self-authoring and identity construction while at the same time practising second language in a L2 classroom.

Significance of the Research

This Teacher Action Research Project is aligned with previous research conducted on the use of technology in an L2 classroom but this project unlike the previous research was focused on the teaching of Greek in an L2 classroom. In addition, this Teacher Action Research Project added the specific use of Microsoft Sway and added to the literature because it utilised a specific program which proved to be an incentive for the students. Microsoft Sway can be used to support students' writing skills in Greek as a Foreign Language or in any other L2.

Ultimately, this Teacher Action Research Project aligned to the previous research conducted in terms of the importance of students collaborating and using cooperative learning to create work together.

Results

The main output of this Teacher Action Research Project is Digital Storytelling and specifically Microsoft Sway can be used to support students' writing skills when learning Greek as a Foreign Language. In addition, when students work in pairs to create their digital stories, they learn how to work cooperatively, which is a substantial competence for the 21st Century.

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The Efficient Communication in Kindergartens (Organization) Affects the Psycho-social Development of the Children

Arlinda Ymeri¹
Albania¹

Abstract

To make this research more meaningful, I have worked with the kindergarten staff to evaluate their communication and the impact of these communicative abilities in the psycho-social development of the children. The aim was to understand the main communicative barriers at work and the level of psycho-social development of pre-school children. Also, to discover what strategies were commonly used to overcome the barriers or conflicts that arise as a cause of work. As we will see below, it is significant and there is a strong link between the effective communication variable in the organization (kindergartens) and the children developmental level variable. The gender variable has no correlation with the communication in kindergartens and the developmental level of pre-school children. And there is no meaning between gender and developmental level variable. The purpose of the study is: The identification of the advantages and discovery of the strategies used by organizations (kindergartens) to overcome differences, conflicts in the workplace and the promotion of the psycho-social development of preschool children. Kindergartens as a professional people organization with a view to achieving a common objective have a human resource unit that takes care of the organization and performance of their work. Organizations (kindergartens) are a mix of people who need to understand each other and cooperate every day. Those who have good communication do their job well and are usually mind-open, curious, patient, and aware. These basic skills help in nurturing a friendly, personal and intuitive approach to organize.

Keywords: communication, psycho-social development, kindergartens, human resources, organization

How communication contributes

The study of communication at the workplace has tried to answer the question, “How do people understand each other?” Now we understand that communication issues are embedded in other complex questions such as: What kind of communication is needed for the majority of employees who also have common goals at work? How does communication, not just tolerance, contribute to creating a respectful environment when we have a common goal? Communication – Your ability to share your beliefs, values, ideas, and feelings – is the foundation of all human contacts. We can have different backgrounds, but when we try to express our feelings and share opinions with others we all do the same. Perhaps the result of a sent message may be different, but the reason why people are communicating is because they aim to be the same. As a way to emphasize the importance of human activity communication, let's look at some of these

reasons:

- Communication allows you to get information about other people.
- Communication helps to meet interpersonal needs.
- Communication creates personal identities.
- Communication affects others.

The purpose of the study is: The identification of the current workplace advantages and barriers and the discovery of the strategies that kindergartens use to overcome and solve problems and achieve results.

Hypothesis: In kindergartens where educators have effective communication, they have the best results (level of psycho-social developments) in their work with children

In this case we have: Dependent variable – the development of psycho-social skills of preschool children and independent variable – the communication efficiency.

For conducting this study two main lines were used:

- a) Analysis and collection of data/theoretical materials, including: review of the relevant literature and international studies conducted in this field. The literature was used to give a general picture of the advantages, problems and benefits that organizations that operate in the field of children education may have.
- b) Analysis and collection of practical data, including: realization of questionnaires conducted with managers and employees of the organization (kindergarten) and analysis from the children observation to evaluate their developmental skills.

The research methodology

In this thesis, quantitative methods of research were used. The quantitative study relates to the way of collecting information by asking individuals who are a subject of research belonging to a representative sample through a standardized procedure aimed at studying the correlations that exist through variables.

Sample

In this case, we have a non-probability sample, sampling through quotas. I have selected this sample with quotas because: It is mostly used in researches, as well as obtains profound information and knowledge about the selected population.

Measuring instrument and questions of research study

The questionnaire selected for the assessment of the study was obtained from an Italian consulting company PYRAMYDE, translated and then modified to be adapted to the confirmation or not of the hypothesis if it results to have effective communication between the staff in the kindergarten and the reflection of the developmental level of the children who are attending the same.

The questionnaire contains 25 questions that serve as an indicator for the Communicative Context.

Effective communication test

COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT		Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	When someone says something you do not agree, continue listening to him without judging	1	2	3	4
2	First you appreciate what and how you would say it then you say it	1	2	3	4
3	After a discussion, ask if you are understood	1	2	3	4
4	You keep judgment and criticism of the other while listening	1	2	3	4
6	Even if I know the answer, I allow to end the question	1	2	3	4
7	When communicating with someone, you identify the differences to create your identity	1	2	3	4
8	When someone raises their voice, you strain to hear until the end	1	2	3	4
9	When someone opposes, you accept and hear them to the end	1	2	3	4
10	You look right in the eye when someone speaks to you	1	2	3	4
11	You wait until you say your opinion	1	2	3	4
12	When you can, keep notes to remember better	1	2	3	4
13	You accept that words do not have the same meaning for everyone	1	2	3	4
14	You use questions to clarify the thoughts and ideas of the other	1	2	3	4
15	You ask questions to know if they understand what you are saying	1	2	3	4
16	You repeat the message and words heard to make sure you understand it well	1	2	3	4
17	You listen curiously the views of others even if they are different from yours	1	2	3	4
18	You have an interest in hearing even if it is not important	1	2	3	4
19	You're preoccupied with knowing the words you do not know	1	2	3	4
20	You can change your point of view and think like the other person	1	2	3	4
21	When talking, you focus more on the person in front of you or in yourself	1	2	3	4
22	If, even after you repeat the same discussion several times, the person does not understand you, take the responsibility of the situation	1	2	3	4
23	When talking to many people, you can see them all in the eye, keeping your head and eyes up	1	2	3	4
24	Communication changes whether it is a man or a woman	1	2	3	4
25	You accept discussion even you think that you know everything about an argument	1	2	3	4

25-50	Inappropriate
50-75	Promising
75-100	Excellent

The source of the questionnaire

<http://www.pyramyde.it/Portals/12/Test%20sulla%20comunicazione%20efficace.pdf>

The selected sample is in the non-probability category and sampling is selected through quotas. There are altogether 40 questionnaires divided into four kindergartens, two state-owned and two private (kindergarten names) subject to, including the heads of these kindergartens and the educators working there. Realization is all done by me in order to have a better explanation of the above questions. The second test is the one to which the children of the third group (pre-school children) of these kindergartens have been subjected.

Results of the study

After collecting the data according to the procedures described in the methodology of the work and verifying the reliability of the two instruments (test of communication skills, the Gesell test for the development of the psycho-social skills of the children and the field observation of psycho-social skills of these children, through drawings, game observation, helping each other, focusing on the explanation of the educator, etc.) used in this study, here we will present the analyzes made to confirm or not the hypothesis we have set in advance at the beginning from reviewing the literature.

Correlation analysis

This study is a descriptive-correlational quantitative study; therefore, the essence of the analysis is finding the correlations of the variables of hypotheses that we have raised. The following table shows all correlations between variables.

Correlations

			Effective communication of educators in kindergartens	Development of children's psycho-social skills
Effective communication of educators in kindergartens	N			
	Pearson Correlation		1.000	.158
Development of children's psycho-social skills	Sig. (2-tailed)	80	80	80
	N	.000	1	-.520
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).	Pearson Correlation	1.000		.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	80	80	80
	N	.159	-.520**	1
		.158	.000	80
		80	80	80

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As seen from the table above, we have a statistically significant and very strong correlation between the good communication variable in the kindergartens (organizations) and the variable of the psycho-social development of kindergarten children. This is also the core of our study.

Discussion

As we can see from each questionnaire analysis we have a statistically significant and very strong correlation between the effective communication variable in the organization (kindergartens) and the variable of the psycho-social development of children.

The psycho-social skills of pre-school children are: maintaining eye contact, smile, enthusiasm, accepting others, expressing emotions, active listening, and constructive interaction.

The element that influences the improvement of communication is the fact that the educators give special importance to the communication by developing relevant trainings for this part:

Some good qualities that are observed in kindergarten educators:

- Educators are very hardworking, they are simple people, try to improve their performance at work
- They are very energetic and cheerful.
- They are very open to communication.
- They love their job and have developed sensitivity and personal affect to children in their working group.

Improve communication skills towards effective communication, special trainings for communication and teamwork, improve the recognition of developmental stages (cognitive-behavioral and psycho-social of preschool children), knowing the children needs Knowing the needs through the parents and informing the parents about the child, coordination of multidisciplinary work of the working group, work in groups, design and detail individual plans, recruitment of staff, supervision of drafting plans, design a specific ethical code at the workplace. In the four studied kindergartens: in the first two kindergartens, Bebtusha and Soros, the percentage of effective communication was higher (excellent) than in the other two studied kindergartens: Delfinet de Lulebore.

Children in the first two kindergartens have a higher point in the Gesell test.

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Formative Assessment: a 20th Century Relic or a 21st Century Solution?

Mateja Prevodnik Mayland¹
Gimnazija Škofja Loka, Slovenia¹

Abstract

The paper presents some practical cases of application of principles and methods of formative assessment in teaching in general and more specifically in teaching English Essay in grammar schools. The aim is to monitor student learning by providing ongoing feedback which makes not only teaching but also learning more effective, structured and focused on problem-solving. It helps students as well as teachers identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas that could do with improvement. Peer assessment, which is presented as an example, is intended for both peer evaluation and self-evaluation, as students can apply the same technique for their own essays; with its students receive double feedback. Students are thus not only in the role of the author but also the assessor and can later transfer their experience to their own work. Although the peer assessment of essays in the form of a handout/questionnaire is designed for a group of students, the support they receive is tailored. The emphasis is on the feedback which is not in the form of grades or points yet it is very precise, specific and clear. As a result, students who do utilise their feedback comments improve in the areas previously criticised, the reasons for engagement or non-engagement become apparent, they develop self-perception of their ability and potential as writers. This method also involves students in self-reflection of learning which they can apply to any subject at any stage of their education process. The paper argues that formative assessment should have a stronger role in our education system since it provides immediate feedback to students, informs them of their progress in a constructive and stress-free manner and in the case of essay writing – enhances students' writing performance. In conclusion, formative assessment allows students and teachers to obtain a more detailed understanding of the students' work so that summative assessment can confirm the improved results.

Keywords: formative assessment, English essay, peer assessment

Introduction

Formative assessment is one of the methods that have ruffled the world of teaching in the recent years. It seems that the students, the parents and the schools alike are under constant pressure to improve the results in exams, finals and externally set tests.

Testing is generally considered as a good way to establish where the students are, what they know but not so much how we did as teachers or better, how much they understood and took in of what we were trying to teach them. Being a teacher means that we are concerned and interested in improving our students' learning and progress throughout the year not only at the end of a term. This is where formative assessment comes in.

Passing into the new millennium, the term 'formative assessment or monitoring'

became more and more commonplace, and twenty years later we find that the results are favourable for all stakeholders. Although the term first appeared in the late 1960s, it is nevertheless authors such as Black and Wiliam, Harlen and James, Marzano, Crooks and others who place formative monitoring of teaching and learning at the foreground.

As a global society, we are not yet ready for a complete transition – and summative assessment is actually present everywhere – but formative monitoring is steadily increasing its share of the educational process.

Formative assessment – like learning – is a continuous process which can include keeping student's work in portfolio, giving short self-checks, creating criteria for written or listening assignments together which helps students understand every aspect of the task, peer correction and so on. The central component of formative assessment is feedback. It basically provides the information about the existing gap between where a student is and where they would like to be. Not only does it show where the student is but it also secures a stress-free environment where both the student and the teacher can identify the weaknesses and strong points, which means that the feedback is personalised.

It does not mean that summative assessment becomes obsolete but through formative assessment students get to the desired grade and achieve knowledge of higher quality. They are assessed through assistance during the process of learning not just at the end; the goal is to improve learning so after the assessment the student goes back to the subject matter and has the opportunity to really get to the desired level of knowledge and abilities.

Case study

The below handout was designed together with and for the students of the fourth-final year in our grammar school as an aid to their first attempts to write an essay in English language. In addition to creating the elements of the essay together in class, the handout is intended for both peer evaluation and self-evaluation, as the student can use the same technique for their own work; at the same time the questions of the peer evaluation support the writing of this type of text, and students receive a double feedback:

- feedback to the author of the handout,
- feedback to the author of the essay by a peer and a professor.

After the introductory lesson where the students participated in forming the criteria for writing a 'for and against' essay comparing them with the officially published final exam assessors' criteria, each wrote their first essay on the given title at home. During the next lesson, they exchanged essays and partly at school, partly at home assessed them on the basis of the handout with all the remarks and findings. The essays together with the peer corrections were handed over for my contribution and we discussed their experience. I went through the essays and I commented on the handout findings.

Upon returning the essays, each student examined their work together with the comments of a classmate and me. We again commented the findings as well as the experience. Students are not only in the role of the author but also the assessor, and they later transfer their experience to their own work. The feedback has no points, no grades yet is very precise, specific, detailed and clear. In the evaluation, students singled out the detailed and specific feedback and emphasized that in this way the theory entered into practice, which is particularly valuable in the writing of an essay. It is also important to them that their first attempt in writing and essay is not graded in any way, so no points, no numbers – stress free. Nevertheless, it is reviewed in very specific detail, it is easy to pin-point the weaknesses as well as strong points. They find that such

feedback is a challenging and demanding task for them but it helps understand the theory that they can then implement into the practice of writing. For the students the whole process takes four school lessons in addition to writing the essay at home and the possible peer correcting in case the class lesson wasn't enough. After the first experience the following ones take less time, the students understand the grades and the criteria are no longer just theory but they have a very specific idea of what exactly they mean.

Table 1

Peer correction of essays

PEER EVALUATION HANDOUT

Please read your peer's essay twice before you start answering the following questions. To avoid the confusion, you should use different marking colours than your teacher (if possible, use red).

CONTENT

1. Has the author of the essay written what he/she was asked to?
If not, explain:
2. Does the beginning make you read on?
3. What is the main idea of the essay?
4. Can you summarize in one sentence the main idea of each paragraph?
P1 says that
P2 says that
5. Can you find any parts that are not related to the main idea?
(underline them)
6. Does the writer support his/her opinion giving enough examples (arguments) or does he/she generalise?
Find places where you would like more explanations or details?
7. Is the essay much too short or much too long?
8. Does the essay leave the reader with something to think about?

VOCABULARY

1. Does the essay contain rich vocabulary? Write out words closely related to the topic:
Can you think of more such words? Give examples!
2. Find examples of wrong use of words if there are any.
3. Does the writer use contractions? Give examples.

GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY

1. Underline all the complex grammatical structures in the essay (passive, conditionals, reported speech...)
2. Mark the grammatical and spelling mistakes

ORGANISATION/COHERENCE

1. Is the essay divided into paragraphs? How many are there?
2. Are paragraphs logically arranged? (new idea – new paragraph)
3. Does the writer repeat ideas too often? Give examples:
4. Did you at any point lose the flow of the writing? Where and why?
5. Underline the linking words! Are they used correctly?
6. Are pronouns correctly related to nouns?

THE AIM OF THIS EXERCISE WILL BE FULFILLED WHEN YOU APPLY YOUR FINDINGS TO YOUR OWN WRITING.

Results

Our expectations need to be realistic. Formative assessment does not improve students' knowledge and grades overnight – as mentioned before, it is a process. A process for students and a process for the teacher but it does result not only in better understanding of the subject matter but in better student – teacher relationships.

Teaching becomes more personalised and therefore personal.

Time management though, could pose a challenge. Discussions, debates and comparisons take time but when we decide to do things differently, we adjust and we make time. It helps a great deal if there is support among fellow teachers and administration in terms of comparison with different methods and the opportunity to attend various seminars for further teacher development. My experience is a positive one. I started with peer correction of essays as an experiment but the students' feedback encouraged me to continue. The students appreciate the individual approach, they particularly value the fact that the feedback is specific and not graded which they interpret as an opportunity for improvement, what is more, they can focus on specific elements and therefore raise the level of writing before they are graded rather than only afterwards. Having the experience of being an assessor is another element that contributes to better understanding of what it means to write an essay and students take this role seriously. In their evaluations they continuously stress the importance of role-changing since this offers a fresh insight into essay writing. The teacher on the other hand can see if the explanations were clear, if any stage of teaching should be changed on the level of classroom.

Conclusion

School systems throughout the world are periodically bombarded by the latest, the most efficient, the most innovative or the most student and/or teacher friendly methods.

Why should we consider formative assessment? The reasons are numerous but it all comes down to the simple fact that it works, it is effective and user-friendly on the side of the student and teacher which is otherwise not always the case. Assessment is an inevitable element in teacher – student relationship and the summative part by default happens at the end of the teaching and learning process. The formative part fills the gap between the initially set goal and the final result. We can apply it during the learning activity, it improves learning, the process is stress-free, the feedback tailored. It is not a competition but students can focus on their own work. Teachers on the other hand can follow an individual's progress, not through grades but through their accomplishments from their first attempts to their final 'product' which in the end satisfies not only the narrow, summative goal in the form of a grade but – hopefully – there is understanding of the subject matter and real knowledge that is there to stay.

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Integrating Virtual Reality in Language Learning Settings

Kelly M. Torres¹, Aubrey Statti²

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, United States of America^{1,2}

Abstract

Technology-enhanced learning environments provide language educators access to tools that offer students engaging second and foreign language academic experiences. Through these types of activities, educators are able to teach content in meaningful ways in which students are able to further explore and immerse in the target language and culture they are learning. Virtual reality is one type of technology that is becoming more commonplace in classroom settings since the inclusion of this technology offers students enriching learning experiences. Further, by engaging in virtual reality apps, students are able to practice the target language in an immersive environment in which they receive immediate feedback on their productive language skills. They also are able to virtually visit another country in which they are able to explore the geography and culture that they are studying. In addition to providing engaging lessons, the inclusion of virtual reality activities can help students acquire higher levels of target language proficiency and become more motivated to learn other languages. This presentation will introduce the idea of virtual reality in a language learning setting as well as provide specific platforms and tools that educators can use with language learners.

Keywords: virtual reality, language learning, education, educational technology

Introduction

The advancement of technology affords language educators the opportunity to integrate a multitude of engaging and motivating activities into their classes. Lin and Lan (2015) postulated that in foreign and second language classrooms, the inclusion of technology-enhanced activities results in students experiencing enriched learning experiences, higher cognitive outcomes, and positive attitudes toward the language learning process. One technology that has become more commonplace in these types of educational contexts is virtual reality (VR). This technology has been defined as “an artificial environment which is experienced through sensory stimuli provided by a computer and in which one’s actions partially determine what happens in the environment” (Jerald, 2016, p. 9). VR technology provides users the opportunity to manipulate digital objects in an artificial environment similar to how they might perceive them in real-world settings (Cooper, Park, Nasr, Thong, & Johnson, 2019).

Virtual Reality

There are five main key elements of VR that includes the participants, creators, virtual world, immersion, and interactivity (Sherman & Craig, 2019). The first key element, participants, are an important element of VR since their experiences with the technology

may be shaped by their capabilities, interpretations, background, and history (Sherman & Craig, 2019). Similarly, the creators are essential elements of VR. The role of the creators is to design the VR experience. The third key element, virtual world, is the space where objects within the simulation exist. When experiencing virtual reality, participants are immersed, key element four, into an alternate point of view. For the last key element, interactivity, Sherman and Craig (2019) shared that “interactive fiction can be defined in terms of the user/player’s ability to interact with a world by changing locations, picking up objects and setting them down” (p. 12).

VR can be a powerful learning tool since it provides learners lifelike learning experiences. Further, VR impacts students’ perceptions through the inclusion of sounds, sights, touch, taste and smell (Ornes, 2017) producing a more interactive learning environment. Particularly, VR provides immersive environments in which learners are able to interact and observe different types of elements. The inclusion of VR has been found to have positive impacts on student academic gains. For example, the use of VR assignments has been found to enhance student learning and impact their levels of attention and provide them concepts to help them better understand the phenomenon being studied (Liou, Yang, Chen, & Tarn, 2017). The inclusion of VR in foreign and second language classrooms can be particularly powerful since students may not have the opportunity to receive direct access to the target language and culture they are studying.

Language Learning

In language learning contexts, the inclusion of VR technology provides learners access to a more immersive learning landscape. Specifically, students are able to engage with VR technology that allows them to enter a virtual world and interact with others across the globe. The exploration of virtual worlds provides students exposure to authentic contexts for language acquisition and offers them opportunities to develop effective strategies for acquiring the target language (Hsiao, Lan, Kao, & Li, 2017).

Further, Chen (2016) discovered that the use of VR in language learning classrooms resulted in students improved acquisition of phonological, morphological, grammar, and syntax knowledge. There are many different types of VR programs available to teach foreign and second languages. Below is an overview of some technologies that are readily available to primary and secondary educators.

- [ImmerseMe](#): This type of VR technology provides learners authentic and contextual language learning experiences. Content is provided at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels and is scaffolded through the learning modes of pronunciation, dictation, translation, and immersion. Additionally, educators are able to tailor lessons to match the sequence of their curriculum and provides students the opportunity to develop language skills that will help them to become global citizens.
- [Mondly](#): This VR platform provides learners conversational opportunities with virtual characters in interactive scenarios. Through these interactions, learners will experience real like interactions and receive instant feedback on their pronunciation. They will also receive suggestions on how to enhance their vocabulary ranges.
- [VirtualSpeech](#): For students who are focused on learning business communication skills, VirtualSpeech offers immediate to advanced level learners’ access to VR activities that will help prepare them to communicate in workplace settings. This VR app provides courses that provide cultural

immersion, realistic environments, voice analysis, recorded speech options, business scenarios, and is accessible via smartphones. Further, learners are provided the opportunity to answer potential company questions and learn networking skills.

- [ESSA](#): Language learners are able to create their own world in the ESSA app when learning a new language. This VR app allows learners the opportunity to choose their own background and add animations and movements. The overall goal of this app is to help learners develop more advanced pronunciation skills. Therefore, when learners correctly pronounce a word, the system will automatically display one of the student's favourite items on the VR screen.
- [PanoLingo](#): This VR app provides learners the opportunity to learn a foreign or second language via a gamification approach in which they are able to collect points and bonuses. Learners are also able to share their score and levels with their friends. Through this interactive platform, learners are directed to complete different commands and are able to receive immersive language experiences that provide access to real language situations.

Conclusion

VR provides a plethora of opportunities for learning, including opening a new world of possibilities for student immersion into a new language. Through VR, educators can introduce learners to new sights, sounds, cultures, and experiences. Various platforms such as ImmerseMe, Mondly, VirtualSpeech, ESSA, and PanoLingo are all potential tools that educators can explore for use in their classrooms. While the onset of integrating any new technology, specifically virtual realities, takes additional time, resources, and creativity, the outcomes are virtually limitless as to what students can be exposed to in their learning as well as in their language development.

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Interactive Listening – A Can-Do Paradigm

Anthony Green¹, Mimmo Bracciodieta²
*Bari University Veterinary School, Bari, Italy¹,
Liceo Scientifico Leonardo da Vinci, Cassano delle Murge, Italy²*

Abstract

Two decades after being called “the Cinderella skill” by Nunan (1999), listening frustratingly still very much deserves the dubious honor of such a metaphor. Results from the recent national Invalsi tests for school leavers in Italy, as well as anecdotal evidence from several other countries, underline the lack of progress made in listening at secondary schools – what is sorely needed is a solution, a new paradigm. But where is that going to come from? Much of the difficulty of listening in English comes from deciphering sounds in a stress-based language as opposed to a syllable-based one, and when we also factor in such variables as language-specific vowel and consonant sounds, speed, local/national accent, clarity of enunciation, choice of lexis, and background noise, the huge variety of combinations of sound possible are a constant source of frustration to language learners’ self-efficacy (except for those select few who reach autonomy). Add to that of course an idiosyncratic spelling “system” (for want of a better word) in English, and learners struggle to connect sound and meaning, sometimes of even the commonest words. Current listening approaches based almost wholly on “comprehension” questions are thinly disguised tests, and thus often counterproductive, seeking to find out what the listener cannot understand. New smartphone technology, which almost every student now has, can provide that new paradigm, encouraging the comprehension of even a single word or phrase, and enabling each user to work at their own comprehensible input i+1 level as Krashen (1982, 1985) put it so long ago – come and try it out for yourselves!

Keywords: Listening, comprehensible input, smartphone technology, interactive, self-efficacy

1. Introduction

At most language conferences, the Cinderella skill, mentioned *en passant*, often taken for granted by presenters, pushed into fourth place, is poor old listening. There may be many reasons for this, as we will see below, but there is little doubt that a poor listener will be unable to communicate adequately, given that so much information around us is delivered orally.

Results from Italy’s national INVALSI examinations in 2019 clearly illustrate the problem, with huge swathes of school leavers showing much lower scores for listening than for reading. These results appear to be common to many other contexts, not just to Italian schools.

Backed up by anecdote, this suggests that students are often left to their own devices when dealing with listening, asked to ‘try harder’ or to ‘keep on listening’ rather than being given a range of tools to help improve their lot. In addition, listening tasks are overwhelmingly structured in the form of comprehension questions, unwittingly mimicking listening tests, which provide teacher and students with a ‘pass’ or ‘fail’, but

does almost nothing to boost learning. Furthermore, there is precious little help available to those who are unable to decipher the sounds they are hearing. This paucity of tools to help with bottom-up listening strategies often leads to a rejection of listening or even of English on the part of weaker listeners, who tend to compare themselves unfavourably with their stronger counterparts, falling even further behind them and damaging their self-efficacy, i.e., their belief in their ability to accomplish a task [1].

Clearly a new paradigm is needed to help these students with bottom-up processing of sounds, splitting them into meaningful words and understanding the features of connected speech, a paradigm which might help all students raise the bar on what they can comprehend.

Using traditional media, from pen and paper all the way through mp3 files, does not seem to have provided any significant breakthroughs in terms of deciphering sound, largely due to the fact that students fail to get any positive feedback when they are unable to make sense of what they are perceiving.

We would like to share with you one attempt to create such a paradigm and invite you to test it out with your classes.

Dictation and dictogloss activities have been used successfully for decades by teachers, though neither is designed specifically for improving listening skills, with the former concentrating on spelling (in itself a considerable hurdle for most English L2 speakers) and the latter on written production. What might happen when we shift the focus onto transforming sound into meaning in an *i+1* listening text?

Smartphone technology enables each student (or better still, each group of students) to access audio in English on their own devices (which they often do for music) and to process it at their own speed.

Teachers in Italy, and probably elsewhere, bemoan the lack of hours allotted on the school timetable to their subject, and feel stressed at what they regard as the impossible task of helping the students to bolster their listening abilities. Indeed, traditional listening lessons with classes that usually feature a considerable gap between stronger and weaker listeners become boring for the former who do not feel challenged, and a nightmare for the latter, persuaded by their poor self-efficacy into believing that they are so ill-equipped for the task as to render any effort at deciphering increasingly complex audio a pointless and thankless task. What if there were a way of catering for and providing a challenge for all of these students at one and the same time? And what if it were possible to set such tasks without having to use up any of the precious hours assigned to English in the classroom?

The above premise led the authors to devise a solution for smartphones and other devices which would help all levels of students to decipher English spoken discourse at their own *i+1* level, providing immediate feedback whenever the student requested it from the device, just as a game does. This aspect of gamification is, as we will see later, a vital part of the challenge and the attraction of this new paradigm.

The accomplishment gap between reading and listening comprehension can of course be readily explained by the fact that literate readers can recognise each word separated by a space and by punctuation and/or capital letters, whereas listeners will often not even have the luxury of a pause to mark the passage from one word to the next. Given the huge number of homophones and near-homophones in this tricky language of ours, we may be asking rather too much even of most upper-intermediate listeners if we ask them to differentiate between 'it's tough', 'it's stuff', 'hit stuff', and even 'hits tough' in fluent discourse, and such permutations of similar sounds are almost infinite, often forming the basis for the puns so prevalent in English humour.

Accordingly, L2 listeners will often stop to "inspect in their short-term memory" [2]

what they have just heard for meaning, “a skill that is a prerequisite for understanding” [3]. However, by doing so they lose track of time and thus miss out on vast parts of the discourse, or else they try to catch the gist of what they are hearing (as we teachers often encourage them to do, for better or for worse!); such an approach inevitably leads to stress and frustration on their part at their inability to decode, especially given that our task as teachers is nominally to help them improve their listening skills. The predominance of school leavers signing up for university courses here in Italy with a level below (and often well below!) that required to carry out their studies and chosen profession using English would seem to indicate that we are still rather a long way from achieving success across the board on this score, and the authors suspect that poor self-efficacy plays a key role in this failing.

The solution we have envisaged and which we would be delighted to share with you, involves a special interactive player which allows users to “inspect” speech and to test out their hypotheses in terms of perception. The disappearance of such perception exercises from syllabuses and textbooks over recent decades, described by Brown as “a quite extraordinary case of throwing the baby out with the bath water” [4] has led to English language teachers generally treating listening not as an exercise in itself, a skill to be worked on and learned, but rather as a prelude to discussion or “consolidation”.

Understandable as this is, given the frustration which listening engenders in many students, it loses sight of the vital goal of providing learners with the tools needed to perform in an English-speaking environment.

2. Description

In this interactive player, based on gamification principles, learners coordinate ear, brain and eye, writing down any words or fragments thereof which perceive and ask the player to provide feedback, which at an ± 1 level will generally be required. Listeners can lose points by slowing down the speech, by asking for hints for unguessed words etc.

Interestingly, we have found that when students work together collaboratively on such perception exercises to try to defeat the machine, one of the most effective tools in their arsenal is metalinguistic discussion, much to the delight of their teachers.

3. Conclusion

Following initial trials in both of our workplaces, we are confident that the success of this approach to listening can be mirrored elsewhere. We are currently launching an investigation into whether and how much such a new paradigm might impact learner perception and understanding and would be delighted to recruit any colleagues interested in investigating this together.

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International Cooperation for the Promotion of Multilingualism

Elisabetta Delle Donne¹
Pixel, Italy¹

Abstract

This paper presents and describes the funding opportunities in the field of education, training, research and innovation managed by the European Commission.

The paper presents and describes the main characteristics of the most important funding Programmes that can be interesting for researchers and higher education institutions to finance their researches, their mobility and their career development, Erasmus+ providing funding opportunities in the field of Education, Training, Youth and Sport and Horizon 2020, providing funding opportunities in the field of Research and Innovation.

The paper presents each of the mentioned Programmes main objectives, funding schemes and budget.

Then issues related to quality project planning are addressed together with an overview of the main quality and assessment criteria used to select successful project proposals. Finally, some examples of initiatives, already funded by the European Commission are provided.

Keywords: European Projects, Erasmus+, Language Learning, Initiatives

Introduction to European Commission's policies for the promotion of internationalisation and multilingualism

Among many others, two funding programmes are the most interesting for Educational institutions as they make available resources to strengthen internationalization and multilingualism and to reinforce the effectiveness and inclusiveness of Higher education. These funding programmes are Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020.

Erasmus+ is the EU programme providing funding resources for education, training, youth and sport.

Erasmus+ Programme aims to foster quality improvements, innovation and internationalization of education and training institutions. Also, Erasmus+ improves the level of key competences and skills, with particular regard to multilingualism and its relevance for the labor market. Finally, Erasmus+ promotes the emergence of a European lifelong learning area supporting the modernization of education and training systems.

Horizon 2020 is the programme that finances research, development and innovation activities.

Horizon 2020 aims to raise the level of excellence of Europe's scientific research through the support to researchers in order to explore and implement their innovative ideas.

Horizon 2020 also intends to make Europe a more attractive location to invest in

research and innovation by promoting activities where businesses set the agenda and providing major investment in key industrial technologies.

Finally, Horizon 2020 focuses on bringing together resources and knowledge across different fields, technologies and disciplines to support initiatives building a bridge from research to market with a new focus on innovation-related activities, such as piloting, demonstration, test-beds, and market uptake.

Erasmus+

The Erasmus+ Programme provides funding opportunities for different types of activities and is structured in three Key Actions dedicated respectively to Mobility, Cooperation for Innovation and Policy reforms and two specific actions dedicated to Sport and European Studies.

Key Action 1 is dedicated to finance mobility projects and is organized according to the different target groups.

Mobility of learners and staff provides opportunities for students, trainees, young people and volunteers, as well as for professors, teachers, youth workers, staff of education institutions to undertake a learning and/or professional experience in another country.

The Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees support high-level integrated international study programmes delivered by consortia of higher education institutions worldwide.

Finally, Erasmus+ Master Degree Loans offers loans guarantee schemes backed up by the Programme to be used by students to follow abroad for a full Master Degree.

Key Action 2 – Cooperation for Innovation and The Exchange of Good Practices aim to develop innovative approaches to make education more attractive and in line with individual needs and expectations of learners. The KA 2 action also promotes ICT based methodologies and new or improved processes of recognition and validation of competences. Special focus is also given to multilingualism, knowledge of foreign languages, integration of migrants and the needs of disadvantaged groups and to deal with differences in learning outcomes linked to the geographical and socioeconomic disparities.

Key Action 2 is based on enhancing synergies between organizations active in different fields and socio-economic sectors.

Key Action 2 foresees four different funding tools: Strategic Partnership, Knowledge Alliances, Sector Skills Alliances and Capacity Building.

Strategic Partnerships focus on the promotion of innovation, exchange of experience and know-how between different types of organizations involved in education, training and youth.

Knowledge Alliances promote the cooperation between higher education institutions and enterprises to foster innovation, entrepreneurship, creativity and multidisciplinary teaching and learning;

Sector Skills Alliances provide support to VET systems and the Business sector to jointly design and delivery of vocational training curricula, programmes and teaching and training methodologies, drawing on evidence of trends in specific economic sectors;

Finally, **Capacity Building** are addressed to enhance the cooperation between European and Non-European Higher education institutions and systems for their modernization and internationalization.

Key Action 3 – Support for Policy Reforms through meetings, conferences, consultations and events promoting the active participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.

There are also two other actions included in Erasmus+, **Jean Monnet** supporting excellence in teaching and research in the field of European Union studies worldwide, **Sport Actions** finance through **Collaborative Partnerships**, prevention of doping, fight against match-fixing, containment of violence and also tackling racism and intolerance in sport.

The overall Budget of the Erasmus + Programme is 14.77 Billion Euro for the entire 7 years period, with KA1 being allocated around 63%, KA2 around 28% and KA3 around 4%, of the total budget

Further information on the Erasmus+ Programme is available on the European Commission's website at: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm

Horizon 2020

The Horizon 2020 Programme is organized in three Pillars: Pillar 1 – Excellent Science, Pillar 2 – Industrial Leadership and Pillar 3 – Societal Challenges.

Pillar 1 – Excellent Science, aims to make the EU's research and innovation system more competitive on a global scale providing funding opportunities for individual and group researchers according to a science-driven and widely 'bottom-up' approaches.

The European Research Council (ERC) provides flexible funding opportunities to enable talented and creative researchers (individually and in teams) to pursue the most promising researches.

Future and Emerging Technologies (FET) supports collaborative research for advanced and paradigm-changing innovation. It finances scientific collaboration across disciplines on radically new, high-risk ideas to accelerate development of the most promising emerging areas of science and technology.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) finances opportunities for researchers' training and career development through their cross-border and cross-sector mobility. Resources are available both for individual researchers and for institutions to cooperatively set up mobility initiatives.

Pillar 2 – Industrial Leadership, aims to make Europe a more attractive location to invest in research and innovation by promoting activities where businesses set the agenda.

Leadership in enabling and industrial technologies (LEIT) provides support for research, development, demonstration, standardization and certification of highly innovative products and services in three topic-based areas identified by the Horizon 2020 bi-annual Work-programmes: Information and communications technology (ICT), Nanotechnologies, advanced materials, biotechnology and Space.

Pillar 2 also provides an innovative SME instrument to stimulate all forms of innovation in SMEs, targeting those with the potential to grow and internationalize across the single market and beyond.

Pillar 3 – Societal Challenges, aims to address major concerns shared by modern societies through a challenge-based approach, bringing together resources and knowledge across different fields, technologies and disciplines.

Funding focus on topic-based challenges, already defined by the Horizon 2020's Work-

programme reviewed on a bi-annual basis:

- Health, demographic change and wellbeing
- Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research, and the Bioeconomy
- Secure, clean and efficient energy
- Smart, green and integrated transport
- Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials
- Europe in a changing world – inclusive, innovative and reflective societies
- Secure societies – protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens

The total budget for the 2014-2020 period is 70 billion euros:

- Pillar 1 – Excellent Science: 24.4 Billion Euro
- Pillar 2 – Industrial leadership: 17 Billion Euro
- Pillar 3 – Societal challenges: 29.7 Billion Euro

Further information on the Horizon 2020 Programme is available on the European Commission's website at: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en>

Quality in Project Planning

Usually there is an average of 3 months for presenting a project after a Call for Proposal is published. Given this limited time it is recommended to start developing a project idea before the Call for Proposal is published, based on what is foreseen in the program of reference. The formulation of a project idea should arise from the analysis of the context at European level and on a clear and consistent identification and selection of the needs to be addressed. The analysis of the context should include the understanding of community policies in the sector of reference, specific needs analysis and researches on the subject field as well as the evaluation of the current and past initiatives in the framework of interest. The project idea also has to be fully consistent with the specific priorities of the Call for Proposal.

The relevance of the project, its consistency with the programme's priorities, the European added value and its level of innovation are among the quality criteria that are considered in the project assessment and selection process.

Further assessment criteria are:

- The quality of the project structure and overall work plan that measures aspects such as: the completeness and the consistency of the activities with reference to the objectives identified; the feasibility of the planned activities and the of the expected results; the innovative potential of the methodologies adopted to carry out the activities; the effectiveness of the planned quality control measures; the cost effectiveness of the project budget.
- The quality of project partnership addressing different elements such as the complementarity and multi-sectoral dimension of the institutions involved, the capacity of the project partners to cover the relevant experiences and expertise and a balanced and appropriate representation of the different geographical areas and cultural backgrounds of Europe is an important matter.
- The potential impact of the project addressing issues as: the effectiveness of the communication plan, the measures that will be adopted to ensure the project results dissemination, sustainability and transferability the number of stakeholders benefiting from the project activities.

Examples of successful projects in the field of Internationalisation and Multilingualism

- CLIL for STEAM

The project, funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme- KA2 Strategic Partnership in the field of School Education, aims to address students under achievement in English and in STEM subjects through the promotion of an effective strategy for teaching STEM with the CLIL approach.

<https://clil4steam.pixel-online.org/index.php>

- OPENLang Network Open European Languages and Cultures Network

The project, funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme- KA2 Strategic Partnership, aims at developing the “OPENLang Network”, which envisages to connect all the Erasmus+ KA1 Mobility Participants in an OPEN informal and highly interactive online environment which could support more efficiently their effort to develop their language skills of the target mobility EU languages.

<https://www.openlangnet.eu/>

- Med&Lang Palliative Care

The Med&Lang Palliative Care project, funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme-KA2 Strategic Partnership in the field of Higher Education. The project focuses on communication skills in a foreign language for supporting the teaching processes of the medical lecturers at higher education level, with a specific focus on the palliative cares.

Website: <http://www.medlang.eu/>

- Increase

The project funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme- KA2 Strategic Partnership in the field of School Education, aims to develop the intercultural competences of adult educators working with multicultural and multilingual learners.

- EET – Economic e-Translations

The EE-T, Economic e-Translations project is funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme-Erasmus Multilateral projects in the field of Higher Education. The project, assessed the impact of translations of economic texts on the European history of economic thought. Website:

<http://eet.pixel-online.org/index.php>

- 2IMINED

The 2IMINED European project is aimed at improving competencies of educators working with immigrants as far as formal and non-formal education provision is concerned.

- Not Only Fair Play

The project aims at promoting the enhancement of sport and physical activities offer of European schools both within the curricular activities and through extracurricular initiatives in order to promote integration and intercultural understanding.

- NELLIP Network of European Language Learning Providers

The NELLIP project is funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme - KA2 Languages. The NELLIP project promoted quality in language learning through the application of the quality criteria used to award the European Language Label.

Website: <http://nellip.pixel-online.org/>

LightVerb-Quest: An Adventure Storytelling Game to Foster Second Language Acquisition and Verbal Multi-Word Expressions Assimilation

Annalisa Raffone¹, Francesco Maria Sacerdoti², Sabina Maraffi³,
Johanna Monti⁴

“L’Orientale” University of Naples, Italy^{1,4}

E-voluzione s.r.l., Italy²

I.C. Poggiali-Spizzichino, Italy³

Abstract

In today’s ever-changing society, Second Language Teaching (SLT) is becoming a challenge for language learning teachers and educators as the increasing availability of digital tools – to whom 21st Century students are constantly exposed – can cause the traditional face-to-face language learning process to be boring and/or ineffective. Nevertheless, CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) researchers have recently stated the potential for serious games as innovative support to traditional educational methods.

In effect, Game-Based Learning (GBL) could have a strong impact on achieving educational objectives in language learning as it stimulates learners’ autonomy and cooperation and promotes language acquisition through goal-oriented activities. Moreover, when gaming is accompanied by a good narrative structure, motivation and engagement are further enhanced.

In the context of English as a Second Language (ESL), Multi-word Expressions (MWEs) play an essential role in enabling language fluency but, at the same time, they usually represent a challenge for L2 learners as, unlike native speakers, they tend to paraphrase or produce word combinations instead of multiword sequences.

In particular, Light-Verb Constructions (LVC) pose a problem for processing due to the non-compositionality of their meaning that cannot be easily deduced from their constituent parts.

In fact, as a light verb is formed by a verb plus a nominal complement (take a nap), it actually presents some information on the event but has abstract semantics, unlike heavy verbs that have full lexical meaning (sleep).

Therefore, this paper aims at presenting a class-interactive adventure game called LightVerb-Quest (LVQ) or “The Story of WordLand” aiming at teaching English LVCs to Italian secondary school students.

The game is based on an original adventure-story whose highly narrative nature allows the creation of a flow that fosters students’ intrinsic motivation and learning as they face their learning challenges by interacting with the game through their Smartphones.

Accordingly, Multiple-choice questions (MC) related to the chosen LVCs gradually appear during the story narration, thus making students understand their meaning and assimilate their usage.

Furthermore, the story has been syntactically and grammatically constructed according to CEFR (The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) levels for

secondary school students (A1-A2), so to make them learn and fix other grammatical structures.

This paper also aims at responding to today's latest methodological guidelines about students' needs for digital skills by creating an innovative instructional product.

Keywords: Second Language Acquisition, Storytelling, Game-Based Learning, Multi-Word Expressions, English as a Second Language, Computer Assisted Language Learning

1. Introduction

A challenging aspect in SLT is represented by Multi-word Expressions (MWEs) that usually cause problems to L2 learners as they are units derived from the combination of two or more words. The meaning of the MWE is different from the meaning of their constituent parts. However, MWEs form a considerable amount of the English language and learning them is fundamental to be able to communicate both in spoken and written language. Among MWEs Light Verb Constructions (LVCs) are a type of highly frequent Verbal MWEs (VMWEs) in the English language and their processing is usually difficult for L2 learners because their meaning is mostly non-compositional, that is it is not evident on the surface.

As a result, this paper aims at presenting a class-interactive storytelling game called "*LightVerb-Quest*" or "*The Story of WordLand*" devoted to teaching LVCs to Italian learners of English.

2. Digital Gaming, Storytelling and MWEs

The use of games in SLT is quite recent [1] as CALL educators have lately underlined the potential of digital gaming in being a valuable resource in fostering language learning.

The reason lies in the fact that, in the past, the use of computers and games was limited to the usability of computer labs while today, the increasing availability of new media technologies and mobile applications, allows second language educators to practice with this relatively new form of teaching generally well-welcomed by the students as they are heavy users of Smartphones and video-games.

Researchers state that games that include a meaningful story are more likely not only to engage and motivate students with their studies but also make them both assimilate the subject matter even better and develop their problem-solving skills [2].

In effect, since ancient times storytelling has represented not only a means of transmitting traditions and beliefs from a generation to another but also knowledge and wisdom as stories make the learning process faster because they are entertaining and easy to remember.

In the context of SLT, when the subject matter is conveyed through the combination of gaming and storytelling, this leads to the development of a meaningful learning environment in which students' learning is enhanced by digital technologies.

In particular, digital games seem to be a powerful way in fostering ESL (English as a Second Language) students' learning as they provide them with the opportunity to experience language acquisition not only as a traditional scholastic subject but in a more natural way by allowing players to interact with new vocabulary and stimulating their thinking skills.

In effect, it is self-evident that vocabulary acquisition is central to language learning because a limited vocabulary can impede successful communication.

3. Light Verb Constructions (LVCs) and Language Learning

The term Light Verb was first coined by Jespersen [3] to refer to those English verbs composed by a verb + a noun construction such as “*take a walk*”, “*have a rest*”, “*make a call*”, “*give a presentation*”.

The essential characteristic of these verbs is that their semantic content is not provided by the verb but by the nominal complement. This means that in a Light Verb Construction the noun complement adds additional semantics to the event representation.

Let's take for instance the sentence “*Luke gave his presentation yesterday*”: The Light Verb *give* contributes little semantic content to the sentence while the main meaning is provided by the noun, thus “*Luke presented yesterday*”.

It seems clear that processing these types of constructions could be difficult especially for beginning learners of English as the information they provide should be gathered both from their syntactic and semantic components.

Moreover, Light Verbs differ in their use and they cannot quite always be translated.

In Italian these verbs are called *verbi supporto* [4] but they are differently constructed compared to the English ones. In fact, referring to the example mentioned above, the English construction *give a presentation* cannot be translated in Italian as *dare una presentazione* (namely, “*Luca diede la sua presentazione ieri*”) as the Italian verb *dare* generally refers to the act of *giving something to someone* while the verb *give* in the English LVC refers to the act of *doing something*. In this case, the Italian translation “*Luca fece la sua presentazione/presentò ieri*” seems to be more appropriate as the verb *fare* better translates the meaning of the English LVC.

Having said that, apart from the syntax, what makes the acquisition of LVCs difficult is their abstract meaning. To that end, the idea of this paper is to claim that by narrativizing the abstract content of some most frequently used English LVCs through storytelling and gaming as further support to the learning process it could be possible to simplify and better allow the acquisition of English LVCs.

4. The Game & the Adventure: Storyline and Linguistic features

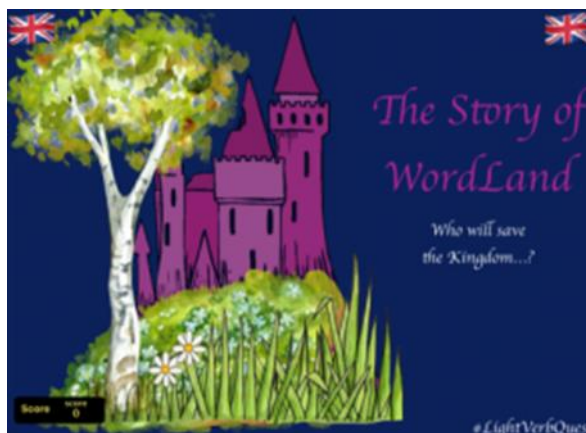


Fig. 1: The Game

Light-Verb Quest or “*The Story of WordLand*” is a class-interactive storytelling game developed by using a role-playing engine called *EVO-RPGE* aiming at fostering English

language acquisition by Italian secondary school students at their 7th grade.

The game deals with MWEs, especially VMWEs (in particular, LVCs) but the story narration has been developed so that it contains most of the grammatical structures provided by the syllabus students should be able to manage at the end of their school year.

In fact, the game provides students with the possibility to better assimilate and review tenses (e.g., *Past Simple* of regular and irregular verbs); *Wh-questions*; *Comparatives* and *Superlatives*; *Modals* (their positive and negative forms) such as *Have to*, *Must*, *Can*; constructions with verbs that express likes and dislikes (*like*, *love*, *hate*, *prefer + ing*); vocabulary about *weather*, *means of transport*, *body parts*, *holidays*; also, there are some geographical and historical references to the UK such as information about *Scotland* or *The Tudor Times*.

Light-Verb Quest is based on an original story that makes students directly involved in the narration so that they get to know characters and events as they proceed in the story.

The adventure is set in the fantasy world of *WordLand*, a magical kingdom where people live happy and free. The King, the Queen, and the little Prince peacefully spend their lives in a bucolic castle and protect a very important treasure: a magical chest that contains all the words of the World. Unfortunately, one day a terrible dragon who hates seeing people love each other and wants to control the world of *WordLand* and throw people into despair and solitude attacks the Kingdom with its fire and steals the magical word-treasure. From that moment on, people cannot talk anymore. Only the Prince could save *WordLand* but he needs a *WordMaster* (the students) who helps him collect all the missing words by overcoming the trials the dragon has prepared for him, give people their words back and restore peace and serenity in the Kingdom.

This is the moment in which the learning process starts, however, students are introduced into the topic thanks to an external narrator that presents the background situation, describes the characters and the kingdom, so to make them active participants in the game. Each character has its voice, in this way students identify roles and objectives and better follow the story narration. Also, both the protagonists (e.g., the prince or his friends) and the antagonists (e.g., the dragon) of the story directly interact with the class by addressing it by simply asking students to do things (e.g., a rabbit who cannot talk asks the Prince to help him complete a sentence that gives him a hint to proceed in the story) or “threaten” them when the class is trying to complete a challenge in the story (e.g., the dragon gives the class wrong hints). This is a way to engage students provided by digital gaming and storytelling that cannot be experienced during traditional *face-to-face* teaching.

Moreover, by giving students the role of the *WordMaster* of the English language they experience a sense of responsibility in completing the game and the need to overcome the troubles created by the dragon could motivate them to better focus and reflect on the different linguistic questions that gradually appear during the story-narration.

5. The Questions

The questions are presented in the form of Multiple-Choice questions (MC) that allow students to reflect upon the answers and follow and proceed in the story without needing particular knowledge of the topic.



Fig. 2: Gap-fill exercise

Also, the MC-questions are sometimes presented in the form of a *gap-fill exercise* especially when it comes to LVCs, so to make students able to visualize, understand and remember not only the syntactic construction of the LVC but also the appropriate verb that goes with the noun complement.

Moreover, each question gradually appears during the story narration and this helps students maintain their attention without distracting themselves, something that could happen instead if they were forced to only follow the narration.

The interaction with the game is provided by students' Smartphones that are connected to a private Wi-Fi that only allows them to play the game by impeding them to surf the net or use other applications.

Students can work individually or in groups, however, results by previous work with this type of language-learning game [5] have already demonstrated that students prefer doing these activities in groups. This allows claiming that the combination of gaming and storytelling fosters cooperative learning (CL).

When all the students have answered the question, then the system chooses the most voted one by following the criterion of the majority. Besides, each student can auto-evaluate himself/herself as the correct answer is displayed both on their screen and on the Interactive Whiteboard (IWB). In the example below, a rabbit missing words is trying to tell the students that he is taking a nap, so if they want a hint to proceed in the story, they should bring him some chocolate. This example shows the case in which the students choose the wrong answer. Accordingly, when the answer is incorrect, then the system colours the right answer in green and the wrong one in red.



Fig. 3: Correct and Wrong answer

Furthermore, the game has been developed so that the system not only shows the correct answer but also explains why the other one is incorrect by giving the actual meaning of the answer. To reinforce students' understanding, the explanation is always accompanied by visual and textual elements that help students memorize the content.

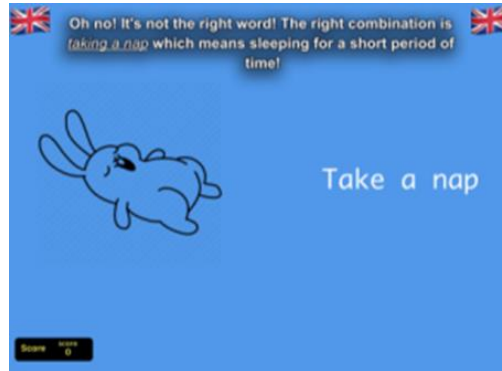


Fig. 4: Example of an explanation

In the example below, the narrator tells the students that the chosen answer is incorrect and explains to them why both through visual text and voice but also the image of the rabbit *taking a nap*.

All the music, the sounds, the images that accompany the story-narration in *LVQ* are copyright-free or have been created and/or modified by using photo, video and audio-editing software. The idea of mixing the verbal and the visual into the game aims at offering the students the possibility of experiencing different communication codes that could enhance their learning process.

6. Conclusions

This paper aimed at presenting *LightVerb-Quest* or *The Story of WordLand*, a class-interactive adventure game devoted to enhancing ESL acquisition and MWE assimilation by Italian secondary school students. The game focuses both on the grammatical structures provided by the English syllabus of the students and on a particular type of VMWEs, which are LVCs, usually problematic in their comprehension and processing.

By combining digital gaming and storytelling, *LVQ* aims at offering students an innovative learning experience in which they can feel stimulated and motivated both in their independent and cooperative learning.

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Making a Difference: English Learning, ICT and the School Library Hand-in-Hand

Cláudia Mota¹

Colmeias Joint Group of Schools, Portugal¹

Abstract

Teaching English as a foreign language to students who are 8 to 11 years old (especially when you are used to working with teenagers) can be really challenging, but also highly rewarding. You must definitely leave your “comfort zone” and risk new approaches. Introducing ICT in the scenario and making use of the school library space conditions and resources (books, iPads, digital tools) can lead to countless ideas and initiatives, which arise gradually as time goes by and imagination takes the lead. As an English teacher and librarian teacher of a joint group of schools in the centre of Portugal, I developed this project with about 100 primary school students (plus 20 kindergarten children), in the course of two school years (2016-2018). The project became “Merit Idea 2016”, supported by the Portuguese School Libraries Network. Not to lose its dynamics, it has been reconfigured and further developed with the previous primary students, later attending the 5th (2018/2019) and 6th grades (2019/2020).

In this project, ICT tools are not an END, but a MEANS to learn English and become digitally (cap)able in a modern world. English children’s books and other school library resources are also great instruments to develop one’s vocabulary, pleasure in reading, creativity, sense of citizenship and opinion about the world. Songs, nursery rhymes, videos, English apps and games are also on the core of this project, which I consider worth spreading to other teachers around the world. A lot of effort, but also a lot of pleasure, are definitely involved in the process. There were steps forward and some backwards, but motivation to learn a foreign language and the pleasure of playing and sharing were/are always present in the English classes.

Keywords: English, ICT, school library, motivation, children’s literature

1. Contextualization

Projects are never easy to implement, but are a crucial factor for the development of innovative teaching methods. If this is the case everywhere, projects gain a special meaning if we consider a rural group of schools in the centre of Portugal, split over an area of about 20 kilometres, at middle distance between the two most important cities: Lisbon and Oporto. Eight hundred and fifty students attend these joint schools, from kindergarten to the 9th grade (that means three to fifteen-year-old students). Eighty-eight teachers work in these schools, which are governed by a common administration and have had the same Headmaster since its very beginning, 24 years ago. Needless to say, the Headmaster team always gives a strong incentive to new and innovative projects and highly supports the teachers willing to take up the challenge.

What is my role as the single Librarian Teacher (besides being one of the eight English teachers), within this particular community? Running two school libraries and

giving some support to the whole community, especially in what concerns its reading dynamics, is not an easy task. The modernization of the school libraries, trying to link them as much as possible with the curriculum, has been my *modus operandi*, having a certain philosophy in mind:

La biblioteca debe ser un agente catalizador e canalizador de acciones concretas que sin apoyo estable y continuado non podrían fructificar. [...] debe aglutinar como un imán, demandas y necesidades concretas surgidas en las distintas áreas curriculares. [...] Este imán puede y debe, a su vez, iluminar y canalizar, por caminos de corresponsabilidad e interdisciplinariedad, las demandas recibidas, vinculando las herramientas y recursos – tradicionales y digitales – más útiles para su realización, y asesorando en el diseño de propuestas concretas. [1]

2. Introduction

The title of this project, in Portuguese, was initially “Inglês com TICs e (re)toques na BE do 1º ciclo”. As the children grew up, it was later adapted and denominated “Inglês com TIC, (re)toque e com a BE”. It’s hard to translate the titles chosen, because some meaning gets lost in translation, but they refer to English learning, ICT and the school library hand-in-hand, as does the title of this article.

Before starting to discriminate some of the most emblematic activities developed and tools used, let me just add, in advance, that the project’s philosophy has always had to do with a central word – SHARING:

- sharing ideas with the students involved;
- sharing students’ learning experiences with their parents, so that they would be familiar with the project and the children’s school life;
- sharing the dynamics with the teachers from our group of schools, hopefully making them curious about certain activities and/or ICT tools;
- sharing resources with English teachers from other parts of Portugal and, now, through this article/presentation, with teachers who live and work abroad.

The intention to combine the recently compulsory English language learning in an early age (seven/eight-year-old students) in Portugal with the dynamics of the school library and the use of ICT tools/equipment was the starting point of this project. It was considered one of the seven national “Merit Idea Projects 2016”, financially supported and closely supervised by the Portuguese School Libraries Network (in Portuguese, Rede de Bibliotecas Escolares – henceforth referred to by its abbreviation, RBE).

As an easily accessible sharing/dissemination platform, I created a Facebook group page, where working documents, videos, photos, the description of activities, links and much more are included and regularly updated [2].

3. Main activities

Around 100 students were included in the project from 2016 to 2018. In the first year, English classes actually took place in the primary school library. However, in the second year, the school underwent a major renovation and we had to temporarily move elsewhere.

Parallel to this, I have also promoted an introduction to English learning for 20 kindergarten children. Sessions take place in the main school library once a week since October 2016. Playing with the English language and memorizing some words (and their meanings) is the goal. English picture books, songs, videos and stimulating images help us do that.

From September 2018 onwards, the key group of primary school students involved (that is, the class participating in the project since the moment it started) changed school and are now attending the main school, called EBI Colmeias, which serves about 350 students. The school library resources, such as English books, iPads, films are regularly used. Even robots were tried to revise some vocabulary. From time to time, the English class may take place in the school library, following two of the quality patterns defined for Portuguese school libraries by RBE: school libraries as “places of knowledge and innovation, able to incorporate new pedagogical practices” and “flexible environments, adapted to the technological changes and the users’ needs” [3].

Outdoor activities are also privileged. In the first two years, the English class always started in the playground with a vocabulary game, song or nursery rhyme. Then, the students were given the related so-called ‘password’, which they had to quickly memorize and repeat in front of the teacher when finally entering the classroom. If they had forgotten it, they had to take the last place in the students’ queue and repeat it till they could say it correctly. Later it was written on the board and its meaning was explained.

Flashcards, posters, stimulating images and boardgames are frequently used, allying the vocabulary learning to visual representations of the words and the capacity to learn by playing. Good literary titles from well-known English writers, such as Eric Carle, Shel Silverstein, Anthony Brown, Lane Smith or Nick Sharrat, among others, are used for educational purposes or just read for the pleasure of a good story.

Kahoot, Mentimeter, Quizizz, Socrative and Plickers are some of the students’ favourite digital tools, allowing them to develop their technological abilities while learning English. They also enjoy working on shared documents on google drive or talking to “Siri”, a virtual assistant that is part of Apple IOS system.

Some of the games tried and materials produced (crosswords, little videos, QR codes, Prezi presentations) are also shared with other 6th graders attending another public school, but in a very different context. Their school is situated in Montalegre, in the north of Portugal, about 350 kms away from us. Students call each other “Tech Pals”, even if sometimes we exchange letters, postcards or manually produced objects. All these initiatives allow the project to be at full speed for the 4th consecutive year, also promoting respect, understanding and a strong citizenship sense among teenagers [4].

In fact, the promotion of citizenship and social inclusion has been at the core of the most recent transformation in the Portuguese curriculum. The tendency is also to make the learning process more flexible and the classes’ structure not so strict. The content of two or three subjects can be combined and teachers can work simultaneously with a class to try some more practical teaching approaches. Formative evaluation is more valued than summative as well.

In this context of growing flexibility, my students organized a singing reception to a visiting writer in the so-called “National Reading Week 2019”. They studied the lyrics of an English song, translated them to Portuguese, rehearsed and then sung “Heal the World”, by Michael Jackson, in front of our guest and all the 6th grade classes. The following subjects were involved: English, Portuguese, Music and Citizenship.

In another occasion, students and some of their teachers, including me, dressed up as “lost tourists” and went around the school talking in English (or trying to) and asking for directions to go to the south of Portugal. English, Geography, Portuguese and Arts were the involved subjects. Students had to improvise a lot, establish contact with unknown people, practice the English language and, most of all, they had a lot of fun.

We are now preparing new initiatives of curricular flexibility for this school year, trying to include the school library professionals and resources in the process.

4. Conclusion

It is certain that, in a library context, the “outcomes are the ways in which library users are changed as a result of their contact with the library’s resources and programs” [5].

These are very important in this project, as the involved students feel physically and emotionally closer to their school library, valuing and getting to know its resources better.

What else? “Outcomes are key but not the whole story” [5].

For me, the process developed in this project is more important than the products and results obtained. Step by step, with some hesitation but also a big enthusiasm, my students and I have built this project because a teacher can’t do anything alone. In a complementary way, the interchange with the northern school has represented a significant added value.

With these strategies (and others that come out of a sudden due to the students and teachers’ motivation/imagination), learning/teaching English becomes more interesting.

These dynamics demand a lot of effort, but are also a source of great pleasure.

To finish, I truly hope that the reading of this paper might inspire other teachers to engage in similar projects, preferably including the libraries as dynamic structures within the school. English learning projects, such as this one, can really make a difference and are a very rewarding educational and personal experience.

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Neuro-didactics: A New Approach In Learning Processes

María del Prado Camacho Alarcón¹
University of Castilla-La-Mancha, Spain¹

Abstract

Over the last thirty years, research on the human brain has provided teachers with new tools about the relation among how our brain works, the important role of our thoughts and emotions and the capability to be efficient. Thus, the main target of this article is getting a closer approach to the implementation of neuro-didactics in class, outstanding the importance of a cognitive training in which new concepts will be built on the base of the old ones offering intellectual relevant activities to promote neuroplasticity and neurogenesis among my students. Since learning is a cognitive and motivational process, I have worked on implementing socioemotional learning with varied challenging activities in class to stimulate the functional diversity in our brains for cooperation and to develop prosocial attitudes and develop their growth mindset (Moser, J.S. et al., 2011). Throughout this article, we will deal with the cognitive components in learning together with the interrelations among three constructs of motivation in my class, considering self-concept and goals in learning. I will focus on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in class, the impact of prospective and retrospective emotions in learning and efficiency and the contextual variables in motivation applied in my groups at the Official Language School in Spain and how to maintain attention, wakefulness and alertness in memory processes and learning. Thereby, the present article is meant to critically evaluate the implementation of neuro-didactics in class to work on students' motivation and goals in learning to fulfill their potential (Dweck, C. 2008).

Keywords: Neuroscience, Neuro-didactics, Motivation, Attention, Learning

1. Introduction

The remarkable recent scientific developments of neuroscience have provided us with new tools to understand how our brain works and have confirmed the constant growth of new neural connections and thought patterns throughout life, which means our brain is flexible and we are all involved in a constantly improving learning process.

Guillén states that neuroeducation offers a new flexible, positive and optimistic approach as it is in line with varied active learning methodologies and because it enhances the development of competences for life [6]. As educators, we have the responsibility to provide students with relevant information and challenges to awake their curiosity and motivation and develop their learning experience by being active participants of their learning-teaching process. Indeed, it is experience that makes our brain change by creating new synapses and repetition and practice make changes permanent. Thus, neuroeducation offers a holistic approach from the fusion of neuroscience, psychology and pedagogy.

The human being is supplied not only with cognitive abilities but also emotional,

social, moral, physical and spiritual capabilities which come from them all from our brain.

Despite constituting 2% of our body mass, it requires 20% of our energetic needs.

Moreover, the growth of the human brains and massive development in neocortex throughout history accounts for over 40% of the whole-brain energy consumption [8]. It holds approximately 86 billion neurons [7] which can establish about 10.000 connections or synapses each. This leads us to a new concept of learning as our brain is constantly creating new synapses according to the stimuli and changing environment.

Each hemisphere of our brain consists of four lobes with different functions. The occipital lobe is related to visual processes, the temporal lobe to auditory processes, and it contains the hippocampus and the Wernicke's area, which are basic for memory and language processes. Furthermore, neurochemical systems have different abilities to influence learning and memory [10] as dopamine will help us have a motivated student, serotonin will be present in a glad student whereas we could find low noradrenalin levels in a distracted student or acetylcholine in bored learners listening to a traditional master class [6]. Thus, neurotransmitters, such as adrenaline and noradrenalin, are essential to keep our students' attention once the information has arrived at the prefrontal lobes, where executive functions take place.

2. Executive functions and learning as a cognitive and motivational process

Executive functions have a main role in cognitive and behavioural processes and are crucial not only in our daily life, as they help us organize our time and tasks properly and be flexible to get our conduct adapted, but also for our students' educational paths as learners whose executive functions are better developed are often those who perform and succeed best in school and university [10]. The most relevant components of executive functions are the abilities to [15]:

- Set goals: motivation, self-awareness and the way human beings perceive the world.
- Plan strategies to get your goals: analysing situations to evaluate the circumstances and plan how to lead an activity.
- Fulfil plans: ability to start, continue or stop sequences in a clear integrated way to achieve the objective.
- Control, readjust and be aware of the time, intensity and other qualitative aspects [6].

The three following elements of executive functions [1] are essential when planning for our students' appropriate academic and personal development, which constitutes a must for teachers:

- Inhibitory control helps to intentionally control behaviours and automatic responses, so that students keep their attention on what they are doing without getting distracted and know when to interact. For instance, in a role-play activity, a conversation or teamwork.
- Working memory is important for reasoning, decision-making, and behaviour.
- Cognitive flexibility is the capacity to change from one task to another, mental processes and objectives [5], which permits us to develop our critical thinking. For example, when proposing different uses for one object or when choosing among different ways to continue a story.

Integrating these processes with emotional and motivational ones will allow the most complex behaviours, as learning is both a cognitive and motivational process [2].

Consequently, students need both the ability to learn, as they need the cognitive elements such as knowledge, strategies, and skills required, and to be willing and

motivated to do it [11].

Among the different theories there are three main interrelated constructs in academic motivation:

- Causal attributions patterns, in which achievement strivings are in part determined by causal attributions. For example, students high in motivation attribute success to the effort on the task [16].
- Self-concept, which in the academic context will be built not only by the student's self-perception but with the feedback received by their classmates, teacher and parents.
- Learning goals [3], which can be internal, if related to their curiosity or their will for challenges or learning, or external, if related to rewards, marks or parents' approval.

Thus, intrinsic motivation involves an internal desire to engage in an activity to develop oneself, to learn and it is related to a growth mindset [3], whereas extrinsic motivation involves doing something to get a reward or somebody's approval, so students with extrinsic motivation will evade academic challenges to avoid failure.

Emotions play a crucial role in students' motivation [14], and cognitive strategies such as acquisition, storage, and recovery of the students' information and, consequently, in learning and academic achievement [12]. Pekrun states that prospective emotions are directly linked to results, such as good marks or parents' and teachers' appreciation leading to a satisfying state, which will lead students to positive extrinsic motivation.

Whereas, retrospective emotions such as joy for the results, sadness, shame, pride, disappointment or anger have evaluative functions to develop extrinsic motivation [4]. Additionally, there are relevant contextual elements in motivation to consider such as a respectful teacher, the positive relationships created among students and relevant contents, which are indispensable elements to guarantee significant learning and maintain their attention, wakefulness and alertness, in which the Ascending Reticular Activating System (ARAS) plays a main role as when a stimulus is positive for students, dopamine appears and encourages them to set in motion. Consequently, neurotransmitters such as adrenaline and noradrenaline are released holding their attention until they get their reward.

Hence, learning a language must be a rewarding experience in a positive learning environment. For this reason, systematic careful planning of learning situations is essential. At the Official Languages Schools in Spain, teachers deal with tremendously heterogeneous classes regarding interests and ages, which range from 16 to 70 approximately, so planning considering their competences, abilities, and limitations, the previous knowledge on which to build the new concepts and linking the contents to their interests and experiences helps to encourage them to continue learning a language.

Furthermore, objectives must constitute a challenge to make them abandon their comfort and teachers, as guides, must help them analyse mistakes showing them their positive expectations about their learning process to help students manage the stress that could arise during the process. Once positive associations with the language have been created, by means of dynamic activities including movement to activate their prefrontal brain area at the beginning of the class in which they mainly socially interact, teachers must plan to guarantee the students' success offering attractive activities in which students will be active participants, such as problem-solving and group activities to boost enriching cooperative work. Additionally, the positive emotional components in my class are the key to stimulate students' learning, as when they get positive feedback, dopamine acts as a reward. Along with this, waking up their curiosity will make them focus their attention, for example using new technologies to present some information,

using a story or an anecdote or setting real examples. All this must be based on mutual respect, knowing each student's name, trying to also guide them individually and appreciating mistakes as something natural from which we all learn and in which we are all interested.

As a teacher, letting my students become autonomous learners too, make their own decisions and develop their skills has been a reward. Active participation makes them feel at ease in written and spoken English activities and contributes to information consolidation and reflexion upon the teaching-learning process as well as reducing school drop-out and increasing resilience and motivation among them.

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Peculiarities and Advantages of Teaching English through Games

Susanna Asatryan¹

Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences, Armenia¹

Abstract

*Games and fun activities are a vital part of English teaching classes. Embracing rules and elements of fun, they must be an integral component of the language syllabus, as a technique with clear goals, objectives, tasks and expected outcomes. Games are a good way of practicing language. They motivate learners, promote classroom interaction, improve learners' language acquisition and their communicative skills. Games can be used at all stages of the language instruction from controlled to free practice. Games can also serve as a diagnostic tool for teachers to note and specify the areas of difficulty and take appropriate constructive actions. Sometimes students are lazy and none motivated to do their tasks. So, for this account games lead the learners for participation in different activities, they get a chance to practice or use the new language items (vocabulary, grammar structures and rules, phonetic items) they have just learnt eagerly and willingly instead of forcing them to do as a task. The most particular effective point is that learners play and learn at the same time. Games motivate learners, encouraging their teamwork solidarity. So, while considering games as a technique we come across with the following factors, such as **rules, competition, relaxation, learning**. The main focus of using game in class is not only to help students learn more effectively but also have fun. So before playing game in the classroom, it is necessary to explain clearly its rules to the learners.*

Keywords: teaching technique, classification of games, linguistic games, communicative games, interaction, learner motivation, language acquisition

Games are an integral part of language teaching instructions. Based on the purpose and objectives of the performance, we identify many kinds of game with different topics and for the learners with different levels of their language proficiency.

Generally, in contemporary foreign language teaching methodology games are divided into two main types:

Linguistic games – Focus is on language accuracy (vocabulary / grammar / spelling / phonology games).

Communicative games – Focus is on meaningful exchange of information, ideas, and messages.

According to Hadfield's classification, there are more games that contain elements of more than one type [3].

Lee suggests the following types of game classification [5].

- structure games
- vocabulary games
- spelling games
- pronunciation games

- number games
- listen-and-do games
- role play and simulation
- discussion games.

Mc Callum provides another classification:

- structure games
- vocabulary games
- number games
- spelling games
- conversation games
- writing games
- role play and drama [6].

Games can be used to teach or to assimilate the learners' language knowledge and communicative skills. Therefore, while choosing this or that type of game teachers must be careful, so that both learners and teachers can benefit the most from these games.

The important thing is to clarify and specify goals and objectives before the performance.

Information Gap games: One or more pupils have information and others need to complete a task. For instance, one person might have a drawing and their partner needs to create a similar drawing by listening to the information given by the partner with the drawing.

Information Gap games can involve a one-way information gap, such as the drawing game just described, or a two-way information gap, in which each person has unique information.

For Information-Gap activities to work, it is vitally important that students understand the details of the task and interact [7; p. 63-65]. From this perspective project work is another good example to motivate the learners for collaboration, promoting both authentic language use and interaction.

Guessing games. These are a variation of Information Gap games. One of the best-known examples of a guessing game is "20 Questions", in which one person thinks of a famous person, place, or thing. The other participants can ask 20 Yes/No questions to find clues in order to guess who or what the person is thinking of.

Matching games. As the name suggests, participants need to find a match for a word, picture or card.

Labeling games. These are a form of matching, in that participants match labels and pictures.

Board games. These games are mostly aimed at focusing on the target language knowledge.

Role-play games. The term "**Role play**" is generally used to refer to a wide range of practice and communicative activities. Some of the controlled or guided dialogues, especially cued dialogues, might be considered as an introduction to role play. These prepare learners to take part in role play activities which require greater spontaneity and fluency.

Byrne characterizes role-play with the following four features:

- **closeness**
- **situation**
- **realism**
- **personality** [1; p. 117-118].

Role-plays can be:

- **Controlled** – Participants are responsible for the language they use.
- **Semi-controlled** – Participants are partly expected to use the prescribed language.
- **Free** – Participants are responsible for the message not for the prescribed language.

Role play is not simply a rehearsal for real-life transactions. It provides learners with opportunities to practice correct and appropriate use of language functions, notions and structures in different contexts.

The ultimate aim of the role play, as of all speaking activities, is to involve learners in fluent and creative expression in a way which can and should be meaningful and enjoyable. This, as always, requires a supportive classroom atmosphere where learners are not afraid to speak and to act, the role play mask must provide some relief, particularly for shyer learners, from the intensity of teacher- centered activities.

Simulation involves learners in more creative activities. It usually covers complex structures and larger groups (of 6 to 20 students) where the entire group is working through an imaginary situation as a social unit. A common genre of simulation game specifies that all members of the group are shipwrecked on a “desert island”. Each person has been assigned an occupation (doctor, carpenter, garbage collector, etc.) and perhaps some other mitigating characteristics (a physical disability, an ex-convict, thief, businessman etc.) Only a specified subset of the group can survive on the remaining food supply so the group must decide who will live and who will die. Both the role play and the simulation require careful planning and preparation.

- A powerful variation of the Role-play is a Real-play. In this case, situations and one or more of the characters are drawn not from cards, but from a participant’s own life [7; pp. 155-163].

Typically, one of the learners plays himself/herself. This person explains a context (e.g., from his/her life experience) to other learners, and then together they recreate the situation in class. The Real-play technique allows learners to practice language they need in their own life. Nowadays there exist the new interpretation of the real play, which is a Reality Show.

In the frame of this article we’ll introduce several types of games that serve as corner-stones for structuring and implementing an interaction in the language classroom, they are:

Word Jumble Race

This game encourages team work competition in the classroom. It is perfect tool for practicing reading and writing skills and grammar.

Instructions:

- Write out a number of sentences, using different colors for each sentence, e.g., we suggest having 3-5 sentences for each team.
- Cut up the sentences so you have a handful of words.
- Put each sentence into hats, cups or any objects you can find, keeping each separate.
- Split your class into teams of 2, 3, or 4. You can have as many teams as you want but remember to have enough sentences to go around.
- Teams must now put their sentences in the correct order.
- The winning team is the first team to have all sentences correctly ordered.

Right Word, Wrong Place

It is a pretty tool for practicing learners' vocabulary and grammar skills. It is effective for the learners with different language proficiency levels [8; p. 21].

Instructions:

- Work in pairs.
- In each of the sentences below underline the two words which should change places with each other in order to make sense.

Example

- The park played in the children.
- The cinema went to the children.
- This time we week next will be in Paris.
- I French learning to speak am.
- Grass off the keep.
- Like you do watch television?

Hangman

This is a favourite for all students. No matter how many students are there in the classroom, this game is best used particularly at the start to warm the class up or at the end if we have got some time left over.

Instructions:

- Think of a word and write the number of letters on the board using dashes to show many letters there are.
- Ask students to suggest a letter. If it appears in the word, write it in all of the correct spaces. If the letter does not appear in the word, write it off to the side and begin drawing the image of a hanging man.
- Continue until the students guess the word correctly (they win) or you complete the diagram (you win).

Pictionary

This is another game that works well with any age group; children love it because they can get creative in the classroom, breaking the monotony of new language learning. Pictionary can help students practice and brush up their vocabulary.

Instructions:

- Before the class starts, prepare a bunch of words and put them in a bag.
- Split the class into two teams and draw a line down the middle of the board.
- Give one team member from each team a pen and ask them to choose a word from the bag.
- Tell the students to draw the word as a picture on the board and encourage their team to guess the word.
- The first team to shout the correct answer gets a point.

Hot Seat

It is perfect tool for practicing speaking and listening skills, encouraging competition in the classroom and it allows students to build their vocabulary.

Instructions:

- Split the class into two or more teams.
- Elect one person from each team to sit in the Hot Seat, facing the classroom with the board behind them.
- Write a word on the board. One of the team members of the student in the hot seat must help the student guess the word by describing it. They have a limited

amount of time and cannot say, spell or draw the word.

- Continue until each team member has described a word to the student in the Hot Seat.

Find Someone Who...

This is an excellent game to practice and activate learners' speaking and listening skills, encouraging their vocabulary learning as well.

Instructions:

Every student takes a sheet of paper and walks around the room, asking the other students for information. The learners must interact only in English, using complete sentences.

To provide authenticity in class, the learners ask interesting questions related to real life events, situations, facts, for example:

Find someone who...

1. can play the piano _____
2. can read sign language _____
3. can make pizza _____
4. can sing well _____
5. can speak three languages _____

The teacher walks around the classroom and observes the learners to prevent them using repeated questions. They also focus their attention on the learners' mistakes, slips, or any kind of difficulties occurring in communication.

Two Truths and a Lie

This is a fun game and a brilliant ice breaker between students if they do not know one another. The game is excellent for practicing speaking skills and building up relations.

Instructions:

- Write three statements about yourself on the board, two of which should be lies and one true.
- Allow your students to ask you questions about each statement and then guess which one is the truth. If they guess correctly then they win.

You can also give your students time to write their own two truths and one lie.

- Pair them up and have them play again, this time with their list, with their new partner. If you want to extend the game and give students more time to practice their speaking/listening skills, you can rotate partners every five minutes.
- Bring the whole class back together and have students announce one new thing they learned about another student as a recap.

Cause and Effect Game

When English as a Second Language (ESL) students begin to form more complex sentences, it's important for them to understand the relationships between phrases.

Cause and effect phrases are essential because they allow the speaker to state reasons clearly and accurately.

EFFECT	CAUSE
Jim was not able to go to soccer today. Mike spent all day in the kitchen.	Because he had the flu. Because all of his friends wanted him to make dinner for them.
She got 100 percent on the test. He had a stomachache.	Because she studied hard. Because he ate junk food.

In the example introduced below we use Cause and Effect to show the relationship between two facts, concepts, or events, in which one is the result of the other (or others).

For this activity we can offer the learners different examples to put the concept into context.

We can provide students with an effect and they must provide the cause or vice versa, e.g.

To begin, write the following phrases on the board.

Effect

- Because Ann was late for class, _____
- As a result of the low exam grades, _____
- Mary was unable to write her report, therefore, _____
- Due to the expensive meal, _____

Cause

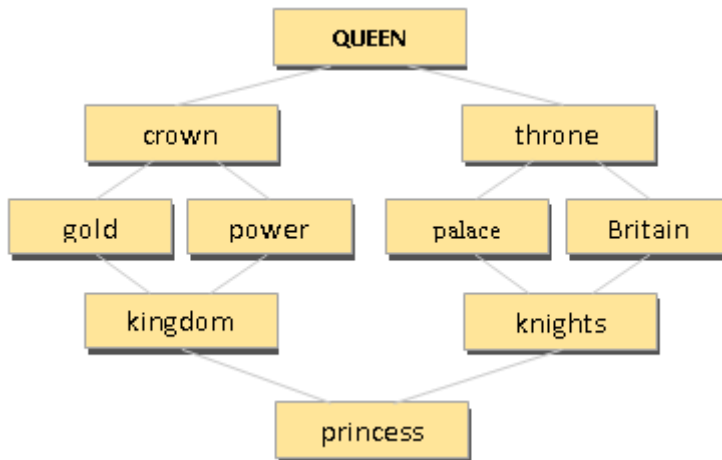
- The baby was crying because
- The car rolled off the road owing to
- Water was everywhere as a result of

Learners do this activity trying to make associations between different concepts, events or ideas. They find logical links between facts and results. On the other hand, they use the language they studied.

Prism

Today students need to develop a range of academic skills. They need to learn how to analyse information, look at things in new ways, formulate their own opinions, and express themselves clearly. Prism takes a fresh approach to EAP, by focusing strongly on critical and creative thinking, skills for academic life, and teaching the most useful language. Students can draw diagrams to generate concepts and ideas they are reading about, making logical links and connections, e.g.

PRISM – “THE QUEEN”

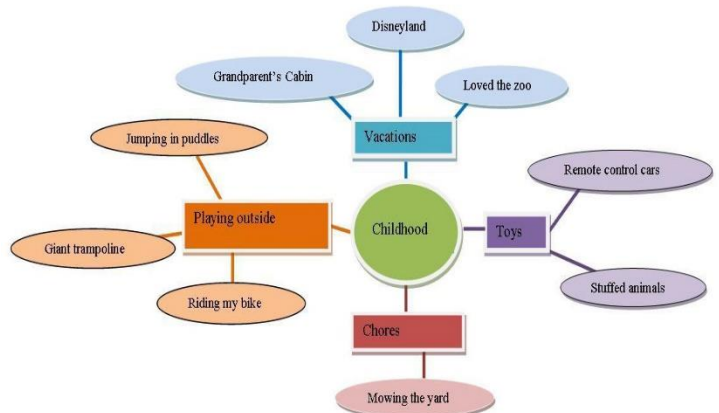


Brainstorming

This is another popular idea invention and problem-solving technique. We use Brainstorming when need to find a creative idea or solutions for a problem.

To Improve learners' brainstorming skills, we should:

- start with a clear question or problem to generate ideas about
- focus on quantity, not quality
- not criticize other people's ideas
- not be a judge
- keep going
- set a goal.



Actually, it is not possible to observe all language games and activities within one article. Teaching language through games is a vital topic for discussion and research.

So, with our interpretations we have tried to analyze games in teaching/learning process, highlighting their methodological peculiarities and advantages:

Games motivate learners

Games are highly motivating and entertaining as they are amusing, interesting and

at the same time challenging. Games raise student's activation to move around, use their mental abilities. As a result, they can transform a boring class into a challenging and interactive one. And in the line with Wright's and Buckby's theories, games help the teacher create a useful and meaningful language context in the classroom [9].

Games promote learners' interaction

Nowadays, in the era of communicative language teaching, interaction lies, in fact, in the heart of communication; it is what communication is supposed to be.

When playing games, students are trying to win or to beat other teams. Naturally, in this kind of activities learners interact a lot with one another.

Games improve learners' language acquisition

Thanks to the motivation and interaction created by games, students participate in the activity, have fun and learn at the same time. So, they acquire language knowledge.

Games increase learners' language communicative competence

Communicative competence is the main goal of foreign language teaching methodology nowadays, supported by European plurilingual education policy. Games help learners develop their language learning and social skills. They provide a platform for meaningful context. Learners utilize basic communicative skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing, associated with the practice of language forms, elements, structures and rules. [2; pp. 7-9]. As a result, games increase learners' learning achievements maximizing interaction in class. As for the teachers- they use games in class to:

- create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom
- develop a good relationship with the learners
- Increase learner's linguistic self-confidence
- make language classes interesting
- personalize the learning process
- promote learner autonomy.

So, games should be an integral part in language teaching syllabus. Through games language classes become relaxing, interesting, fun, enjoyable, interactive and effective.

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Problematising Intercultural Communicative Competence in Language Teaching and Learning

Souad Boumechaal¹
University of Leeds, United Kingdom¹

Abstract

In light of students' international mobility, learning modern languages has become the key to unlocking new opportunities. Within this global mobility, intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has become a new buzzword in language teaching and learning. Generally, it is defined in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills which supply language learners with "the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognise as being different from our own" [1]. Despite several attempts in contemporary literature to establish an encompassing model of teaching ICC, a coherent understanding of how this concept relates to classroom pedagogical practices is still lacking [2]. This paper, therefore, addresses two interrelated facets of teaching ICC. First, the theoretical framework underpinning ICC models in foreign language learning is critically discussed. Secondly, the practical facet of teaching ICC will be further examined through discussion of findings from teachers' interviews. In this respect, teachers' perspectives about ICC are explored to highlight the challenging nature of teaching ICC and the pedagogic issues it raises given the inconclusiveness of existing teaching models. Finally, practical considerations are suggested for teachers to implement the intercultural dimension into their language classroom.

Keywords: Intercultural communicative competence, language and culture teaching

1. Introduction

Kramsch and Zhu contend that foreign language learning is inevitably "an interpersonal and intercultural process whereby learners come into contact with teachers and other learners of diverse personal histories, experiences and outlooks" [3 p. 40].

This denotes that the fields of language learning and intercultural communication are closely interrelated. Despite the bulk of research studies reviewing this connection, conclusive teaching models have not been offered yet for foreign language teachers to guide their language classroom. This paper aims to discuss English language teachers' perspectives on current ICC teaching models in a quest for practical pedagogical suggestions.

2. Review the literature

"The intercultural language teaching and learning is not simply a new way of doing teaching and learning but a new way of understanding what teaching and learning is". [4 p. 26]

Language learning is mainly a sociocultural endeavour by which learners' develop their schematic knowledge of interpreting and meaning-making through active

engagement in social interaction. From this perspective, the intertwined relationship between language and culture has become one of the most controversial topics in the field of language teaching leading to divergent approaches to defining the notion of culture and its relation to language learning. As several existing definitions of this notion are problematic and need to be treated with caution, scare quotes are used with the word 'culture' to indicate scepticism toward the way and the purpose for which it is used. This section will briefly discuss current approaches to implementing the intercultural dimension of language teaching and learning.

2.1 Intercultural approach to language learning

Can culture be taught? To what extent does learning about other 'cultures' help language learners to communicate effectively? Several attempts to find answers to similar questions are identified in Byram's seminal work. Byram first suggested a model to use in language classrooms which involves developing the following aspects in learners:

- Attitudes (*savoir être*).
- Knowledge (*savoir*) of self and others.
- Skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) when interacting in intercultural encounters.
- Skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*).
- Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*). [5]

Throughout these five 'savoirs', Byram maintains that learners are guided toward a higher level of thinking in which they are put in situations where they need to reflect, analyse and evaluate perspectives, practices and products in ones' own and the others' cultures. Although this model seeks to promote learners' understanding of the cultural diversity in the world, it homogenises people and ignores the existing diverse identities they possess. Furthermore, the systematic development of skills that this model assumes is also questioned.

2.2 Problematising current approaches to ICC

One major contribution brought by Byram's work, is transcending the 'native speaker' model and perceiving learners as intercultural speakers with their own linguistic and cultural profiles which they bring to communication. Despite the fact that Byram's model and others with similar aims have been extensively used, a raised concern relates to the way they put into practice the objectives sought to be achieved. According to Dervin, Byram's model is paradoxical [2]. Although the model aims to draw learners' attention to the diversity and flexibility of intercultural communication, the five 'savoirs' are mainly concerned with learners' cognitive skills and focus less on external factors such as the actual situational context. Consequently, they place learners in non-interactive systematic stages where they are supposed to acquire these components progressively.

As a result, this perception of moving from a low to a high level of intercultural competence is controversial.

The lack of actively engaging learners in interactive situations as they would normally do in real life communication is another weakness. Existing ICC models do not highlight the way meaning in communication is jointly constructed by both subjects involved in communication. As such, the model overlooks that communication breakdown and misunderstandings are not entirely a consequence of learners lacking cultural knowledge and their negative attitudes they hold towards other 'cultures', but other factors play a vital role in such situations such as the context (both prior and actual).

The model also overemphasises knowing, accepting and critically interpreting the

other's 'culture' in which 'the other' is always someone from another foreign country. This indirectly conveys that individuals possess a single rigid identity which is to a great extent ascribed to them by their national culture, whereas the way individuals' identities are represented in communication is dependent on specific context, thus, it can never be predicted.

Overall, the majority of current models of teaching ICC are based on a comparative approach between learners' national cultures and that of others with a particular focus on differences. This approach might lead to generalisations and the promotion of stereotyped ideas [2]. Therefore, these ICC models are seen as problematic in the way they simply prescribe a ready-made recipe for achieving idealistic successful intercultural communication.

3. Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative approach through which a case study was undertaken in an Algerian institution for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). One part of the EFL curriculum accentuates the importance of developing learners' ICC. Therefore, the case of this institution seemed relevant to the purpose of this paper. Data was collected through interviews with ten EFL teachers. Braun and Clarke's [6] thematic analysis was used as an analytical framework to develop themes relevant to the research questions. These themes are discussed below.

4. Findings

One theme identified within the analysed data is discussed in this paper. The theme relates to EFL teachers' perspectives about teaching ICC and the pedagogic issues they are facing given the inconclusiveness of the existing teaching models. Furthermore, practical considerations are suggested as alternative teaching techniques when implementing the intercultural objective into the language teaching classroom.

4.1 EFL teachers' perspectives of ICC models

The relevance of ICC in teaching any language was emphasised by all the interviewed teachers on the basis that language use always carries socio-cultural embedded meanings that learners need to be aware of. However, what these teachers found challenging is the implementation of ICC as a learning outcome. There are two challenges that frequently arise; firstly, the EFL teachers find the ICC models broad and confusing in the sense that they merely concentrate on cultural knowledge transmission and often fail to highlight the dynamic and the interpretive nature of communication for learners. Secondly, teachers also perceive these models as problematic since they present a static approach to teaching language and culture. They also questioned the appropriation of English language to a specific national 'culture' such as the 'Anglophone culture' as a point of reference notwithstanding that English learners are expected to communicate internationally and use English as a lingua franca. Consequently, these teachers opted to concentrate on developing their learners' attitudes towards language and its use in different contexts to encourage them to engage in lifelong learning.

Furthermore, they emphasised the importance of experience as one teacher maintained "*culture cannot be taught, it has to be lived*".

4.2 Teaching culture as a discourse

Given the problematic nature of the current ICC teaching models, this paper postulates teaching culture and ICC following a discourse approach. The latter considers 'culture' as a verb rather than fixed ascribed cultural identities related to a particular group or a nation [3]. Furthermore, a discourse perspective considers any language "as a social semiotic system that mediates global form and local thought, national and transnational interpretations of history, collective and individual apprehensions of reality" [3 p. 48]. In other words, the global use of a particular language unavoidably undergoes inflections brought by speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, this entails critical consideration of 'meaning' in language teaching and learning which needs to be treated from a sociolinguistics and pragmatics perspective. Therefore, raising learners' awareness of the nuances of meaning expressed by people with different social affiliations and identities (gender, age, profession... etc.) becomes the core of intercultural language learning. A discourse approach suggests raising learners' awareness of the impact of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds on communication rather than teaching them how to interact with specific people such as Americans or Egyptians. Teaching culture as a discourse approach also emphasises the vital importance of raising political and historical awareness.

Along the same line, this approach calls for a cosmopolitan methodology which reflects learners' expectations. The term cosmopolitan refers to the contributions of learners and all their linguistic and cultural resources they bring along that can revolutionise and enrich the teaching methodology by crossing the cultural boundaries imposed by national paradigms of teaching languages and cultures. These contributions are local but they serve global communication [7]. Within this approach, teachers are advised to engage critically with teaching materials, which might often be imposed on them by their teaching institutions, especially those materials dealing with 'cultural' differences. Stated differently, they should usher their learners to go beyond the surface level of just taking things at face value and encourage them to seek critical explanations, appreciate complexity and avoid preconceptions and overgeneralisations that are detrimental to real life communication.

5. Conclusion

Despite its ubiquity, ICC teaching has been subject to criticism. The global spread of modern language across cultures and the increasing complexity of defining what culture is, have led many researches works to re-examine the practicality of ICC teaching models. A concern raised in this paper relates to the danger of falling in the trap of national homogeneity, reductionist and essentialist understanding of language and culture relationship. Alternately, this paper attempted to shed light on the co-constructive nature of intercultural communication in which both interlocutors negotiate meaning in an actual context. Consequently, ICC cannot be prescribed in terms of a set of fixed skills. Additionally, successful communication is somewhat contingent on speakers' linguistic and social backgrounds. Therefore, language teachers need to develop their learners' critical awareness of language and culture.

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Reading Out Loud: Perceptions and Practices of Primary School Teachers

Sandrina Esteves¹, Ana Patrícia Almeida²
Escola de Educação do ISEC Lisboa, Portugal^{1,2}

Abstract

The reading competence has a determining influence on personal, social and academic success. To read aloud it is necessary that the child develops a fluency in reading. For Walker, Mokhtari and Sargent (2006, in Tristan, 2009) [1] there are three key attributes for fluent reading: performance attributes, which include aspects such as precision, speed, and prosody; competence attributes, namely phonological and morphological awareness, knowledge of syntax and structure of discourse, and metacognitive competence regarding reading; and, finally, dispositional attributes, that are, attitudes towards reading, self-perception as a reader and reading habits. Esteves (2013) [2] summarizes three dimensions of fluency in reading aloud: accuracy, speed and prosody. The precision refers to the correct decoding of the words of the text, that is, for correction in the reading. Speed, in turn, is related to the decoding of words, using the minimum of attention resources; finally, prosody corresponds to the rhythm and expressiveness used when reading a text, while extracting its meaning. From here it is possible to see the advantages that the practice of reading aloud can bring to the students, namely the development of questions related to the oral expression, the motivation to the reading; and reflection on the need to understand the text read, since this understanding (or lack thereof) will be mirrored in reading aloud (Silva, 2013) [3] It is understood that reading aloud should, for the reasons given, take a prominent place in the classroom. The present study intends to know the perceptions of 1st CEB teachers regarding the importance they confer to the practices of reading aloud in the classroom, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to know the practices they develop, even in the sense of to see if they know changes due to the year of schooling taught.

Keywords: fluency, reading aloud, perceptions and practices of teachers

1. Introduction

The reading competence has a determining influence on personal, social and academic success.

Several researchers and practitioners have demonstrated the significant impact of the read-aloud practice in different areas of reading development (Sipe, 2000) [4] They also noted its potential to increase motivation to want to read while building the knowledge necessary for the successful acquisition of reading and writing. Reading aloud is the foundation for literacy development. It is the single most important activity for reading success. Decades of research highlight the instructional benefits of read-aloud. There is a direct causal relationship between reading to children at a young age and their future schooling outcomes. Read aloud to students has the power and promise to set students on a path of lifelong reading. When instructional time is devoted to these

practices, we rouse students into embracing literacy as a perennial skill and practice (Ness, 2018) [5] Reading aloud increases the accessibility of texts to students, who are unable to read the texts themselves (Ariail & Albright; Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006) [6]

Also, when teachers read interesting texts out loud, some students (especially those who are able to read but choose not to) become more motivated to read themselves.

Additionally, students find read-alouds an enjoyable activity and adopt positive attitudes toward reading (Cunningham, 2005) [7] Unlike silent reading, which should be understood as the culmination of an initial reading learning process, which is done using reading aloud, reading aloud it is the key to achieving fluency in reading, representing a micro-ability of reading comprehension (Trapero, 2009) [8]

Many teachers recommend reading aloud to students, but there is little awareness of the nature of the read-aloud practices they use. When teachers read aloud, their actions demonstrate that they value reading, a key component in motivating students to read is a teacher who uses the read-aloud to demonstrate enthusiasm for reading and to model reading practices. When teachers purposefully read aloud from texts that capitalize on students' interests and academic needs, students are more likely to embrace the authentic role of literacy (Ness, 2018). [5]

2. Reading Out Loud: from theory to classroom practice

Read-aloud is an instructional practice where teachers, parents, and caregivers read texts aloud to children and it's known that reading aloud to children builds and supports their listening and speaking abilities and enhances their overall language development (Sipe, 2000). [4] Reading aloud to young children has been a commonplace practice in homes and schools for years. Parents, educators, policymakers, and politicians have promoted read-alouds with the common belief that reading to children makes a difference in children's literacy development. From here it is possible to see the advantages that the practice of reading aloud can bring to the students, namely the development of questions related to the oral expression, the motivation to the reading; and reflection on the need to understand the text read, since this understanding (or lack thereof) will be mirrored in reading aloud (Silva, 2013). [3]

That's why reading aloud has been the subject of definition by many authors. For some, the definition is based on a more constructivist perspective, presenting itself as a strategy that the teacher uses to create reading spaces where ideas can be shared, for others it comes from a more mechanistic perspective, where it is assumed as a method to evaluate the various learnings. We know reading aloud is a complex process, requiring an already automated reading that allows the writing to be almost real-time oral speech.

When the reading has not yet reached this level of automation, reading aloud is not fluid, and reading with interruptions, word readings, word exchanges and even syllabus.

Reading aloud therefore requires the child to develop the fluency of which involves various skills. For Walker, Mokhtari and Sargent (2006, in Tristan, 2009) [1] there are three key attributes for fluent reading: performance attributes, which include aspects such as precision, speed, and prosody; competence attributes, namely phonological and morphological awareness, knowledge of syntax and structure of discourse, and metacognitive competence regarding reading; and, finally, dispositional attributes, that are, attitudes towards reading, self-perception as a reader and reading habits. Esteves (2013) [2] summarizes three dimensions of fluency in reading aloud: accuracy, speed and prosody. The precision refers to the correct decoding of the words of the text, that is, for correction in the reading. Speed, in turn, is related to the decoding of words, using the minimum of attention resources; finally, prosody corresponds to the rhythm and

expressiveness used when reading a text, while extracting its meaning. So, fluency is not just a goal of reading aloud, but a competence in itself is extremely pertinent and revealing of a good oral reading.

As such, reading aloud is a skill to develop in the classroom and should be the target of a specific learning which can only be successful if the students already know how to read (Belo & Sá, 2005) [9]. The same authors report that reading aloud by students in the classroom can serve several purposes: the practice of oral reading itself; aesthetic sharing and enjoyment; and constitute an evaluation instrument for the teacher.

In fact, read-alouds, the act of reading aloud to others, hold an important place in literacy instruction. Read alouds are powerful because they serve so many instructional purposes to motivate, encourage, excite, build background, develop comprehension, preparing preservice teachers to approach read-alouds with knowledge, confidence, and a seriousness of purpose is a central responsibility of teacher educators. Fulfilling this responsibility includes making expressive reading expectations clear, selecting a wide variety of read-aloud texts, teaching strategies for choosing and reading informational texts, and reading aloud to preservice teachers to enhance their exposure to literature and model effective read-alouds (Belo & Sá, 2005) [9]. Researchers and classroom teachers advocate that engaging students in extension activities as part of a read-aloud is good practice because the read-aloud event provides a beneficial context for students to see how language works. Moreover, teacher reading can act as a model for students, provided that has quality. In addition, the fact that the teacher reads aloud in the classroom may constitute a motivation for reading by students. Ferreira, Ribeiro and Viana (2012) [10] gathered, from the studies of several authors, a set of procedures and strategies for the development of reading fluency, which highlight: (i) the use of models; (ii) hear a proficient adult read aloud; (iii) video recording of the reading made by the students with their visualization and subsequent analysis; (iv) repeated reading; (v) reading aloud for adults; (vi) providing clues during reading; (vii) the provision of corrective feedback using systematic error correction procedures; (viii) repeated reading until a predefined performance criterion is met; (ix) the definition of objectives, (x) the organization of graphical records that allow the visualization of progress; and (xi) the practice of reading word lists. These aspects can, and should, be operationalized in the classroom in a variety of ways, using playful activities. Belo and Sá (2005) [9] provide some suggestions for activities, such as the dramatized reading of a text with dialogues; self-reading and self-assessment peer reading; reading passages with different intonations (sad, happy, angry, sleepy, etc.); systematic reading workshops in which students present texts whose reading was previously prepared; reading contests in loud voice; among other suggestions, are easily implemented and allow to work reading aloud in a motivating way and with good results.

3. The Study

In the present study participated 31 teachers involved in the project *JÁ SEI LER – Leitura em Voz Alta*. This project started in January 2019 and is intended for children attending the first year of school in 2018/2019, accompanying them along their four-year course in the 1st Cycle of Basic Education (CEB). It is developed over four academic years: 2018/2019; 2019/2020; 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. Fruit of a tripartite partnership, ISEC Lisboa, Municipality of Entroncamento and National Reading Plan (in Portugal), has as object of study the practice of reading aloud in three different contexts: classroom; family and community, based on the premise that the promotion of such practices will enhance the reading competence of the students involved in the project and,

consequently, their academic, personal and social success.

The teachers involved in the study were given a questionnaire intended to gauge their perceptions of the importance they recognize to reading aloud, on the one hand, and, on the other, to understand which reading-alouds practices develop in class, trying to understand if these vary according to grade level.

Of the 31 teachers involved in the study, 31 are female, with an average age of 49 years. Of the 31 teachers, 9 teach to 1st grade; 9 to 2nd grade, 5 to 3rd grade and 8 to 4th grade.

When asked about the value of reading aloud in the classroom, 16 consider it to be *Indispensable*; 14 *Very Important* and 1 *Important*.

Regarding the aspects that most value in reading aloud, *Expressivity* appears as the most valued dimension (selected by 24 teachers), followed by *Clarity in reading* (chosen by 16) and *Precision* (pointed by 10). *Rhythm* and *Speed* are only referenced by 4 and 2 teachers, respectively. Such perceptions of the teachers involved in the study regarding the importance they attach to reading aloud clearly indicate that there is an appreciation of them in relation to what is one of the greatest predictors of reading comprehension: expressiveness. As pointed out by Esteves (2013) [3], reading aloud with expressivity and rhythm builds a bridge with comprehension, and those who read without effortless and with an appropriate expression tend to understand better.

With regard to the textual typology that they understand best for the practice of reading aloud, 27 teachers choose the *Narrative* text; 13 point the *Poetic*; 11 the *Dramatic*; 6 the *Informative* and only 2 point the *Instructional*. Such a choice may be related to the fact that narrative text is the textual typology mostly found in 1st CEB textbooks that support teachers in their practice and perhaps allow students to follow events more easily, when reading aloud.

Regarding the support that they tend to select as the basis for reading aloud, it should be noted that the 31 teachers select the *Book* as the election support, with only 6 teachers referring to the *Interactive Whiteboard*, 5 *Magazines and/or Newspapers* and 1 the *Tablet*. This opinion finds its voice in recent studies that point to paper support as the elected, since it allows a greater understanding of what is read, especially in children. (Delgado, Vargas, Ackerman & Sálmeron, 2018). [11]

Looking now at teachers' responses to their classroom read-alouds practices, it can be seen that in terms of attendance, and of the 31 teachers involved in the study, 24 reported reading *daily in class*, 6 did so *2 or 3 times a week* and 1 teacher *at least once a week*. Regarding the time they devote to this practice, when they carry it out, 17 teachers indicate that they take *10 to 15 minutes to spend reading practice aloud*; 7 report doing so at least 5 minutes and 6 more than 5 minutes. Regarding the time of day, they preferentially adopt for the development of reading aloud practices, 18 teachers select the *morning/afternoon period* and 13 the *morning period*. The reading made by the teacher seems to be becoming a central activity in the classroom, occurring daily and, with this, the teachers have shown the students its importance (Belo & Sá, 2005). [9] Such practice will surely lead to greater involvement with reading by students.

Children should listen to read adult to appropriate reading models: reading aloud to children strengthens the emotional bonds between the reader and the listener, stimulates the pleasure of listening, the pleasure of imagining, facilitates acquisition and development language and gives rise to the desire to learn to read.

Regarding the purposes for which they use reading aloud, 27 teachers point to using it as *Motivation for reading*; 24 as *Support for the contents of the various curricular areas*; 17 as *Reading Training*; 13 *Development of reading comprehension*; 11 *Enjoyment of reading*; and only 5 for reading *Assessment purposes*. Jean (2000) [12] points out the

reading of stories aloud as one of the most effective and simple ways to motivate children to read. Also, according to Guthrie and Knowels (2001, cit. by Mata, 2006) [13] motivational attitudes towards reading, as feelings related to reading, lead the individual to seek or avoid reading situations, and personal experiences that each child lives in relation to this task, are directly related to the attitudes that he will develop in relation to this activity.

When asked about the main strategies for reading aloud that they use in the classroom, 30 teachers indicated that they preferred the *read aloud by the teacher* and the *read aloud by the student*, with 20 teachers selecting, equally, the *dramatized reading* and 10 the *peer reading*. *Choir reading* is only a practice of 3 of the 31 teachers in the study. Such strategies are crucial as the reader is a “mediator” who must know how to read, through reading techniques and sensitivity in order to be able to decipher the text. The teacher’s intervention in the practice of reading aloud is understood as an intervention in which corrections for pronunciation, reading speed, intonation, rhythm and fidelity to the text.

It is also important to highlight that 28 out of 31 teachers report talking to students about what they read in the classroom, and 26 teachers point out that their students talk to each other about their readings. Now, it is well known that commenting on what you have read or heard helps to make sense of the text. When listening to read, the student interprets it based on his knowledge of the world and other texts and what he anticipated during reading. When he hears other interpretations of the same text, he considers different points of view and revises his own, modifying, broadening, or reinforcing them.

Considering what a colleague understood, what path he took to reach that conclusion, and locating which part of the reading enabled his analysis, helps him to find meaning, better understand the content, and broaden his or her own interpretation of that text and other readings (Ness, 2018) [5].

One last point to mention is the indication given by the teachers, regarding the differentiation of reading aloud practices in class according to the school year taught. In fact, 21 teachers assume that they use different practices depending on the year they teach, and only 10 do not.

4. Final reflection

We are not born readers, we learn to read and to enjoy reading, if our learning and experiences allow it. Moreover, and as you know, who reads more read better and, if you read better, will want to read more.

A great ally of working fluently at school is reading aloud, as it allows students to prepare to read, understand, communicate, and express meaning to others. Reading to others requires skill, concentration and expressiveness, it involves intonation, rhythm and emphasis.

Working with reading fluency and reading aloud practices in school should gain a new look from teachers, aiming to promote moments and activities varied according to the year of school, reading experience and age of students. Clear and objective purposes must be relied upon. In general, reading activities should be present throughout schooling, with daily readings and conversations about these readings, in which students can establish relationships with other readings.

Working reading fluency at school is the challenge proposed to broaden students’ experience with texts and to collaborate in understanding what they read.

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Teachers' Attitudes towards Theatrical Laboratories and Experiential Learning: Lithuanian Case

Giedre Straksiene¹
Klaipeda University, Lithuania¹

Abstract

This article reports the general findings of a survey study designed to extend knowledge about secondary school teacher attitudes and experience toward the Theatrical Laboratories implemented in the project OFF-BOOK (Erasmus+ programme) in non-formal education. Teachers use Theatrical Laboratories as pedagogical methods to create a better understanding and environment in classrooms, thus enhancing teachers' capacity to involve and motivate students in their learning processes actively. Specifically, the study examined extension to which and how secondary school teachers apply the methods of Theatrical Laboratories, in which manner, what results they noticed, and what problems arise. The participants included 19 teachers from 7 secondary schools in Klaipeda (Lithuania), voluntarily completed the diary and participated at the focus group discussions. The data was collected and analysed using qualitative diary research design and focus group discussion. The results suggested that in general teachers have positive attitude toward Theatrical Laboratories as pedagogical instruments. Teachers who reported less experience in drama teaching was found to hold more positive attitude toward Theatrical Laboratories. Teachers who already have positive attitudes towards students with special need may be predisposed to seek out additional experiential education practices and be more willing to be use theatre/drama methods.

Keywords: Theatrical Laboratories, experiential learning/teaching, teachers' attitude, method, students

Introduction

The challenges facing the contemporary teacher are to respond effectively to the diversity of learning/teaching styles and successfully engage students in active learning approaches. Experiential learning/teaching instils positive, confident and enquiry focused attitudes in student building on their inherent experience to make sense of the world around them, and thus provokes increasing depth of understanding [4].

The Erasmus project "Objective: Foster theatrical performance to combat discrimination in schools & tackle early leaving" (OFF-BOOK), No. 2017-1-LT01-KA201-035235 set out to develop practices and training materials based on the theatrical laboratories (hereafter – TLabs) and experiential learning cross-disciplinary thinking. The project's main aim is to develop and support teacher skills in experiential teaching/learning by integrating creative tools as the TLabs methods in non-formal education, engaging students to participate in collaborative work and involving them into active learning process based activities (<https://off-book.pixel-online.org/>). A key example of innovative approach to fostering motivation to learn in schools is the TLabs

approach being developed by project partners from Italy (Teatro Stabile di Grosseto, University of Siena, Pixel) Lithuania (Klaipeda University, Klaipeda Puppet Theatre, Klaipeda Simon Dach progimnasium) and Romania (Colegiul National de Arta “Octav Bancila”, EUROED Primary school) and adopted within the project. Through the project there were developed TLabs methodology and best practice examples of non-formal learning led by a set of principles: involve students in playing activity, exploration, inquiry-based discovery, engagement in experience-oriented questions, connection of explanations to experience, democracy and collaborative work. The project OFF-BOOK integrates TLabs into the original way by involving students and teachers on experiential learning process demonstrating common impulses shared by theatre/drama. The project's uniqueness also lies in its capacity to leverage some of the emotional and cultural aspects of the TLabs in national context.

In the present research we explore the case study of the Lithuanian teachers. The main purposes of the study were to identify the major obstacles in implementing TLabs practices in mainstream schools and to analyze different aspects of teachers' attitudes towards this method.

Theoretical background

The ideas of experiential learning in scientific literature relate to J. Dewey's approach to teaching and the starting point of his theory of experience is daily life. This means, that experience and learning through doing or playing is encouraged over 100 year ago.

According to J. Dewey, the nature of art as experience and art functions as experience [7]. Process of inquiry, observing and finding meaning are transformative, and expanded perceptions open venues for understanding and action [7]. C. Rodgers stated that experience is the meaning that one perceives in and then constructs from an experience that gives that experience value. An experience exists in time and is therefore linked to the past and the future [17]. Experiential learning undoubtedly involves the 'whole person', through thoughts, feelings and physical activity. The recognition of this 'whole environment', both internally and externally, is important [1]. Experiential learning can take on many appearances in life, such as recreational or leisure activities, exhilarating journeys or adventures, experimentation or play [7]. It can also be in the form of painful events. "This consciousness-in-action involves, intentionally, both participatory and individuating functions: feeling and emotion, intuition and imagery, reflection and discrimination, intention and action" [2]. During the process of experiential learning, students are able to learn with and from each other, while problem solving and collaborating to complete tasks during experiences that occur in real contexts [4].

Experience pervades all forms of learning; however, its value is frequently not recognized or is even disregarded [5]. Experiential learning is a client-focused, supported approach to individual, group, or organizational development, which engages the young or adult learner, using the elements of action, reflection, and transfer [2]. As stated by D. A. Kolb, *experiential* describes "a theoretical perspective in the individual learning

process that applied in all situations and arenas of life, a holistic process of learning [13]. Experiential education reflects many methodologies in which teachers purposefully engage with learners in direct experience in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values. As [13] stated "learning by doing – the experience – during the learning process is a major source of learning". Learning is therefore achieved by taking action, on the condition, however, that learners have the opportunity to take a step back and think about what they have just experienced, draw a lesson from this experience or gain a new understanding of the phenomenon and experience it once again [1].

Experiential learning is a dynamic view of learning based on a learning cycle in which the learner travels through four steps: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation [13]. As mentioned by [1], for students, this cycle begins with an experience; a tangible problem with which they are faced. They then reflect on and critically examine this experience from multiple perspectives. D. A. Kolb put forward an experiential learning theory (ELT). The aim of ELT is to create, through a synthesis of the works of the foundational scholars, a theory that helps explain how experience is transformed into learning and reliable knowledge [13].

P. Goldblatt provides us a link between art in education as a way to learn experientially [7]. By considering the theory that art functions as an experience we can assume that it has the potential that brings changes in the learning process and leads of transformative learning. This means that theatre/drama activity has the ability fostering not only experience itself, but to promote a dialogue in social awareness and critique [14]. Theatre/drama education can potentially impact students' achievement by using creative thinking techniques, looking for innovative problem solving, and communicating ideas [5]. Furthermore, theatre/drama can positively contribute to the transmission of their skills development, influencing and supporting intellectual development, as well as empowering them to affect change in their own lives by opening up further education opportunities [12]. Drama and democratically based theatre models provide tools that the educator can use to incorporate dialogue and experiential learning into each classroom and subject area [5]. By examining the importance of experiential learning and making the link between experiential learning and drama/theatre as tools to be used for experiential learning in classrooms [10].

The Laboratory Theatre the best-known and most commonly used general name for Grotowski's theatre company. J. Grotowski created the first "theatre laboratory". He mentions in his book that theatre becomes a tool of knowledge for the actor as a person [8]. The laboratory objective is to discover the man who exists beyond the actor and learner by looking for the origin of one's actions, awareness of values and urge to socialization [8]. Theatre Laboratory approach and place in education was analyzed by T. Chemi. She accounts that various theatre/drama games require listening, cooperation, make relationship, attentiveness, discuss and respect other opinions. Along the years, the theatre games within the theatre laboratories were called "physical acting" or merely "movement" or "physical theatre training" [6]. Regardless of what they are called, the technique is spread throughout the world in different fields, such as: team building sessions within companies, courses of all kinds and all subjects, camps and even gyms [14]. TLabs activity combines kinaesthetic, emotional and intellectual involvement in improvisation activities to promote a range of experience and empathy [15]. Yet the most effective and appropriate is the technique applied to secondary school education, in the best period of students' life: adolescence – when they have the chance to shape their personality themselves. Therefore, theatre laboratories are processes of acquisition of meaning, connecting thoughts and movements, verbal and non-verbal expressions towards a greater understanding of the self and of the others [16]. The TLab is a friendly environment where the student is able to develop his psychophysical well-being without the fear to be judged, because the laboratory is set up on the solid foundation of respect to the others. Students' spontaneity will go beyond expressing emotionally and intellectually towards creating themselves strong persons.

Methodology

This study was conducted as a part of our research on the teaching practices in non-formal education in the Lithuanian schools. In the framework of the project OFF-BOOK, the TLabs method has been evaluated through a series of focus group discussions and diaries written by teachers. At this point, three focus groups discussions (2018 September, 2019 January, 2019 April) were conducted and the diaries of the teachers were collected.

A focus group discussion was used for this research focus on evaluating teachers' attitudes about the TLabs methods and the OFF-BOOK principles and exploring possible barriers in the integration of the approach in teachers' teaching practices. In addition, the diary aimed to identify and evaluate the impact of the approach on participants' attitude towards theatre/drama activity as experiential learning. The focus group discussion was designed and structured around five topics: *expectations, evaluation of the implementation, impact of the activity, suggestions for improvement* and other commentary and teachers' personal data.

The sample of research consisted of 19 secondary school teachers in 7 schools from Klaipeda (Lithuania). Sampling data (the distribution of teachers by age, pedagogical experience, gender and teaching subject) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Age	Pedagogical experience	Experience using drama methods	Teaching subject	Gender
up to 30 years – 3	Up to 10 years – 6	Up to 1 year – 5	Science (biology, chemistry) – 2	Female – 18 Male – 1
31-40 years – 6	11-20 years – 9	2-5 years – 8	Humanities (languages) – 6	
41-50 years – 6	21-30 years – 4	6-9 years – 4	Art (drama, music) – 6	
Over 50 years – 4	Over 30 years – 0	Over 10 years – 2	Ethic, primary school teacher, social pedagogue – 5	

Results

The overall impression suggested that in general teachers have positive attitude toward Theatrical Laboratories as pedagogical instruments. Teachers who reported less experience in theatre/drama teaching was found to hold more positive attitude toward Theatrical Laboratories. Moreover, the teachers who already have positive attitudes toward students with special need may be predisposed to seek out additional experiential education practices and be more willing to use TLabs methods. This should be kept in mind while conducting training activities for teachers in future.

Expectations. The first topic included two open questions. In the first question, the participants were asked to share their expectations from participating in the project OFF-BOOK. From the gathered data it was indicated that the teachers mostly expected to learn about TLabs method and how to use this method in school but also to get new ideas and learn about new teaching techniques in general. Many expected to get tangible tips on working with students and engaging them, their motivation through the TLabs in the learning process. Some of teachers were expecting exchange of experiences with colleagues from different disciplines, schools and backgrounds. The second question "Did the TLabs method implemented in OFF-BOOK project met your expectations?" requested teachers to assess the method in terms of their expectations. According to

their answers, the TLabs method was evaluated positively with a great part of the teachers (16) indicating that their expectations were completely met. Only several teachers (2) expressed a negative stance in terms of their expectations. However, based on the diaries notes and spontaneous reactions of the teachers during the group discussions, it seems that focus easily slips on doing theatre/drama and being creative, while the TLabs ideas somehow gets forgotten on the way.

Evaluation of the TLabs methods. In the second topic addressing the issue of evaluation of the TLabs methodology. The first question's main aim (Have you learned something new regarding applying the TLabs method?). The most common answers (14) referred to learning to connect/combine theatre/drama with experiential learning, learning to organize and create the TLabs in the classroom and to use in a way that will get students more interested and motivated. Other answers concerned the identification of tools that would facilitate the integration of theatre/drama classroom and some of them addressed the issue of collaborative techniques and their implementation through this approach, and only two answers replied that they had not learnt anything new. In terms of the evaluation of the TLabs methods, a number of teachers stated that the integration of the method into non-formal education could enhance the learning outcomes and motivation to learn. In addition, 5 teachers stated that the TLabs method was suitable for their subject area and expressed their intention of applying the method into their teaching practice. The general impressions are positive, the implementation period is perceived as quite useful and mostly very enjoyable for students. The focus group discussion disclosed that teachers believe that the TLabs method advocates experiential learning/teaching as well that this method could result in enhanced learning motivation.

Teachers agree that inclusion of this method in teaching subjects could result in enhanced learning outcomes, boosting self-confidence of students. The aspects of TLabs method that are perceived by teachers as the greatest advantages are group work and greater interaction among students. Another comparative advantage that could be communicated is interaction between teachers and students that results in improved students' perception of that relationship. Emphasising benefits should motivate teachers to engage in implementation of TLabs methods in their classroom.

Implementation and impact of the TLabs methods. In the third topic 'Impact of the TLabs methods' in order to explore the effect of the TLabs on the participants' perception of integration of this method in their teaching practice, teachers were asked to reflect on the implementation of the method and its effect. The topic included two open questions.

In the first question the teachers were asked to indicate possible advantages and disadvantages by implementing the TLabs methods in their classroom. A vast majority of the teachers (16) indicated the game nature of this method as a major advantage.

Furthermore, a number of teachers (5) highlighted the efficiency of the method in integrating alternative ways of active learning in the educational process. The teachers also indicated the collaborative nature of this method and its significance in building students' collaboration, also its contribution in setting a friendly classroom environment.

The advantage of boosting students' self-confidence was indicated by a few participants. At this point, it is important to state that the categorised advantages as illustrated above by far outnumbered the disadvantages that were only reduced to potential technical limitations for the implementation of this method. More specifically, the disadvantages involved the potential difficulties in affording the adequate equipment and lack of time with reference to curriculum and school peculiarities demands for implementing this method. The second question of this topic aimed to evaluate the effect of the method in terms of teachers' intention to implement it into their teaching practice.

Particularly, we requested participants to state whether the training activity had

inspired them to introduce this teaching technique in their classroom. Moreover, we requested for the teachers' evaluation of the implementation process in terms of its efficiency in providing them with necessary knowledge in order to introduce new method in their teaching practice. In general, the implementation of the TLabs method had a positive effect on the teachers who expressed strong intention of implementing this method into their teaching practice in future. The majority of the participants (15) stated that they were inspired by the TLabs method and that they had gained knowledge (12).

Again, a number of the teachers stated that they had gained adequate knowledge from the project OFF-BOOK to even independently develop theatrical methods towards to TLabs idea. It is very encouraging that many felt inspired by the TLabs implementation to introduce new techniques into their teaching practice.

Potential barriers in the implementation of the TLabs, suggestions for improvement

Finally, the fourth topic of the focus group discussion was addressed to suggestions for improvement comprised of two items. The first question was structured in flexible form, in which participants were required to reflect on potential barriers in their attempt to implement the TLabs methods learning and teaching principles in their teaching practice. The majority of the teachers (15), indicated as a barrier for the implementation of this method the lack of financial support, a number of teachers (10) stated the lack of time as a problem. Only 2 teachers stated that the lack of skills and adequate knowledge were difficulties during the implementation period. The second question also was an open question in which participants were required to contribute with suggestions or notes that would help to improve future of TLabs method. In general, the participants had a positive stance on this method and expressed their satisfaction. Most recommendations addressed the issue of presenting the TLabs examples in a real classroom or video before the implementation starts on (in the project OFF-BOOK).

Conclusions and Discussion

The aim of the research study was to disclose teachers' attitude towards the TLabs method and the project OFF-BOOK pedagogical principles. By communicating the TLabs method and experiential learning integration through project activities in non-formal education we aimed to explore possible barriers and identify the approach on participants' attitude towards this phenomenon. This way we would identify the kinds of relationships that occur in the meeting points of theatrical activity and experiential learning and the way teachers perceive or identify such relations. Furthermore, the one more goal of the TLabs method implementation was accomplished: to instill inspiration to the teachers and encourage them to implement the TLabs method in their teaching practice.

The research data have shed light to Lithuanian teachers' perception on the issue of combination and mutual contribution of theatre/drama and experiential learning in non-formal settings, based on this case study. In general, the findings of this case study have shown teachers' positive attitude and reaction towards the TLabs method. Teachers, who reported less experience in drama was found to hold more positive attitude toward TLabs. Teachers who already have positive attitude toward students with special need may be predisposed to seek out additional experiential education practices and be more willing to be use theatre/drama methods. Furthermore, one of a key point in this study was the interaction among teachers from different disciplines and theirs' perception of

theatre/drama activities. The participants' contribution during the focus group discussions was significant seeking to raise the different aspects of the TLabs method, bringing to the surface both creative and pedagogical parameters, and facilitates students' engagement and development of collaborative skills and self-confidence.

In terms of possible alternations and improvements on the implementation of the TLabs methods, the research findings have shown that more focus should be given on the elaboration of the main principles of experiential learning/teaching and their recognition in theatre/drama methods. Given the positive stance of the participants regarding TLabs into the teaching practice it is necessary to increase the number of training activities for teachers and demonstrate the underlying TLabs approaches in real classroom settings.

Furthermore, at this point it is essential to explore the results getting from other countries. This way we will have valuable information and data on the way the TLabs methods have impacted the overall non-formal educational context and get important feedback on the further development.

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The Pedagogical Potential of MOOCs for Creating a Collaborative Learning Environment

Svetlana Titova¹

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia¹

Abstract

Many educators argue today that MOOCs present new educational opportunities for face-to-face language classes. With the increasing popularity of MOOCs and OER among learners and due to the innovative trends in higher education in the Russian Federation, college instructors today are confronted with a lot of challenges. The objective of this action research is to work out the possible ways of MOOC integration in a blended Content and Language Integrated Learning course to create an authentic online collaborative community. The theoretical framework of the intervention is based on current MOOC theories, connectivism, and the Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition model by R. Puentedura. Thirty bachelor students from Moscow State University, enrolled in a Methodology of English Language Teaching blended course, participated in the first cycle of the research. The analysis based on the quantitative data (questionnaire) demonstrated the learners' positive attitude to this intervention due to the following possibilities: getting familiar with the theories and terminology on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, sharing experiences on the MOOC forums with the learners from all over the world and developing writing skills, etc.

Keywords: MOOC, CLIL, collaborative language learning, interactive environment, collaboration skills, language skills, digital literacies

1. Introduction

The new educational standards of Russian Federation require educators to design innovative instructional models based on digital technologies and open educational resources. The Ministry of Education and Sciences of Russian Federation launched in 2015 a long-term project aimed at promoting students' and instructors' motivation in implementing and creating MOOCs for higher education. Some universities in Russia have accepted MOOCs for credits since 2016. With the increasing popularity of MOOCs and OER among learners and due to the innovative trends in higher education in Russian Federation, college instructors today are confronted with a lot of challenges: how to integrate MOOCs in traditional or blended learning courses, how to evaluate student participation once a MOOC or some materials from it were implemented in the course, what kind of tasks and activities can be designed using MOOCs, what kind of instructional design to choose for integration, how to pick up a MOOC that can fit the aims and objectives of the taught course, etc.

2. The background for the study

From multiple points of view MOOCs can be considered as self-paced distance courses supported by social networking and a peer-tuition approach [1]. Without any doubts, MOOCs provide a great deal of pedagogical potential to design innovative educational models. They create authentic educational environment to develop learner communicative, digital and professional skills, they provide online interaction and high-quality online educational resources from top-ranking universities and colleges [2].

Forum discussions, that is an essential part of any MOOC, create interactive communities where participants from all over the world can share their experience, ideas and knowledge [3]. MOOCs foster highly demanded in digital age approaches such as the general peer assessment and the calibrated peer review, collaborative enquiry-based and project-based methods [4]. They enhance learner motivation through prompt and timely feedback from course participants.

The most frequently described way of MOOC integration is the use of MOOCs for flipped learning or “distributed flip” or hybrid MOOC model [5], [6]. In this model students are enrolled in the MOOC chosen by the instructor; they study the material presented online. In class they discuss, exchange ideas and opinions, share their progress, work in groups or individually, do the tasks tailored by their instructor using MOOC content to fit the objectives of his or her course. Israel M. came to the conclusion that there are two theoretical models of MOOC integration in traditional classroom: *single MOOC adoption* in which a MOOC is used as the primary source of information is synchronized with the on-campus course and *multiple MOOCs adoption* in which a MOOC is used by the instructor as additional learning resources [7].

It is also possible to use learning materials not from one but from various MOOCs [8].

The hybrid model seems to be very effective in terms of evaluation and assessment because learners can be provided with formative assessment and feedback from their teacher of the on-campus course [9]. Hybrid degree programs that include a combination of traditional and MOOC courses, have been launched recently at the Georgia Institute of Technology in the United States.

3. The methodological framework of the research

The methodological framework of the research is based on the recently appeared pedagogical theories and approaches: connectivism, the Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition model (SAMR model) and the models of MOOCs integration offered by M. Israel [7]. Digital technologies have changed the way we interact, behave and learn. G. Siemens argues that the well-known pedagogical theories (behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism) cannot be implied any longer for designing a new educational/instructional model. Connectivism is the learning theory that fits the digital age education. According to the connectivism approach we “can no longer personally experience and acquire learning that we need to act. We derive our competence from forming connections” [10]. In other words, learning in the digital age is a continual process that occurs in a variety of ways – through online discussions and forums, group interactive activities, group-based projects, etc.

Another theoretical approach that is very important for this research is SAMR model designed by R. Puentedura. It was created for teachers who would like to integrate digital technologies and OER in learning process [11]. According to this model the use of new tech tools in education may lead either to the *enhancement of education* (augmentation and substitution phases) or to *the real transformation* (redefinition and modification

phases). *Redefinition* is the highest transformation phase which allows for a completely new format of tasks and activities that were previously impossible.

3.1 The rationale of the research

The growing interest for MOOCs and open educational resources (OER) provides new opportunities for language education. Unfortunately, limited research and empirical data were provided to support the effectiveness of such intervention in blended CLIL or language classrooms. Godwin-Jones outlined the three areas within language learning where MOOCs can be implemented efficiently – teaching English as a second language, study of indigenous languages and teaching language for special purposes [4].

Unfortunately, *not much research and empirical data were provided to support the effectiveness of such kind of intervention in blended CLIL or language classroom*. So far it has been proved that MOOCs integration into traditional classroom has “modest positive impacts on learning outcomes, no significant evidence of negative effects for any subgroups of students, and lower levels of student satisfaction in blended MOOCs in classrooms” [7].

3.2 The objective and the hypothesis of the research

The objective of this action research is twofold. First, to work out the possible ways of MOOC integration in a blended CLIL course to create an authentic online collaborative community, and second, to analyse students’ perceptions of their MOOC experience as well as the pedagogical impact of this intervention on their motivation and learning outcomes.

The hypothesis of this action research was that OER, MOOCs specifically, could both enhance learner motivation by means of creating an authentic interactive online environment and influence the course performance or learning outcomes. This study, which was based on current MOOC theories, connectivism and SAMR approaches, focused on working out a new methodological framework for MOOC implementation in a CLIL course to create an authentic interactive environment where students can collaborate with the participants from other countries and learn with authentic materials.

4. Materials and Methods

4.1 Participants

30 bachelor undergraduate students (22 females, 8 males) from Lomonosov Moscow State University enrolled in a blended CLIL 15-week course *Methodology of English Language Teaching* participated in the first cycle of the research during the Fall semester 2016. The course, that is taught in English, aims at developing both professional and language skills (listening, reading, speaking) of the students. This course was designed to introduce a student-centered classroom; it is supported by the class blog where learners can communicate with the instructor and their groupmates and publish the assignments. The language competence of students was B2-C1 according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR).

4.2 Research design

Our model of instruction includes a blended CLIL course supported by the group blog and student participation in the MOOC forums. The MOOC is used in this model as additional learning resources for setting up an authentic online collaborative community.

This educational model provides different focuses of perspective on the course content, exposes students to different ways of teaching content, and helps students

develop their communicative skills. This action research includes *the enhancement and substitution cycles* (Puente). The main objective of the enhancement cycle is to analyze MOOC intervention from the perspective of students' engagement and their attitude to the intervention rather than students' outcomes. The second cycle of the research will focus mainly on learning outcomes. In other words, we are planning to analyze the pedagogical impact of this intervention on developing student language skills and collaboration skills. This paper is devoted to the analysis of the first cycle of the research.

At the *enhancement* cycle of the research the students were asked to enroll for the MOOC *Understanding language: Learning and Teaching* (Southampton University, UK) in October 2016. The course that was created by the University of Southampton and the British Council is aimed at graduates with an interest in the development of languages and language teaching. It gives graduates a taste of postgraduate study in the field of English language teaching. Students had to follow the online materials, complete the assignments and participate in discussion forums. Student participation in the MOOC was included into the course evaluation and was assessed using the two ongoing summative assignments: the e-portfolios that reflected their participation in the MOOC forums, and the course blog peer collaboration where they could comment on each other's contributions and experience. The participation in the discussion forums of the MOOC was required according to the course evaluation because as a lot of research showed students liked watching videos, reading extra materials but they didn't take active part in forum discussions [12]. Data collection of *the enhancement cycle* took place from September 2016 to January 2017. Survey data on the students' perception of the MOOC experience were collected using a post-intervention questionnaire. The post-intervention questionnaire contained 10 questions, out of which 5 questions in the format of Likert four-level scale, 3 multiple choice questions and 2 free-text comments aiming to get student views on their attitude to MOOC integration.

5. Results and discussion

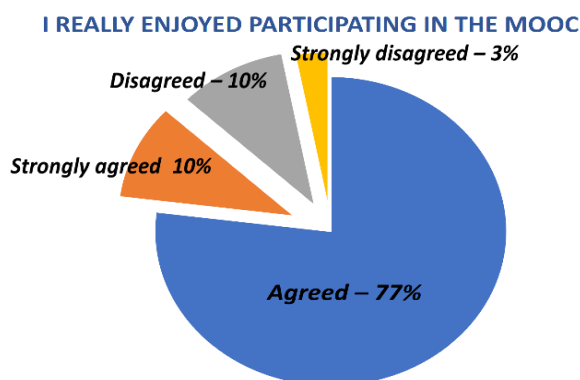
The questionnaire was completed by 30 students (22 females, 8 male). Responses to the 5 questions in the format of Likert four-level scale are provided in table 1.

Table 1. Results of the post-study Likert questionnaire

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Participation in the MOOC helps me acquire some knowledge (theories and approaches) in teaching English as foreign language and get ready for the tests and colloquium	7	20	2	1
2. Engagement in the discussion forums of the MOOC helps me develop my writing skills	4	24	2	0
3. Engagement in the discussion forums of the MOOC helps me share my experience and opinions with other learners and be a member of peer community learning	7	21	1	1
4. Engagement in the discussion forums of the MOOC helps me develop my collaborative skills and digital literacies	3	23	4	0
5. I really enjoyed participating in the MOOC	3	23	3	1

Answering question 6 aiming to figure out how many MOOC forums the students took part in, 14 students answered – all the forums, 10 – some of the MOOC forums, 6 – few of the MOOC forums, none of the students chose – none of the MOOC forums. In response to question 7 *What components of the MOOC do you think were the most valuable to your future professional success*, 16 students chose video lectures; 16 – articles, only 3 – forum discussion, 2 – web resources. In response to question 8 *What did you gain most from taking part in the MOOC?* The students were asked to check all the variants that apply. 21 students marked the opportunity to get familiar with new theories and approaches, 10 students – the opportunity to develop your writing skills, 10 students – the opportunity to network with a like-minded group of people, 10 students – awareness of open educational resources. Our data analysis demonstrated that the overall positive attitude of the learners to this intervention – 87% (26 students) (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Students' attitude to participation in MOOC



The learners agreed that MOOC integration in the course syllabus helped them: develop writing skills – 80% (24 students); develop collaborative skills and digital literacies – 77% (23 students); share experience and opinions with other learners and be a member of peer community learning – 70% (21 students); acquire some knowledge (theories and approaches) in teaching English as foreign language and get ready for the tests and colloquium – 67% (20 students).

Some free-text comments provided additional insight into learner experiences and revealed their positive attitude to the MOOC intervention. Answering the question *What did you like best about taking part in the MOOC?* almost 70% of the participants (21 students) mentioned the opportunity to communicate with other people via forum discussions. There are other benefits resulting from the use of MOOCs: 43% (13 students) indicated the opportunity to learn more about teaching approaches, 27% (8 students) – liked the video lectures as the way the content was presented. Our findings suggest that the students place heavy emphasis on the value of the lectures showing and demonstrating some practical approaches.

Only 13% (4 students) were not satisfied with this innovative model. The main reasons for the negative attitude were the lack of time and the overloaded schedule of the course as these 4 students (13%) said answering the free text question *What did you like least about taking part in MOOC?* The students complained that task completion required an extensive amount of time. This may be because some students did not have an appropriate language level, so they had to spend more time on listening and reading tasks, although none of the students mentioned that it had a negative impact on their

experience.

More than that, as the researcher figured out at the weekly face-to-face sessions the students had some difficulty understanding specialized ESL terms. Although none of the students highlighted it as the negative impact on their experience. In order to solve the problems of the language barrier, the instructors have to adjust the content of on-campus language or CLIL courses to integrate MOOC materials in learning process efficiently [13]. They have to provide language support through glossaries, tasks designed on MOOC materials. One more reason for that is a lack of familiarity among students with online learning and with the teaching and learning techniques utilized as a part of a MOOC [14]. It is possible to improve learners' performance by providing personalized planning, tips and hints for time management, study habits and teamwork, and a meeting point for people who need help to keep pace with the MOOC and need to know who can offer them support.

Surprisingly enough, although 70% of the students mentioned the opportunity to communicate with other people via forum as their positive experience, still some (20%) argued that they didn't like collaborative tasks where they had to give arguments or counter arguments. This can be explained by lacking student experience in participating in online discussion. It was the biggest challenge encountered by the students. As Griffiths *et al.*, argue participating in MOOC forum discussion students gain strong critical thinking in terms of the ability to distinguish between opinions and augmentations, improve their skills in critiquing with analytical comments [15].

6. Conclusion

MOOCs in education represent a new stage not only in distance learning and self-directed learning, as many authors assert, but also in a traditional face-to-face classroom. Integration of the MOOC in the course syllabus helped the instructor enhance learner motivation by means of creating an authentic interactive online environment that enabled students to be engaged in collaborative activities and develop communication and socio-cultural skills [16]. The data analysis demonstrated that the learners' positive attitude to this integration may be due to the following possibilities: sharing ideas and experiences on the MOOC forums with learners from all over the world, getting familiar with the theories on EFL teaching and learning, improving EFL terminology knowledge, and developing writing skills.

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Studies on Language Acquisition

A Study on Impoliteness Encountered by Chinese EFL Students Studying in English-Speaking Countries

Meng Yu¹

Nankai University, China¹

Abstract

With the acceleration of globalization process, an increasing number of Chinese students begin to learn English as their second language and further their education in English-speaking countries. Unavoidably, Chinese students may face with some occasions where foreigners say something impolite to them. The study mainly discusses the verbal impoliteness that Chinese students may encounter in all sorts of occasions during the period of studying in English-speaking countries.

The paper adopts a qualitative questionnaire-based study. According to the results of the survey, it is true that impolite discourses commonly happen. Then this paper sorts out statistical results and combine methods concerning Spencer Oatey's rapport management framework to further analyse these impoliteness phenomena.

Keywords: Interlanguage Pragmatics; Second Language Acquisition; Impoliteness; Rapport Management Framework

Introduction

Nowadays, an increasing number of Chinese students begin to learn L2 English to better adapt to the trend of globalization. Some L2 English learners from China further their education in English-speaking countries, however, they might inevitably meet with foreigners who say something impolite to them because of linguistic competency deficiency or cultural shock and many other factors.

There are several reasons to conduct this research, one of which is to explore whether verbal impoliteness phenomena are prevalent in the L2 context for Chinese students. Furthermore, to reduce cultural misunderstanding and misapprehension of words and develop a harmonious relationship.

Studying verbal impoliteness in an English L2 context has realistic significance which correlates to the most popular issue of studying abroad and is a brand-new orientation in the crossing field of Second Language Acquisition and Pragmatics.

1. Literature Review

In the late 20th century, the study of impoliteness abroad began to boom, mainly focusing on the theoretical knowledge of impoliteness such as definition, types and models. Two famous principles of politeness were put forward including Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle and Brown & Levinson's (1978) Face Theory. Some famous impoliteness strategies such as Culpeper's (1996) five impoliteness super strategies were put forward and some years later, Bousfield (2008) simplified two types of impoliteness.

During the last 20 years, the study scope of impoliteness from abroad gradually increased. Case study and collecting questionnaires are commonly used methods to analyse impoliteness. These researches illustrate that people's perception towards impoliteness is based on individual difference, in other words, interlocutors' divergency.

This kind of research can reflect people's judgement towards impoliteness.

Nevertheless, the cases that are allowed for participants to choose are limited, which do not provide sufficient samples for linguists to study.

Some scholars adopt method of collecting data from specific context, which contains various situations. Mugford & Gerrard (2018) conducted interviews of bilingual workers in Mexican call center and identified intercultural impoliteness to help them overcome difficulties like discrimination and a sense of powerlessness. Kryk-Kastovsky (2006) investigated impoliteness in English courtroom discourses and Sara Mills (2009) analysed about impoliteness at a cultural context.

Another way of collecting data is Cesar & Sean's (2016) study through a prompt that asks participants to write a narration of an impolite situation that occurred while students were studying abroad and uses impoliteness model to analyse. The result of the research demonstrates that American students face many impoliteness phenomena in Spanish L2 context. The advantage is that it allows examinees to write their previous experiences in detail which varies from person to person and the matters they once encountered have happened in our real life that are more realistic and worthier of exploring.

From the literatures that are recently published these years, impoliteness phenomena that English L2 students meet in English-speaking countries were rarely discussed.

Therefore, this paper explores whether impolite utterances pose a threat to L2 students.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Participants and Procedure

A total of 30 students who have studied or are studying in English speaking countries were involved in this research and 4 of them provided invalid answers. Chart 1 shows the constitution of countries where students receive education.

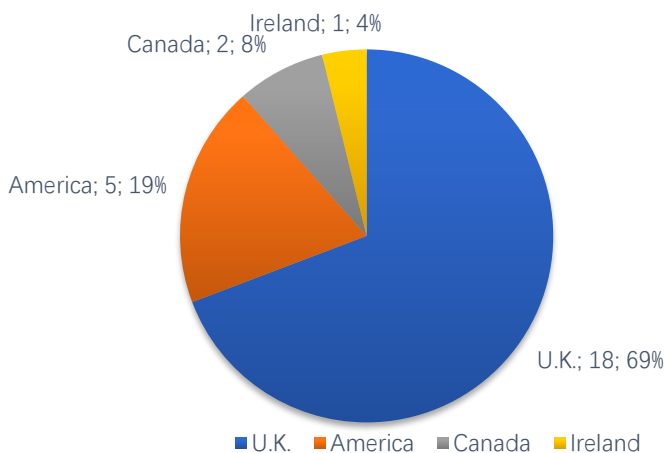


Chart 1. Distribution of study destinations

The paper adopts a qualitative questionnaire-based study method, allowing some Chinese students, who have studied or are now studying in English-speaking countries, to fill in a questionnaire which “contains their age, gender, what kind of course they study and then a detailed description of the impoliteness phenomena they encountered (Cesar & Sean, 2016: 102).

2.2 Spencer Oatey’s Rapport Management Framework

The data collected from questionnaires were analysed according to Spencer Oatey’s (2002: 540) rapport management framework (see Table 1). Column 1 illustrates what type of offense involved in impoliteness events; column 2 put forward some questions that can help researchers to know whether impolite events violate components of face and social rights; column 3 presents a typical example from the questionnaires for each kind of offense.

Violated subcomponent of face or sociality rights	Example from this study’s L2 English corpus	Analysis of the example
Quality Face	When I just came to the U.K., my English was not good and I sat in someone else’s car. When it arrived at my place, the driver opened the boot for me. I didn’t have things in the boot; then I would like to ask him to close it. However, I didn’t know how to express my ideas, so I just whispered ‘no’ and they laughed at me.	The student felt offended because her linguistic competence was not adequate to communicate with others and the driver laughed at her loudly without considering her feelings. Thus, she felt her quality face was violated through ridicule from foreigners.
Relational Face	It was when the new semester began that I knew I was assigned to class of Algebra 2 Accelerated Honors. I felt quite unhappy because the course was so easy for me. Then I decided to ask the director of math department for the reason. He told me that” “I know you’ve learned a lot. The reason we want you to take this course is that you can have a good rest in the first three or four months, without thinking about math, and spend more time on other subjects.” I felt quite angry towards the answer.	The hearer thought that she was a talented learned in math because she was much ahead of American students in the progress of studying mathematics in China. However, her relational value as an excellent math learner had been threatened by the director.

<p>Social Identity Face</p>	<p>I was discussing with the landlord about whether the central heating system should be opened all the day round. I said that there is no need to turn on the heating because it could waste a lot of electricity fees. While the landlord preferred to turn up the air conditioning to the utmost for all day and night and said to me “You Chinese only know save money. Saving money means you all are under freezing.” I felt very embarrassed. I thought helping others to save money is a traditional virtue in China, however, she couldn’t understand it because there exists cultural difference between us.</p>	<p>The Chinese student aims to show her kindness to the landlord because she wants to save electricity fees for the landlord. However, because of cultural shock and the stereotype of Chinese nation, the landlord cannot agree with her, thus making impolite speech to the listener and hurting her social identity face.</p>
<p>Equity Rights</p>	<p>My university treated different students according to their countries and student registration cards. Some teachers had a bias for me because I was not a native British student, so I was not allowed to enjoy the equal treatment with others in experimental equipment and time. Without these, it was very difficult for me to make achievements in scientific research, which made me feel bad.</p>	<p>As a foreign student, the hearer isn’t treated as fairly as native students by his teachers, thus violating his equity rights.</p>
<p>Association Rights</p>	<p>In geography class, the teacher would like me to get more involved in the class. Then she asked the students about their impressions of China. A girl took off her ‘Cross’ from her feet directly, and lifted it saying “They make shoes for us.” The rest of the students began to laugh and somebody added “They made clothes for us.” and others said toys. I was reluctant to show weakness and then counterattack” Yeah, you cannot get dressed without us.” However, before they could reply, the teacher continued her lecture.</p>	<p>In this conversation, the girl and other classmates attack the Chinese student’s positive face on purpose without other reasons mentioned. The teacher wants the Chinese student to be involved more in geography class, however, her classmates satirized her, which made the listener feel uncomfortable, thus she chose a method of attacking back.</p>

Table 1. Operationalization of the rapport management framework

3. Discussion

3.1 Primary Offense Types of Impoliteness Events

The figure below presents the primary offense type (see figure 1), which is the one characterizes the major offense in the impoliteness events, of these examples collected from students. The violation of quality face plays the most dominant part in composing the total types with 12 people involved (46%), then followed closely by social identity face with 7 (27%), equity rights (4 of 26, 15%), association rights (2 of 26, 8%) and relational face (1 of 26, 4%).

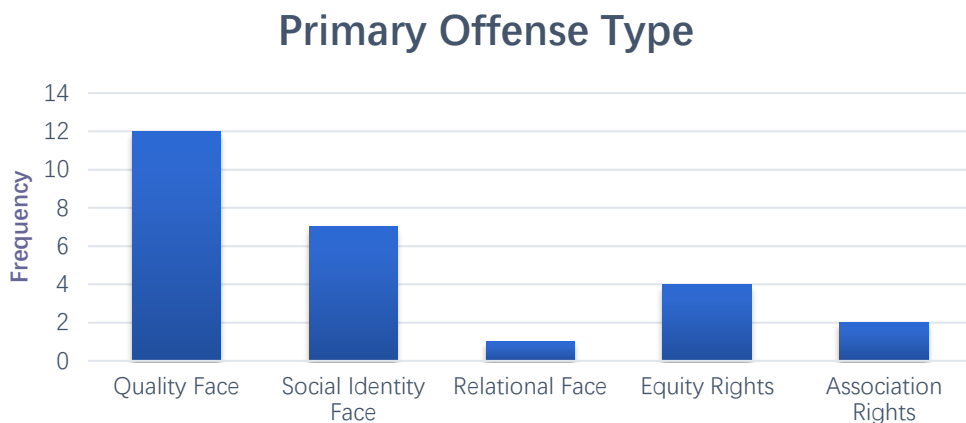


Fig. 1: Primary offense of the 26 impoliteness events reported by L2 English learners

3.2 Frequency of Encountering Impoliteness

The frequency of encountering impoliteness phenomenon in English-speaking countries for Chinese students is quite high according to the survey. From the chart 2 below it can be seen that 15% of students often run into impoliteness events and a half of students occasionally come across impoliteness when studying abroad. Nearly one third of people say they rarely face others' impolite words and only a small percentage of 4 reckon they never meet with these impoliteness phenomena before.

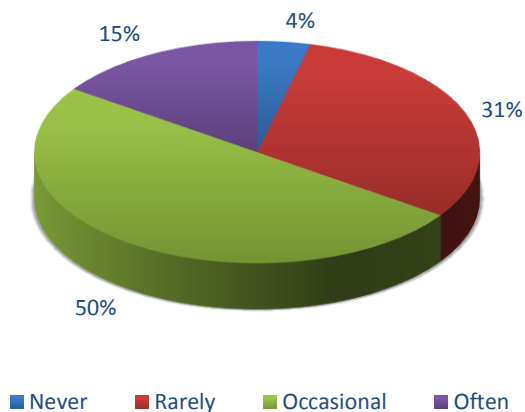


Chart 2. The frequency of students encountering impoliteness

3.3 Different Linguistic Competence

As for their linguistic competence (see chart 3), about 77 percent of students selected the “medieval level” which can “most of the time communicate with foreigners in English; however, sometimes don't understand what the speaker is saying”, while 19% students of “lower level” held that “My English ability is OK and can speak some simple sentences”. The remaining one person thought he belongs to “the beginner of English and can only say some easy words”. However, no one chooses “my English is excellent and can communicate without hinderance”. It is also noted that there still has a lot of space for Chinese students to improve their English ability in order to fully understand the speaker's intention and be respected by them.

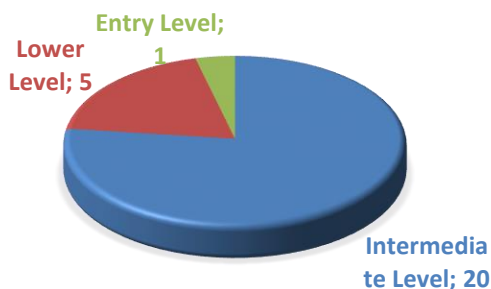


Chart 3. The number of students in different English levels

4. Conclusion and Limitations

According to the survey conducted among L2 English students from China, impolite words pose a threat to their experience in studying in another foreign country. The violation of quality face is the dominant type of offense to Chinese students.

Nevertheless, the shortcoming of my research is that it just contains the verbal impoliteness of the conversation, which may not so complete. Besides, for the sake of lacking in the material condition, the number of participants that can be asked to take part in this study is not so adequate, which may cause this research not so representative.

In conclusion, to study the impoliteness that L2 learners may be faced with in L2 studying context is of great values and has innovative significance that can not only improve the pragmatic awareness of students, but also compare people who come from different cultural backgrounds towards the perception of impoliteness as well as teaching recommendations on how to deal with impoliteness. This field is relatively new and much effort should be made to develop it.

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Communication Competence Related Skills in the Context of Student Performance and Teaching in EFL Classroom

Goran Bubaš¹, Andreja Kovačić²
University of Zagreb, Croatia^{1,2}

Abstract

Communication skills related to general communication competence are frequently placed in the context of foreign language acquisition (L2) and learning English as a foreign language (EFL). For instance, self-disclosure was investigated in relation to writing and discussion assignments in an online course [1], (un)willingness to communicate was explored in association with the frequency of communication in an L2 environment [2], [3], interaction management was observed in the context of CALL [4], and listening skills were analysed in the mobile language learning environment [5]. In this paper an overview of topics associated with communication skills that appear in literature on L2 learning is presented, along with a model of students' communication competence in an L2 and EFL learning contexts that was adapted from the computer-mediated communication competence model by Spitzberg [6] and his intercultural competence model [7]. A number of potential uses and benefits of communication skills instruction that is integrated in EFL teaching and learning is briefly outlined and explained. Assessment instruments for measuring communication skills of L2 and EFL learners are cited and their potential implementation in measuring learners' skill level, as well as in L2 and EFL instruction, are briefly explained. To conclude, communication skills can be used both for the assessment of individual differences of learners and as a subject of L2/EFL instruction. They are an important tool for delivering and displaying L2 and EFL competence in a practical real-world environment and can be used to facilitate both learning and enactment of L2 linguistic competence.

Keywords: EFL, L2, computer-assisted language learning, communication skills, communication competence, intercultural communication

1. Introduction

To illustrate the main point of this paper as briefly as possible a conceptual model of communication competence in foreign language (L2) use is introduced. The four general and hierarchically presented dimensions of L2 activities are outlined in *Figure 1* on the basis of literature (adapted mostly from the *framework of communicative competence integrating the four skills* [8], and also from *molar and molecular perspective on communication competence* [9], levels of abstraction in observing interaction processes – *microscopic, mesoscopic, macroscopic* [10], *levels of analysis in the social ecological multilevel theoretical framework* [11], [12] and *communication accommodation theory* [13]. The conceptual model depicted in *Figure 1* consists of following four dimensions, from the lowest *micro* to the highest *supra* level of analysis (as a reorganization of a model by [8]):

- **Micro – linguistic competence** (lexicon, phonology, orthography, morphology, syntax, sentence sequencing),
- **Mezzo – pragmatic/action/discourse competence** (performing and interpreting concise speech acts, monologue and dialogue according to participant and situational variables),
- **Macro – strategic/adaptive competence** (knowledge and use of interaction strategies, learning to adapt and advance in competence, utilization of specific skills to enhance ability and overcome barriers),
- **Supra – social/intercultural competence** (utilization of knowledge, social/cultural cues and skills to understand the interaction environment and appropriately perform wide-ranging sequences of intentional communication acts).

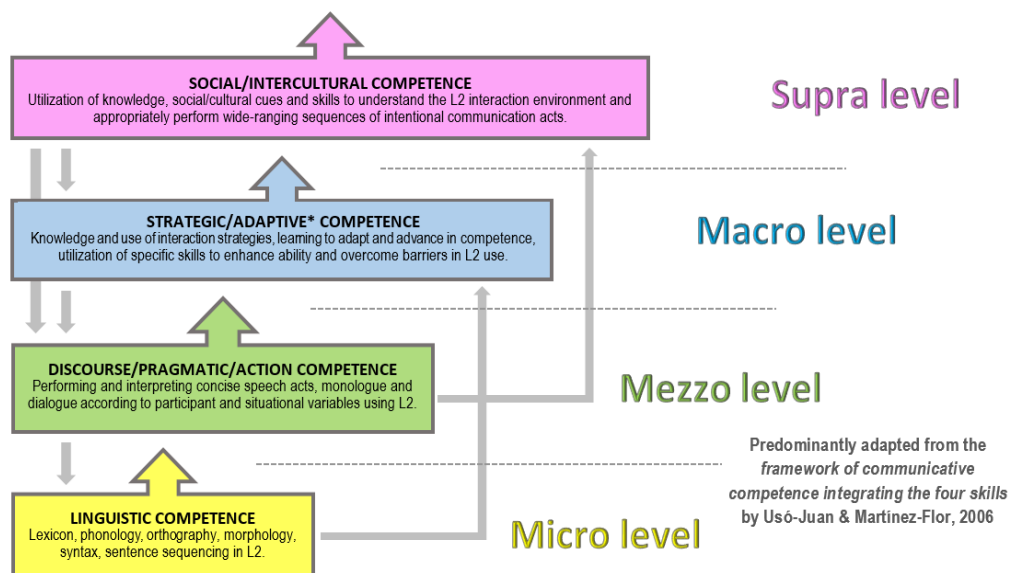


Fig. 1: A conceptual model of communication competence in foreign language (L2) use; *the main focus of this paper is on adaptive competence; sources: [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [13].

Briefly speaking, in the conceptual model represented in *Figure 1*, the *linguistic* competence elements at the *micro* level participate in the creation of speech acts for the *pragmatic/action/discourse* competence at the *mezzo* level. The elements of the latter aggregate to contribute to *strategic/adaptive* competence at the *macro* level. Finally, at the most general *supra* level of L2, there is *social/intercultural* competence which has two-way relationships with the dimensions at the *macro* and *mezzo* level.

2. Communication skills in the communication competence model of L2 use

The model in *Figure 1* was outlined to provide a bigger picture perspective for the main focus of this paper – the **macroscopic** level of communication competence and its **strategic/adaptive dimension**, or more specifically, **communication adaptation/accommodation** in function of the *utilization of specific skills to enhance*

communicative ability and overcome barriers in L2 interaction. In the broad context of *communication accommodation theory* [13] specific communication skills are viewed as a *facilitating factor* for the manifestation and confirmation of L2, particularly for the adaptation to specific tasks and contexts of communication. For instance, generally speaking, (a) *listening skills* may be beneficial to the mutual understanding of participants in L2 communication, (b) *interaction management* may contribute to their conversation flow, (c) *self-disclosure* can be favourable for dyadic and inter-group relationship building, etc.

Spitzberg and Cupach [14] created a list of about 100 labels for the factors/dimensions of interpersonal/social competence that had been mentioned in scholarly research. Self-assessment measures for a great number of communication skills were published in a book edited by Rubin *et al.*, [15]. However, in scholarly literature only a limited set of communication skills have so far been associated with learning L2 and effectiveness in L2 use, either in *face to face* or *online* settings. For instance, *self-disclosure* was investigated in relation to writing and discussion assignments in an online course [1], *(un)willingness to communicate* was investigated in association with the frequency of communication in an L2 environment [2], [3], *interaction management* was observed in the context of CALL [4], and *listening skills* were analysed in the mobile language learning environment [5]. To theoretically organize the skills with potential relevance for L2 interaction the *computer-mediated communication competence (CMC) model* that was proposed by Spitzberg [6] will further be utilized. In *Figure 2* the elements of Spitzberg's CMC model were adapted/expanded and used heuristically to position numerous communication skills in relation to their capacity or potential to support (1) pragmatic/action/discourse competence, (2) strategic/adaptive competence and (3) social/intercultural competence. Numerous possible outcomes of interaction in an L2 environment, supported with the use of specific communication skill(s), are also listed in *Figure 2* as an extension of the original CMC model. Depending on the level of communication competence in L2 (from *mezzo* to *supra*; see *Figure 1*), some of the potential outcomes of L2 interaction can be: understanding, appropriateness, influence, coordination, satisfaction, cooperation, efficacy (goal attainment), attractiveness, relationship, inclusion, socialization etc. (see *Figure 2*). It may be reasonable to consider that facilitating the achievement of those outcomes by developing L2 communication competence above the basic *linguistic competence* (at the *micro* level) can be defined as the additional goal of L2/EFL instruction.

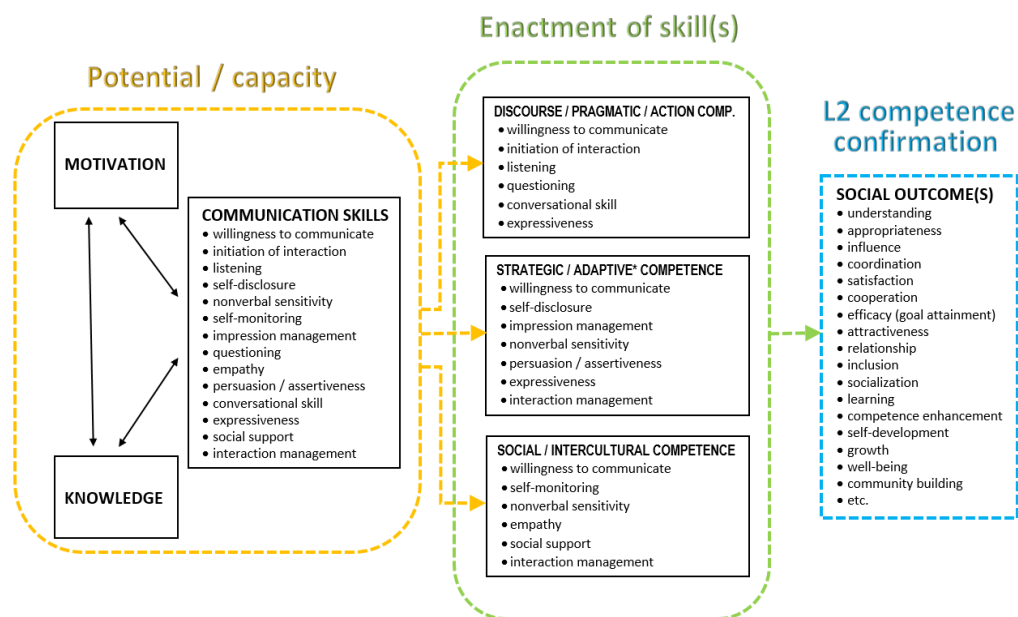


Fig. 2: A conceptual model which illustrates how specific communication skills (as potential or capacity, including knowledge and motivation) can be used to facilitate or enhance practical manifestation of the dimensions of L2 communication competence (enactment of skills) and produce various outcomes (confirmation of L2 communication competence); adapted from: [6]

Owing to the limited length of this paper the individual communication skills listed in Figure 2 will not be explained in detail. However, it must be noted that for all of those skills at least one or more self-assessment measures have been developed and published in scholarly literature. Furthermore, the first author of this paper has constructed 25 such measures for *face to face* interaction and 10 measures for *online* interaction, all of them devised either for research or educational purposes.

It must be emphasized that the elements presented in Figure 2 are applicable in predicting, explaining and developing communication competence in L2 use when a sufficient level of *linguistic competence* is present for meaningful interaction. Regarding *potential/capacity* (see Figure 2) it is clear that greater *knowledge* of L2, as well as of conversation topic(s), situation/context, other participants in interaction, their culture, and potential strategies/tactics for achieving desired goals in a situation at hand, can facilitate the *outcomes* of L2 activity. Also, with greater *motivation* more effort will be invested into achieving successful L2 interaction outcomes and, therefore, existing knowledge and skills will also be better employed for an L2 specific interaction purpose. Finally, a higher level of certain *communication skills* may help in specific types of L2 activity.

In continuation we provide brief illustrations to support the proposition that communication skills can contribute to (at the *macroscopic level* and regarding the *dimension of strategic/adaptive communication competence* – see Figure 1) the manifestation of *communication adaptation/accommodation* [13] or, as mentioned earlier in this paper, facilitate the “utilization of specific skills to enhance communicative ability and overcome barriers in L2 interaction”. (1) Knowledge of *willingness to communicate* and *initiation of interaction* can assist in the initial phases of frequently taught L2

interactions in travel, shopping, business introductions etc. (2) *Self-monitoring* and *impression management* can be useful for a candidate that uses L2 during a job interview. (3) *Empathy* and *self-disclosure* can be relevant for use of L2 in turning new acquaintances into long-term relationships. (4) *Listening* and *questioning* can be beneficial for those who use L2 in actively attending or facilitating a business meeting. (5)

Expressiveness and *persuasion/assertiveness* can enhance the effects of public speaking and oral presentations in L2. (6) For tourist guides using L2 skills like *nonverbal sensitivity* and *interaction management* could be important for leading tourist groups. (7) Last but not least, the skills of *self-disclosure* and *impression management* can contribute to effectiveness and appropriateness in private L2 online communication using social networks like Facebook.

3. Means of communication skills development in teaching L2/EFL

How can the teaching of communication skills be incorporated into an L2 or EFL class? In this section several examples will be provided in the context of traditional *face to face* teaching. In our examples it is recommended to connect the original topic of an L2 or EFL lesson with a specific communication skill. For instance, when teaching the topic of *business meetings* in L2 or EFL it could be useful for students to learn more about the *communication skill of questioning* (for example, the assumptions behind a question, question formulation, alternative questions, flow of questioning, types of answers etc.; see: [16]). Similarly, when teaching the topic of *attending a job interview* in L2 or EFL, students can also learn about the goals, strategies and skills of impression management (see: [17]) and use a self-assessment scale for measuring their impression management skill [18]. Likewise, when teaching about the use of L2 or EFL in *communication over a social network like Facebook* a self-assessment instrument entitled Revised Self-Disclosure Scale [15] can be used to (a) elicit self-awareness of this topic and (b) inform students about the structure of the self-disclosure communication skill since this instrument has subscales with constructs related to this type of communication: *Intended Disclosure; Amount; Positive-Negative; Control of Depth; Honesty-Accuracy*. Finally, when teaching about L2 or EFL use in *teamwork in multicultural IT organizations* the skill of social support may be trained with a role-playing scenario and activities like generating and evaluating sample supportive messages, distinguishing helpful from unhelpful messages, understanding diversity in perception of supportive messages and strategies etc. (see [19]).

4. Axioms for future research of communication competence in L2 use

To summarize the brief elaboration of the use of communication skills for the development and facilitation of communication competence in L2 use at different levels of observation (predominantly in relation to *strategic/adaptive competence* and *macro* level, but also partly in relation to *mezzo* and *supra* levels) the following axioms are defined:

A1. Communication competence in L2 use can be analyzed in relation to different *levels of observation* (micro, mezzo, macro and supra) and respective *dimensions* (linguistic, pragmatic/action/discourse, strategic/adaptive, and social/intercultural); see *Figure 1*.

A2. Various communication skills constitute communication competence in L2 as (1) an individual's potential/capacity and also as (2) a means of supporting/facilitating

enactment or practical realization of his/her L2 competence. This predominantly refers to the *macro* level of observation and *strategic/adaptive competence*, and partly to the *mezzo* and *supra* level and other L2 competence dimensions (see *Figure 2*).

A3. The important outcomes of real world L2 and EFL activities are not only related to mutual *understanding* of persons in interaction, but also to numerous other communication functions/goals; these outcomes do not rely solely on *linguistic competence* in L2/EFL, but also on knowledge and motivation factors, as well as on diverse communication skill(s).

A4. The teaching, training and self-assessment of specific communication skills can be incorporated into L2 and EFL education to support/facilitate the achievement of important outcomes of L2 and EFL interaction in real world environments.

A5. Generally speaking, not only *linguistic competence*, but also the knowledge of social norms and cultural specificities, previous experience, and *use of various communication skills* can contribute to *social/intercultural competence in L2 use* at the highest *supra* level of observation (utilization of knowledge, social/cultural cues and skills to understand the interaction environment and appropriately perform wide-ranging sequences of intentional communication acts).

5. Conclusion

This paper presents a concise introduction to the potential use of communication skills education incorporated in L2 and EFL teaching. The main rationale is that L2 and EFL real world activities are dependent of the level of communication skill and general communication competence of individuals (our students). Therefore, embedding brief episodes of teaching/training of relevant communication skills relevant for specific topics in L2 and EFL education (meetings, job interviews, use of social networks, teamwork etc.) could contribute to manifestation of greater real-world communication competence in L2 use and achievement of important outcomes of communication interaction outside classroom.

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Enhancing the Use of the Spanish Language in a Service-Learning Environment

Sydney Belcastro¹, Briana Moorman², Allen Marangoni³, Luis Arévalo⁴
Wheeling University/Dixie State University, United States of America^{1,2,3,4}

Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of teaching Spanish to Physical Therapy students while on service-learning trips in Peru and Mexico. The study focused its attention on practical uses of Spanish while delivering Physical Therapy services. A secondary purpose was to enhance students' cultural competency during service-learning projects. By implementing the Spanish program, we hoped to improve the exchange of information between student and patient, ideally leading to overall improved cultural competency of the students. Researchers hypothesized that students, subjectively, will report to exhibit a better command of Spanish at the end of their trip as opposed to their performance at the beginning of the service project.

Methods: *Doctor of Physical Therapy students and medical personnel who participated in service-learning trips to Spanish speaking countries were asked to engage in an intensive, practical application language program throughout the trip. They participated in 20-minute language modules at the beginning of each day and each evening. In order to assist students in remembering the vocabulary and phrases, a number of reminders were provided to participants. Participants were asked to rate themselves on his or her ability to speak the language and interpreters tested the participants by quizzing them on common words and phrases both at the beginning and end of the trip. The scores were compared.*

Results: *Fifty-five DPT students and medical personnel met the inclusion criteria, and averaged 31-years of age. The average intake rating on the participants ability to speak Spanish was 1.73 out of 10; and at the end of the program, the average outcome rating was 4.25 out of 10. This demonstrated a significance between the pre and post-test scores ($p \leq 0.05$) on the participants ability to communicate in Spanish. After instructors completed the objective analysis of the participants' ability to speak Spanish, the mean difference was 14.67 ($p \leq 0.05$). Researchers also found no difference between different interpreters' ability to teach by comparing the different groups' pre and post-test scores. Participants reported a common appreciation regarding the repetitions of the newly acquired words and sentences, the practicality of the information taught, and group interactions throughout the language program.*

Conclusion: *Learning modules were found to be an effective tool of acquiring Spanish in a Physical Therapy setting. By the end of the week, students increased their communicative proficiency and required less assistance from the interpreters. This demonstrated that the program significantly improved results objectively as well as subjectively.*

Keywords: Language acquisition, service-learning, proficiency, full immersion, Physical Therapy

Introduction

Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students all around the United States are participating in service-learning trips to provide Physical Therapy services and gain cultural competencies. During the trips, students often encounter language barriers which not only alter patient-therapist communication, but also may negatively affect the functional outcomes of the patients [Bowman & Cook, 2011]. This trend is not isolated to DPT students, but rather healthcare students as a whole. Since patients and DPT students in these situations do not speak each other's language, it is also common that they are not familiar with each other's culture, which may disconnect the relationship even further.

Statement of the problem

As students travel to perform service-learning, interpreters are often required to aid in communication between the DPT students and patients. In the vast majority of the cases, patients and DPT students do not speak each other's language or are unfamiliar with each other's culture, thus requiring the mediation of interpreters. However, the assistance of interpreters requires time and money that is not readily available, especially in the circumstances of the often-underserved population receiving therapy.

In turn, this leads to the even bigger issue of establishing rapport; consequently, patients in underserved populations may experience feelings of detachment from therapists.

Objectives

The primary purpose of this study was to look at the effectiveness of teaching Physical Therapy students Spanish to facilitate the delivery of Physical Therapy services.

A secondary purpose was to enhance students' cultural competency. By implementing the Spanish program, we hope to improve communication between student and patient, ideally leading to overall improved cultural competency of the student. While this research is conducted in Spanish-speaking regions, ideally this program could be applied to all languages.

Hypothesis

Researchers hypothesize that students, subjectively, will report having a higher command of the language at the end of their trip, compared to their performance at the beginning of the service project. Researchers also hypothesize that lessons and practice of language skills will create a statistically significant difference in communication abilities in those students who complete a one-week course of intense language training in Spanish.

Methodology

After approval from the IRB committee, using a sample of convenience, Doctor of Physical Therapy students and medical personnel were recruited based on the location of the international service trips they attended, Mexico or Peru. Each trip had a duration of 9 days. Included were healthcare personnel which consisted of students and other volunteers, who did not speak the language fluently. Exclusion criteria, included individuals who were already fluent in Spanish. At the beginning of the trip, the

participants completed an intake questionnaire and an oral exam regarding their knowledge of the language, as well as an informed consent form. At the start and end of each day, participants were offered a 20-minute Spanish language class, for a total of 10 sessions. During the morning lessons, participants would learn vocabulary and high frequency phrases used in clinical settings. They would role play common scenarios used in therapy. The evening sessions were used to apply the morning session's content, and to introduce additional terminology collected during actual patient-therapist exchanges. Prior to sessions, the students received Airdrop (picture message) images of the day's lesson. In addition to the images provided, hard copy lists of words and phrases used were taped on the clinic walls which were intended to aid the healthcare personnel during therapy sessions. At the end of each service-learning trip, an exit questionnaire and oral exam were completed, similar to the ones completed at the beginning of the trip. The exit questionnaire provided subjective data relating to participants impressions of the program and how they believed it affected their ability to speak the Spanish. Oral language tests objectively evaluated their change in ability to communicate in Spanish. Once the questionnaires and pre and post tests were completed, paired t-tests ($p \leq 0.05$) were performed which compared the scores at the beginning of the week with those at the end of the week. Collected data was analyzed for qualitative and quantitative results.

Results

Throughout this study, our objective was to determine whether or not an intensive, full-immersion, language course would be clinically beneficial for students on services learning trips to Spanish speaking countries. A total of 55 Doctor of Physical Therapy students and other personnel (20 in Mexico, 35 in Peru) met the inclusion criteria, and completed the intensive language program during service-learning trips. The average age of participants was 31-years-old. After collecting the post-program questionnaires, participants were asked if they thought this program was beneficial for providing physical therapy services to the people of the host country. Collectively, 89% of participants agreed it was beneficial, while 11% disagreed. In turn, 100% of participants would recommend this intensive language program to future students.

Within the completion of the intake questionnaire, the average participant rated his or her ability to communicate in Spanish. The result was 1.73 out of 10. After the final day of the service program, the average participant's ability rating, as determined by an exit questionnaire was 4.25 out of 10. Table 1 lists the average personal ratings and the mean differences for each individual trip. The results demonstrated a statistically significant difference between pre and post test scores on the participants ability to speak the Spanish language. When objectively analyzing the participants' ability to speak the language, the value was found to be significant with a mean difference of 14.67, as seen in Table 2. After comparing the different groups' pre and post test scores, no difference was found between the interpreters' ability to teach the language.

<i>Table 1: Subjective Data obtained from each Service-Learning trip</i>				
Trip attended	Number of participants (N)	Average intake scores (out of 10)	Average outtake scores (out of 10)	p value
Peru 2016	14	1.9	4	0.00
Peru 2017	9	1.31	4	0.00
Mexico 2018	11	1.42	4.77	0.00
Peru 2018	12	2.17	3.96	0.01
Mexico 2019	9	1.67	4.67	0.00
Average	55	1.73	4.25	0.00

<i>Table 2: T-Test demonstrating the interpreter's ability to teach the Spanish Language in Peru '18 ($p \leq 0.05$)</i>	
Number (N)	15
Mean Value for Pretest Scores	10.60
Mean Value for Posttest Scores	25.27
Mean Difference	14.67

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Learning German as a Foreign Language: An Empirical Investigation of Motivation Based on Self-Determination Theory

Konstantinos Chatzidimou¹
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece¹

Abstract

The role of motivation in L2 learning is widely acknowledged. Hence, motivation in foreign language learning has become a focus of interest of several researches and various motivation theories have been provided. One of the leading theories within the category of the cognitive approaches in motivation is the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dörnyei, 2003; Noels et al., 2003). Starting from this point, the present study explored the motivation of Greek learners of German as a foreign language in the light of self-determination theory. 152 students of the School of German Language and Literature of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki participated in the questionnaire study. Its research tool was based on previous similar investigations in international settings (Noels et al., 2003). The study explored aspects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as amotivation and basic orientations in language learning. Perceived competence and anxiety were also investigated. Exploratory factor analysis of the items of the questionnaire and correlations among the motivational subscales were carried out in order to examine various parameters of self-determination in the Greek context of foreign language learning.

Keywords: Foreign Language Learning; Motivation; Self-Determination Theory; German as a Foreign Language

1. Introduction

Motivation has been widely acknowledged as a crucial factor in academic learning and thus in learning a foreign or second language (L2). Having been originally initiated in Canada by social psychologists about fifty years ago, L2 motivation has become a central issue in research on foreign language learning (FLL). This has led to various theoretical approaches and motivation theories, such as Gardner's [1] motivation theory, self-determination theory (SDT), attribution theory, and goal theories [2, pp. 7-9].

This paper focuses on SDT, which was established by Deci and Ryan [3] and has been extensively studied and further developed in recent years by Noels [4] and others [5]. In the framework of SDT, two general types of motivation are distinguished: intrinsic motivation (IM) and extrinsic motivation (EM), which lie along a continuum of self-determination.

IM, established upon "innate needs for competence and self-determination" [3], [5, p. 38], can be analyzed into three subtypes: IM-Knowledge, IM-Accomplishment and IM-Stimulation [6]. All of these subtypes of IM have as a common element the satisfying emotions caused by a self-initiated activity [5, p. 38]. On the other hand, EM, connected to actions performed "to achieve an instrumental goal, for example earning a reward or

avoiding a punishment” [5, p. 39], can be divided in external regulation, introjected regulation and identified regulation [6], according to the level of self-determination (from the lowest to the highest level) [5, p. 39]. The situation in which someone has no intrinsic or extrinsic reason for executing an activity, in our case learning a FL, is described as “amotivation” [3], [5, p. 40].

Furthermore, following the perspective of Noels *et al.* [5], we included in our study aspects such as the travel, friendship and instrumental orientation in FLL, described by Clément and Kruidenier [7], in order to investigate their relations to the motivation types described above, suggested by Deci and Ryan [3] and Vallerand and his colleagues [6].

Finally, two variables that have been proved to be related to IM and EM [5, p. 43] were included in our study: perceptions of competence and anxiety.

2. The Study

Following a previous, preliminary study of ours [8], we designed a questionnaire study in order to examine SDT in learning German as a FL in the Greek educational context. Some basic aspects of this research will be presented below.

2.1 Participants

The learner population investigated in our study was undergraduate students of the School of German Language and Literature of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece). 152 students participated in the research, 84.2% of which were women. 30.5% of the participants were first-year students, 22.5% were second-year students, 5.3% were third-year students, 17.2% were fourth-year students, 13.2% were fifth-year students, and 11.2% were in their sixth or higher year of studies. In order to facilitate the statistical analysis, four groups were formed: first-year students (30.5%), second and third-year students (27.8%), four and fifth-year students (30.5%), and sixth or higher year students (11.3%).

Their age varied from 18 to 58 years, with an average age of 22.4 years. Their average amount of years of learning German was 7 years, whereas 6% of them already had another university degree. Regarding their level of competence in German, according to their self-assessment, 18.4% of them placed themselves at a level up to B1+, 31.6% at B2 and B2+, and 49.3% at C1 or higher.

As far as the participants’ competence in other FLs is concerned, 75.5% spoke one additional FL, 17.9% spoke two FLs, 4% spoke three, and 2.6% spoke no other FL than German. These languages were: English (96.7%), Russian (11.9%), Spanish (4.6%), Italian (4%), French and Turkish (2% each), Dutch, Albanian and Japanese (0.7% each).

In order to facilitate the statistical analysis, two wider groups were formed: students who spoke one or no other FL (78.1%) and students who spoke two or three further FL (21.9%).

2.2 Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was a questionnaire specifically designed for the study. The questionnaire was based on the study of Noels *et al.*, [5] on SDT and more particularly on the “Language Learning Orientations Scale – Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Amotivation Subscales (LLOS-IEA)” provided there. The latter was modified, in order to be adjusted to the students who were investigated. Thus, the questionnaire examined: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation (which consisted of three items each), IM-Knowledge, IM-Accomplishment, IM-Stimulation (three items each), amotivation (three items), perceived competence (five

items), anxiety (three items), travel orientation (three items), friendship orientation (four items) and instrumental orientation (three items). Overall, the questionnaire contained 39 five-point Likert scale items and seven background questions.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection was conducted during spring semester 2019. The students were informed that their participation was voluntary and that the survey was anonymous.

There was no time limit in filling out the questionnaire. Students whose first language was German were excluded from the survey.

The analysis and the elaboration of the questionnaire data were conducted with the use of the statistical programme SPSS 22.0.

2.4 Results

Due to space limitations, only the descriptive results of the motivational variables of the questionnaire are presented below, as well as the results from the correlations among the independent variables and the dependent ones. Further statistical analysis will be conducted and its results will be presented in a future publication.

Table 1 presents a comprehensive summary of the results concerning the index for internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha), the mean values and the standard deviation of the two general types of motivation (EM, IM), their six subtypes, amotivation, variables that have been shown to be connected to IM and EM (perceived competence, anxiety) [5, p. 43] and orientations toward L2 learning (travel, friendship, instrumental orientation).

Table 1. Internal consistency and mean values of the motivational subscales

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Std. Deviation
Extrinsic Motivation	0.747	3.12	0.67
External Regulation	0.583	2.97	0.81
Introjected Regulation	0.672	2.32	1.01
Identified Regulation	0.736	4.08	0.87
Intrinsic Motivation	0.880	3.79	0.80
IM_Knowledge	0.786	3.64	0.96
IM_Accomplishment	0.873	3.86	0.97
IM_Stimulation	0.699	3.88	0.89
Amotivation	0.917	1.15	0.58
Perceived Competence	0.849	3.52	0.73
Anxiety	0.764	2.86	1.03
Travel	0.583	3.84	0.86
Friendship	0.905	2.86	0.74
Instrumental Orientation	0.591	3.95	0.84

The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient rendered rather satisfactory levels for most of the multi-item scales. Only few subgroups did not reach the recommended 0.70 threshold, the difference being a few points. Thus, it could be argued that the questionnaire has delivered data of rather satisfactory consistency.

As shown in Table 1, the students of the study seemed to be more intrinsically (M=3.79) than extrinsically motivated (M=3.12). However, identified regulation, as subtype of EM, scored the higher mean value (M=4.08) of all six subtypes of EM and IM.

The two other subtypes of EM, however, had lower mean values than the subtypes of IM, thus concluding that knowledge and the feelings of accomplishment, enthusiasm

and satisfaction play a significant role in the students' learning of German. Amotivation, on the other hand, did not seem to be an influential factor ($M=1.15$); the participants of the research appeared to have reasons for learning German and are not expected to quit the activity soon [5, p. 40].

Regarding the three orientations examined here (travel, friendship and instrumental scale) [6], the students' responses indicated a strong agreement with the proposed reasons for learning German that were included in the instrumental scale ($M=3.95$). The travel scale also scored rather high ($M=3.84$), whereas friendship did not ($M=2.86$).

Overall, the motivational subscales were placed with the following order: identified regulation ($M=4.08$), instrumental orientation ($M=3.95$), IM-Stimulation ($M=3.88$), IM-Accomplishment ($M=3.86$), travel orientation ($M=3.84$), IM-Knowledge (3.64), external regulation ($M=2.97$), friendship orientation ($M=2.86$), introjected regulation ($M=2.32$) and amotivation ($M=1.15$).

The students' self-perception of competence in German appeared rather high ($M=3.52$), while feelings of pressure or tension in learning German (anxiety) seemed to be at an average level ($M=2.86$).

The results of the correlation analysis between the independent and the dependent variables revealed the following:

- Male students appeared to have a higher self-perception of competence in German than female students ($t=3.42$, $df=148$, $p=0.001$).
- Students who were in their fourth or fifth-year of studies had higher self-perception of competence in German ($F=8.485$, $p=0.000$) and stated to have feelings of anxiety to a lesser extent than first-year students ($F=2.990$, $p=0.033$).
- Students who already had another university degree had higher self-perception of competence in German ($t=2.007$, $df=147$, $p=0.047$) and had a lower mean value in identified regulation ($t=-2.773$, $df=149$, $p=0.024$), which is regarded as the "most self-determined form of EM" [5, p. 39].
- Students who spoke one or no other FL than German had a higher level of external regulation than students who spoke two or three further FL ($t=2.516$, $df=146$, $p=0.013$). This type of EM has the lowest level of self-determination [5, p. 39].
- Students with a higher level of competence in German scored a higher mean value concerning IM-Knowledge ($F=3.680$, $p=0.028$) and stated a lower level of anxiety compared to the students with a lower level of competence in German ($F=9.740$, $p=0.000$).

3. Conclusion

Based on the high ranking of identified regulation and instrumental orientation, the students of the study appeared to have chosen to learn German for personal reasons, given that they seemed to be engaged in the activity "because of its importance for achieving a valued goal" [5, p. 39]. Nevertheless, the students also appeared to find the process of learning German pleasant and satisfying (IM). The satisfaction and the enthusiasm they felt by learning and speaking German played a significant role (IM-Stimulation), as did the "sensations related to attempting to master a task or to achieve a goal" [5, p. 38] (IM-Accomplishment). The next step of the present data analysis would be to examine the inner relations among the motivation subscales through an exploratory factor analysis and to calculate the intercorrelations between IM and EM subtypes in order to explore a possible self-determination continuum.

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Low-Immersion versus High-Immersion Virtual Reality: Definitions, Classification, and Examples with a Foreign Language Focus

Regina Kaplan-Rakowski¹, Alice Gruber²

University of North Texas, United States of America¹

University of Applied Sciences Heilbronn, Germany²

Abstract

Since the beginning of the Digital Revolution in the 1950s, the influx of rapidly evolving technologies has posed a challenge to those trying to keep pace. This challenge is compounded by ever changing terms which can lead to confusion, including concepts related to virtual environments, virtual worlds, and virtual, augmented, or mixed realities. A detailed analysis of previous publications (e.g., Berti, 2019; Lin & Lan, 2015; Peeters, 2019) reveals that scholars have been using the same term, “virtual reality” (VR), to describe several distinct educational settings, ranging from low-immersion virtual environments (LiVR) to high-immersion three-dimensional spaces (HiVR). The intention of this manuscript is three-fold: (1) to define and classify the main types of VR, as they have been used in educational research, (2) to outline the differences between the two main types of VR, and (3) to provide examples of VR language learning research.

Keywords: embodiment, immersion, language learning, virtual reality, virtual environments

1. VR definitions and classification

The difficulty of defining and classifying VR has existed since its inception and is related to its constantly evolving nature. The way VR was seen in the 1960s is not the same as in the 2020s (for an overview, see Sherman & Craig, 2018). Various definitions of VR are available (e.g., Steuer, 1992; Burdea & Coiffet, 1994; Girvan, 2018; Pan & Hamilton, 2018), with many of them tending to be unnecessarily complex.

As there are two main types of VR: LiVR and HiVR (Lee & Wong, 2014; Marakansky, Terkildsen, & Mayer, 2019), we offer two separate, simplified definitions. We define LiVR as “a computer-generated three-dimensional virtual space experienced through standard audio-visual equipment, such as a desktop computer with a two-dimensional monitor”. The online virtual world *Second Life* is a popular example of a LiVR setting. We define HiVR as “a computer-generated 360° virtual space that can be perceived as being spatially realistic, due to the high immersion afforded by a head-mounted device”.

2. What differentiates LiVR and HiVR

Both LiVR and HiVR can be immersive. The level of immersion is the essential characteristic that distinguishes between the two types of VR. LiVR settings may be expansive and interactive, but they do not appear realistic to one’s senses. The immersion in LiVR comes from the extent of virtual interactions and activities. HiVR may not necessarily include any social interactions or an expansive setting, but it incorporates

a spatial awareness that tricks the users' senses into a sensation of physical presence.

While immersion intensity may depend entirely on the quality of the viewing content or a storyline, the different levels of immersion are largely due to the equipment used to experience the VR content. Users experience LiVR by viewing a standard two-dimensional monitor and using a keyboard or a mouse, or both, for interacting. The key equipment used for experiencing HiVR is a head-mounted device or, in short, a headset.

The headset physically disconnects users from the real world, allowing for deeper immersion in the virtual space. In addition, it features advanced sensors, such as gyroscopes, magnetometers, and accelerometers, which detect the position of the user, thereby allowing for adjustment of the viewing content. Head-motion tracking is an important aspect in HiVR because it makes learners feel that "they have a greater sense of control and autonomy in the learning process" (Makransky & Lilleholt, 2018, p. 1156).

3. Theoretical framework

LiVR and HiVR are distinctly different in terms of embodiment, or virtual body ownership, "which refers to the virtual body a VR-user coincides with and uses from first person perspective, which then can give the illusion that it is the person's body" (Slater, 2017, n.p.). Makransky and Lilleholt (2018) suggest that HiVR, much more than LiVR, can increase perceived learning outcomes by giving learners a higher sense of autonomy because of better control over the environment. Peeters (2019) points out that when experiencing HiVR environments, participants enter the depicted scenes themselves as no artificial spatial divide exists between stimulus and participant. Just like in the real world, participants are in the same space as the stimulus. HiVR offers a spatial dimension, which is not the case with LiVR, where the users' embodiment experience is reduced.

Empirical research in science education suggests that students favor the HiVR over the LiVR version of a virtual learning simulation, due to their sense of presence, affective variables, behavioural intention, and immediacy of control (Makransky & Lilleholt, 2018).

Students' positive views on HiVR technology, as compared with LiVR technology, are also evident in foreign language-focused investigations (Dolgunsöz, Yildirim, & Yildirim, 2018; Kaplan-Rakowski & Wojdyski, 2018).

4. Examples of VR in language learning

Research on LiVR suggests that certain features afforded by LiVR, such as incorporating real-life tasks and collaboration, can have a positive impact on learners' oral output, performance, and communicative competence (see, for instance, Jauregi, Canto, de Graaff, Koenraad, & Moonen, 2011). Overviews of LiVR language activities or studies are provided in Kaplan-Rakowski (2011), Legault *et al.*, (2019), Lin and Lan (2015), and Sadler (2017). Chen (2018) points out that some studies on LiVR are descriptive, do not show a link between results and theoretical underpinning in second language acquisition, or focus on text-based task interaction.

Studies on HiVR using headsets for language learning indicate that HiVR can help contextualize students' learning. HiVR can also reduce the cognitive burden and can increase the students' interest in the target culture (Xie, Chen, & Ryder, 2019). A recent study suggests that low-ability learners might profit the most from HiVR (Legault *et al.*, 2019).

The widespread availability of Google Cardboard in 2015 spurred various ideas for developing HiVR materials for language learners as well as attempts to investigate how

foreign language learners can benefit from VR technology. Berti (2019), for instance, developed open-source 360° HiVR materials for learners of Italian. Papin (2018) investigated how exposure to 360° videos made learners more eager to use the target language outside the classroom. Dolgunsöz, Yildirim, and Yildirim (2018) explored how 360° videos can affect second language writing performance.

value of more sophisticated VR devices for learning also needs to be explored. With the increased availability of portable HiVR such as Oculus Go, Kaplan-Rakowski and Wojdyski (2018) conducted a pilot study analysing students' attitudes about using a HiVR application for language learning, showing that learners perceive VR technology to be a potential tool for language learning. Gruber and Kaplan-Rakowski (in progress) developed a project exploring whether HiVR simulation of a classroom could help students to cope with foreign language anxiety. Using *HTC Vive*, students were required to speak in front of student-like avatars in a virtual classroom that simulated a real-life scenario (i.e., giving a presentation during a seminar).

5. Conclusions

This manuscript set out to untangle the concept of VR used in the literature for foreign language teaching and learning. It attempted to provide a useful distinction between the commonly confused concepts of LiVR and HiVR. The brief overview of definitions and classification showed that VR technology for language learning is multifaceted in that the level of immersion, sense of presence, and embodiment are experienced differently depending on the type of VR under consideration. As technology progresses and provides additional learning affordances, the terminology and equipment specifications likely will evolve. For example, we mentioned how equipment such as a headset differentiates LiVR from HiVR. Recently released Huawei VR glasses allow users to experience HiVR without a traditional headset. Going forward, the types and affordances will continue to advance and expand the differences in how immersion is generated across different platforms.

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Modern Scientific Communication and its Efficacy through the Prism of Science Education: Dialectic Interaction between Cognition and Discourse Phenomena

Elena A. Notina¹, Irina A. Bykova², Nebojša Radić³
RUDN University, Russian Federation^{1,2}
Cambridge University, United Kingdom³

Abstract

In recent decades, in the light of globalization processes particular role attributed to scientific articles as one of the most efficient means of cross-cultural cross-linguistic scientific communication dynamizing creation of new concepts, categories, theories, and scientific values, including those based on interdisciplinarity, has reinforced complex issues concerning equivalence of thesauruses of communication participants and structuring of the information flow, which are of special interest in what regards science education. Intensified multidimensional dialogue of cultures, scientific schools, and fields of knowledge inevitable requires flexible tools and instruments designed to standardize and structuralize written scientific discourse, inter alia, standardized connectors and compositional formulas or recurrent lexical and grammar constructions to be adequately perceived and efficiently applied by Ph.D. students. Analysing the instruments and tools referred to above, what represents the aim of this article, we apply the following methods: comparative analysis, the method of translation and the questionnaire method which engaged Ph.D. students of RUDN-university (n-95) from different countries learning academic writing in different scientific fields where the English and the Spanish languages are used as a second foreign language by learners with different mother-tongue backgrounds. We conclude that, while providing a map for researchers' creativity or discretion in interpretation and linguistic representation of accumulated research data, recurrent standard constructions, which form part of the structure of text mechanism that reflects universal schemes of the processes of perception, comprehension, and representation of scientific phenomena and processes in their integrity and dynamics, enable the forming of Ph.D. students' own theoretical projections, models and approaches, as well as focusing on polylogue with other scholars in the context of scientific communication. This article is of practical value for cross-linguistic studies, language and translation teaching, foreign language acquisition, translation and interpretation studies.

Keywords: scientific communication; cognition; discourse; equivalence of thesauruses of communication participants; interdisciplinarity

Introduction

Considered as one of the core semiotic concepts, discourse constitutes a modelling system that is oriented towards or tends to autonomy when viewed through the prism of semiotics and communication. Scientific discourse, communicative and cognitive parameters thereof characterized by specific linguistic forms of objectivization in different

languages, plays important role in the transfer of cognitive information due to the fact that *per se* it constitutes linguistic form of new knowledge.

On the whole, discourse as a cognitive event (E. Kubryakova) not only correlates with a particular area of social practice, it deals with transferring, processing or operating with knowledge and structures thereof [1], involving similar presuppositions and implications that precondition adequate cognitive perception of the reality and the ways in which it is conceptualized and verbalized within a given context of cross-cultural scientific communication.

Discussion

As for unique character of scientific cognition science may be conceived as sphere where intertextual interaction takes place. Constituting special way to generate sense of new text throughout interaction between the author's and other researchers' sense positions, intertextuality embodies the core of mechanisms of the text-formation in science.

In general, the author's pragmatics and its discourse realization rest on virtual polylog with other scientists in what concerns the following aspects: framing practical and theoretical questions encompassed by the scope of his research in terms of current debates; expressing agreement or disagreement with the views or estimations of other researchers that represent different scientific schools; finding relevant viewpoints in support of his own ideas and hypotheses; neutralizing communication gaps, differential in linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge, especially, in what regards scientific conceptual categories and verbalization thereof, along with representation of accumulated research data via corresponding means of the other language, etc.

Semantic, pragmatic or conceptual mismatches between the source Language (SL) and the target language (TL) may often be revealed, especially in cases when two language systems meet in mediated scientific communication.

In translation arises the need for the new information regarding the objective reality to be reflected, to be matched with the data or facts known by the addressee, the need to show the result of the reference and objectively depict or capture the information about the world in the language of translation via, perhaps, different as compared to the source language linguistic means, and, finally, to accomplish the goal similar to the one that cognitive linguistics has in what regards exploring how cognitive and linguistic structures intercorrelate but at the level of contact between the two different languages where relevant factors, such as functional, social, pragmatic, and others, have their impact and manifest within mediated crosslinguistic cross-cultural scientific communication.

The author of scientific text, i.e., scientist, assimilates and integrates ideas, thoughts and textual realizations thereof within vast space of scientific polylog, for intertextuality phenomenon in scientific communication lays, *inter alia*, on the dialectical interaction between prior or already existing knowledge and the new one. Intertextual links are realized at the level of content, genre and stylistic peculiarities, structure, and formal verbalization of the information, constituting *per se* special way of building up new sense of a particular text.

Aspects related to the phenomenon of intertextuality and its manifestation in translation, along with linguistic means that are used to articulate intertextual links in what concerns a particular pair of languages, as well as issues concerning structuring of scientific information flow acquire special relevance for academic writing in foreign languages and science education.

Materials and methods

Analysing tools and instruments designed to standardize and structuralize written scientific discourse, we apply the method of comparative analysis, the method of translation, and the questionnaire method which engaged Ph.D. students of RUDN-university ($n=95$) from different countries learning academic writing in different scientific fields where the English and the Spanish languages are used as a second foreign language by learners with different mother-tongue backgrounds.

Results

It is of essence of scientific article that it efficiently facilitates scientific communication and functionally embodies general peculiarity of linguistic world picture viewed in its scientific aspect, for it manifests extralinguistic features that characterize scientific discourse and scientific style in its particular forms, that are, among others, the following: generality, objectivity, preciseness and accuracy, consistency of logic, abstractedness, clarity, modality and evaluativeness. The referred to above stylistic features find their reflection in almost all universal typological categories of a text, scientific text (ST), in particular, such as coherence, integrity, structural composition, modality, sense and functional type preconditioning selection and usage of particular lexical and grammar means and constructions, along with special structural, logic, and compositional schemes that structuralize written scientific discourse.

The need to shape and modulate the usage of the latter strategically for different effects, to apply principles of coding and decoding of cognitive information is fundamental to the skills and competences of Ph.D. students in the context of learning academic writing in foreign languages, particularly, in what concerns establishing comparisons between two or even more different languages in order to meet scientific style requirements and prevent, among others, failures of disambiguation or adequate understanding and presenting of all sorts of information implicitly or explicitly given in scientific text.

The analysis undertaken in this research has demonstrated that, to a great extent, coherence in scientific discourse, while forming part of text structuring mechanism, rests on internal logic inherent to the object subject to research. Among the means of coherence contemplated by the most extensively used classification of means of coherence by the criterion of linguistic representation the following ones are of particular relevance for this research:

- lexical that include, *inter alia*, different kinds of reduplications, such as synonymic, contextual, periphrastic, full or complete ones, etc., along with pronominal substitution;
- lexical and grammar links, i.e., conjunctions, conjunctive or connective adverbs, parenthesis or incidental words and word combinations, that facilitate logic and compositional organization of the text throughout a wide spectrum of relationship of conditional, comparative, concessive or other character;
- grammar links that are manifested in word order, syntactic parallelism, aspectual-temporal forms of verbs, etc.

Compared to the literary texts and viewed in the light of category of coherence realization, the ST reveals a number of peculiarities, such as the following.

- Lexical reiteration of a term when a lexical unit of a prior sentence is repeated in the next sentence so that clear and unambiguous interpretation of scientific text is ensured:

- “It is 3D printing (3DP) technology however that offers perhaps the greatest potential to revolutionize the future of pharmaceutical manufacturing. 3DP was developed as a tool for rapid prototyping.” (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpharm.2014.09.044>)
- Usage of standardized linguistic means that precondition and facilitate compositional arrangement of text content. For example: Conclusion: “concluding”; “by way of conclusion”; “in conclusion”; “in summary”; “summarizing results of the research/paper”; “to summarize”; “finally”; “in brief,” etc. (Eng.); “concluyendo”; “en conclusion”; “en breve”; “por último”; “finalizando”; “por fin”; “en síntesis”, etc. (Esp.).
- Normal or neutral word order that has the theme or thematic and already known information located at the beginning of the sentence and the rhema or core information that matches new, relevant and actual information – at the end of it. For example:
“In particular, the development of medicines personalized to the patient requires consideration of novel manufacturing technologies capable of fabricating small numbers of dosage forms, because current commercial technology only operates efficiently on a large scale”. (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpharm.2014.09.044>)

It is worth noticing that different languages have their particular specificities in what concerns information-bearing structure of the sentence or actual division of the sentence.

In the Russian and the Spanish languages both theme and rheme reveal not fixed or free syntactical presentation. As for structural and syntactic level English theme in most cases correlates with the group of the subject (subject with its adjuncts) and rheme usually coincides with the group of predicates. The latter has special relevance, for it has direct impact on the way in which the notion of “novel contribution to the area” is represented in the sense structure of the text of research article predetermining efficacy of sense perception thereof. In contrast to the Russian and the Spanish languages where syntactic word order in the sentence is flexible to a certain extent, and may change in accordance with the requirements of semantic word order, the English language tends to manifest fixed or rigid order of sentence parts. It preconditions that change in the position of the subject within sense structure of the sentence in order for it to represent rheme position may be observed in rare cases under condition that special constructions are used to manifest sense articulation or segmentation, that, *inter alia*, are the following: indefinite articles, negation constructions that attract logic accent or stress, and other.

Definite articles, personal, demonstrative, emphatic or possessive pronouns, etc., as well as the fact of previous mention in the speech situation or a particular context, along with low semantic and contextual burdening or load specify the reference to the sense group of themes.

- Grammatical category of tense has functions of segmentation and integration of scientific text content. Considered as distinctive character of scientific text conceptual time is represented both in forms of gnomic present tense and present time. It is notable that the Russian language demonstrates free transition from present to past tenses and *vice versa* while the English and the Spanish languages are strict in what regards sequence of tenses while arranging the tenses of successive verbs, particularly in conditional sentences, indirect speech or establishing relationship between main and subordinate verbs. For example:

“This article focuses on the effects of bilingualism on the structure and integrity of the white matter (WM) of the brain and the factors that have been shown to affect it... The review of the available literature reveals that it is unclear what the causes of the WM effects in bilinguals are. Although it appears that WM changes are to be expected in early bilinguals, the evidence on late bilinguals is still inconclusive”.

(www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1414183112)

Conclusion

Scientific communication efficiency implies common knowledge of common cognitive schemes, stereotypes and connotations, so that referring to textual fragments of other authors encourages virtual interaction within scientific community and facilitates openness to other sense systems interpretation and their interaction in what regards content or subject matter and, particularly, verbalization thereof. While providing a map for researchers' creativity or discretion in interpretation and linguistic representation of accumulated research data, recurrent standard constructions, which form part of the structure of text mechanism formation that reflects universal schemes of the processes of perception, comprehension, and representation of scientific phenomena and processes in their integrity and dynamics, enable the forming of Ph.D. students' own theoretical projections, models and approaches, as well as focusing on polylogue with other scholars in the context of scientific communication.

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Non-Native English: In Search for Rhythm

Giedrė Balčytytė-Kurtinienė¹
Vilnius University, Lithuania¹

Abstract

One of the key aspects of English an EFL learner needs to master is the specific rhythm that has traditionally been described as stressed-timed rhythm and opposed to syllable-timed rhythm. Despite emerging criticism and the lack of scientific evidence for the stressed-timed isochronous nature of English some relevant acoustic cues still remain relevant for EFL learners: the alternation of strong and weak syllable sequences, vowel reduction, stress placement and other rhythmic aspects of connected speech. The aim of the current study is to examine the significance of rhythm in the intelligibility of speech by non-native speakers as well as to report on a didactic experiment conducted in order to suggest and test music techniques for the enhancement of English rhythm by Lithuanian EFL learners. The findings of the study showed that the respondents faced major problems in the implementation of weak syllables as well as vowel reduction and elision in English utterances since Lithuanian is not characterized by large spectral and durational differences between tonic and atonic vowels as English is. Additionally, the experiment disclosed that EFL learners may benefit from music instruction: the respondents demonstrated superior overall performance to reproduce sample English sentences rhythmically and employ the tested variables to full extent. Furthermore, a positive correlation was found between the EFL learners with musical aptitude and the implementation of the tested variables.

Keywords: Non-native, rhythm, music

1. Introduction

English today is undeniably used far more by its non-native speakers (NNS) than native speakers (NS) and recent decades have seen a continuous dispute over the implications of English as a lingua franca (ELF) particularly in the fields of second language acquisition (SLA) and English foreign language teaching (EFLT). The development of ELF has given reason to reconsider the traditional native speaker models bringing a variety of Englishes in both social and linguistic sense. Today many scholars and educationalists are rejecting the native-speaker as the ideal model for their learners and are disputing the strict adherence to standard accents such as Received Pronunciation or General American claiming that in current contexts accurate pronunciation models are inappropriate and irrelevant. Instead, they argue for intelligible English pronunciation that serves as a communicative medium for internationally diverse English language users as well as they stress the communicative efficiency over to linguistic correctness ([6], [15]). Intelligibility plays a crucial role in ELF pronunciation curriculum and can be defined as the extent of the phonological features of the language that make the message internationally recognisable by a listener ([6]). Jenkins [15] proposed the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), which is an approach with a systematic minimum syllabus for teaching English pronunciation in international settings required to

result in intelligible communication. And yet, a number of opponents remain sceptical about the relevance and teachability of the LFC. First, the intelligibility level has proved to be challenging to define and measure ([6]; [16]). Then, the goals of pronunciation instruction have become obscure, underemphasized and oversimplified which has brought some ambiguity and resignation to educators as a consequence. One of the most problematic areas in the conventionalised pronunciation curriculum of today is the lack of appropriate attention to the prosodic features of English, specifically English rhythm that is essential in order to attain the reasonable intelligibility.

2. Intelligibility and prosody

A considerable number of studies confirmed a highly tangible correlation between overall speech intelligibility alongside with perceived comprehensibility and speech prosody including rhythm ([2], [10], [22]). Anderson-Hsieh *et al.*, [2] in their research concluded that prosodic errors effected intelligibility more than phonetic errors because “prosody provides the framework for utterances and directs the listener’s attention to information the speaker regards as important” (p. 531). Hahn [10] pointed out that the correct placement of prosodic features throughout the speech slightly increased the intelligibility of the speakers and greatly increased the listeners’ assessment of the speaker. Ladefoged and Johnson [18] claimed that the change in some of prosodic features lead to the change in the utterance meaning and indicated that prosody signals the most important part of the message and directs where the listener should pay particular attention. Peelle and Davis [22] referred to neurology and behavioural studies claiming that rhythmic information is an important marker for place and manner of articulation, segmental information and speech rate as well as is relied upon by listeners and plays a key role in speech intelligibility.

3. English nature of rhythm

Traditionally English rhythm has been described as stressed-timed and opposed to syllable-timed rhythm ([1], [23]). The stressed-timed nature of English rhythm is based on phonetic contrast between strong and weak beats in a sequence of syllables that results in the variation of syllable structure, vowel reduction and neutralization as well as stress position and other acoustic alternations. To achieve approximately equal intervals of time and fit into the typical foot duration, the speakers seem to stretch or compress syllables in an utterance. The isochronous and regular rhythmic timing, however, is far more credible in the ear of the listener rather than in the actual acoustic attributes of speech thus this distinction is by no means uncontroversial and lacks scientific evidence as claimed by a number of scholars ([5]). The rhythmic typology of languages should rather be viewed as a continuum between a prototypically stress-timed and a prototypically syllable-timed pole. Yet some relevant acoustic cues of the stressed-timed nature of English still remain relevant and vital for EFL learners: the alternation of strong and weak syllable sequences, vowel neutralisation and reduction, stress placement and other rhythmic aspects of connected speech that genuinely affect the intelligibility of the learners. More than that, NNSs transfer and adopt their first language (L1) prosody into the target language (L2) and fail to produce and comprehend specific linguistic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic prosodic cues [9]. Indeed, given the complexity and the multitude of functions of prosody several studies have documented that the transfer from L1 is thought to be particularly persistent in prosody ([19]).

4. Acquiring speech rhythm through music

Regardless the substantial evidence of the vital role of prosody in communication and intelligibility, didactic studies on the acquisition of prosody and rhythm as well as pedagogical implications in particular have been somewhat scarce and overlooked in EFL materials as well as gratuitously excluded from Jenkins' *Lingua Franca Core* ([15]).

This article attempts to address this issue and advocates the idea of using music as a didactic tool for the development of English rhythm in EFL learners' speech. The integration of language and music for foreign language acquisition purposes has long interested scholars and has resulted in a number of studies reporting successful linguistic transfer via music. A highly tangible language and music relationship as well as the integration of the two for EFL acquisition and phonetic skill formation purposes in particular has been noticed by a vast number of scholars ([3], [20]). Moreover, studies have shown that the homogeneous prosodic nature of language and music may result in the positive effect on the enhancement of the feel for English rhythm ([4], [20], [21]).

Both, language and music rely on vocal and auditory modalities and thus involve the production and listening stages necessary to boost intelligibility and comprehensibility.

More than that, language and music share a number of features at the sound and the hierarchical structure level ([13], [14], [21]). Jackendoff and Lerdahl [13] investigated the hierarchical organization of elements in language and music and emphasized that both systems (linguistic and musical) are highly analogous rhythmically as they have similar hierarchical metrical systems. Moreover, a close cognitive and neurological interaction between the two systems may aid the recall of information in the brain ([11], [12]).

Ultimately, the cognitive and neurological studies are also harmonious with diverse didactic theories on distinct learning styles, intelligences, aptitudes and natural acquisition approaches ([7], [8], [17]) arguing that music instruction in EFL settings brings the potential to nurture diverse learning styles and positively influences not only prosodic, but overall cognitive and psychological skills.

5. Didactic experiment

The aim of the current study was to examine the significance of rhythm in the intelligibility of speech by non-native speakers of English due to L1 transfer as well as to report on a didactic experiment conducted in order to suggest and test music techniques for the enhancement of English rhythm by Lithuanian EFL learners. Lithuanian is not characterized by large spectral and durational differences between tonic and atonic vowels as English is and hypothetically it was expected that L1 transfer would manifest itself in the absence of vowel reduction as well as the lack of rhythmicity in terms of the alternation of strong and weak syllable sequences. A cohort of 15 EFL Lithuanian students took part in the classroom experiment and were exposed to selected sentence patterns through musically rhythmical expertise. The results of the pilot study reported a higher number of problems with the implementation of weak syllables and vowel reduction. After the musical treatment the respondents demonstrated superior overall performance to reproduce the sample English sentences rhythmically and employ the tested variables to full extent. Furthermore, a positive correlation was found between the EFL learners with musical aptitude and the implementation of the tested variables.

6. Conclusions

Overall, the current paper reviewed the scholastic evidence for the relevance of prosody and rhythm in particular for intelligibility and tested a musical approach in a didactic experiment conducted in order to suggest and test music techniques for the enhancement of English rhythm by Lithuanian EFL learners.

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Pronunciation Accuracy in L2 Speech across Different Production Tasks

Sonia d'Apolito¹, Barbara Gili Fivela²
University of Salento – Lecce, Italy^{1,2}

Abstract

This study focuses on the realization of geminates in Italian as L2 by French learners of two different competence levels (low vs. high proficiency) and across different production tasks in which the amount of information available to speakers varies. The aim is to observe: 1) how the L1 and the competence level affect the production of geminates; and 2) if the pronunciation accuracy varies across different production tasks. The hypotheses are that: 1) both L1 and proficiency affect accuracy, as it is expected a lower accuracy by learners than by natives, above all by beginners; 2) accuracy varies across tasks, as a lower accuracy is expected when the context is rich of information, since other elements can help to disambiguate the target word, and in case there is no specific need to foresee possible meaning ambiguities. Nine subjects participated in the experiment: six French learners (three beginners and three advanced learners) and three Italian speakers as control. L2 target sounds (/t, d, s, n, l, r/ both as singletons and as geminates) inserted in words were read: a) in isolation; b) in minimal pairs; and c) in two interactional contexts, that is i) poor context – a carrier phrase which does not facilitate meaning disambiguation; ii) rich context – an appropriate phrase which does help disambiguate the meaning of target words. Target consonant segments were segmented in PRAAT and their duration was measured. Results show that French learners' productions are influenced by L1 phonetics and phonology as well by the competence level: advanced learners distinguish geminates from singletons as control speakers do, while beginners show a lower degree of accuracy. In all cases, accurately produced geminates are longer than singletons. In line with our expectations, speakers produce more accurately geminates when the context is poor of information and in minimal pairs.

Keywords: L2 pronunciation, Italian L2, geminates

1. Introduction and goals

The accuracy in L2 pronunciation is greatly affected by the phonetic and phonological characteristics of the mother tongue (L1) and above all by the interaction between L1 and L2 phonetic-phonological systems [1, 2]. In particular, this study aims at observing the production of Italian geminates by French learners. In Italian, the singleton/geminate contrast is distinctive, since the meaning of the words changes according to presence of a singleton or a geminate consonant, which mainly corresponds to a difference in consonantal length duration [3]; the duration of the preceding vowel also allows to distinguish singletons and geminates, as the vowel is shorter when followed by a geminate and longer when followed by a singleton consonant [4]. On the contrary, in French gemination does not exist, with the exception of the uvular approximant which

distinguishes the imperfect tense from the conditional mood (e.g., *pourrait vs pourrait*) [5].

Besides the impact of the L1 and L2 systems, even the competence level in L2 affects accuracy in speech production. Further, according to Lindblom's H&H theory [6] speakers adapt their speech to the richness/poorness of the context in which they communicate. Therefore, two other important factors have been considered: 1) the learners' competence level (e.g., beginners vs advanced learners) as the influence of the mother tongue may differ and, as a consequence, their accuracy in production may differ too since mother tongue influence may be more evident in beginners' production rather than in advanced learners' production; and 2) different production tasks in which the amount of information varies from rich context (appropriate phrases according to the meaning of the word) to poor context (words in isolation and in unvaried carrier phrase) to minimal pairs (in which the presence of both members of a pair may induce to more clearly differentiate the target words).

Thus, the aim of this work is twofold: 1) to observe the interaction between L1 and L2 phonetic-phonological systems as for the production of geminates by French learners of Italian, taking into account two different competence levels (beginners vs. advanced learners); and 2) to observe the accuracy in L2 speech according to the information available in the context. The hypotheses are: 1) the influence of the mother tongue may lead French learners to reduce or substitute the nonnative sounds to/with native sounds and, as regards the competence level, a lower accuracy is expected by beginners; and 2) a higher accuracy is expected when the context is poor and a greater effort is needed in order to avoid possible ambiguities.

2. Method

L2 Italian sounds studied were /t, d, s, n, l, r/ within words and sentences, both as singleton (C) and geminate (CC) – see Table 1 which shows a sample of the corpus.

Target sounds inserted in words were realized: in isolation (A.), in minimal pairs (B.) and in two interactional contexts in which the target words were inserted in initial and in final position: poor context which does not facilitate disambiguation (C.) and rich context which does help to disambiguate words (D.).

A. Isolation	Sera (<i>evening</i>)	Serra (<i>greenhouse</i>)
B. Minimal pair	Sera – serra (<i>evening - greenhouse</i>)	
C. Interaction poor context	Cosa hai detto? – Maria ha detto sera/serra di nuovo <i>What did you say? – Mary said evening/greenhouse again</i>	
D. Interaction rich context	Cosa ti va di fare? – Questa sera vorrei andare al cinema <i>What would you like to do? – This evening I would like to go to the cinema</i> A cosa serve? – Questa serra serve per la piante nuove <i>What is it for? – This greenhouse is for the new plants</i>	

Table 1. Examples of words/sentence in the corpus

Nine subjects participated in the experiment. Six French learners were Erasmus students at the University of Salento (female, mean age 21.5) and they came from Paris (2), Nantes (3) and Nancy (1). They were gathered into two groups at their arrival, according to the Erasmus test results: 3 beginners (L1, L2 and L3) and 3 advanced learners (H1, H2 and H3). Three native speakers were recruited for control; they were

Italian students at the University of Salento (female, mean age 23.6) and they came from Maglie (Lecce, Salento, South Italy). All the subjects read the corpus three times.

Acoustic data were segmented in Praat [7] in order to label boundaries of phrases, words and target segments (target word structure: C1V1C2V2, where C2=C/CC) and to measure the normalized duration of C2 as well as that of the preceding vowel (target duration/ word duration). Statistical t-tests were run separately for each speaker ($p < 0.05$) in order to observe any individual difference. Here, only the results concerning the C2 duration are presented.

3. Results

Table 2 shows how all speakers realize singletons and geminates in all production tasks. It is evident that advanced learners realize singletons and geminates as control speakers do, with the exception of few cases of reduction (geminates reduced to singleton) and of overgeneralization (singletons realized as geminate) for the learner H1, above all for the interaction-poor context (24 cases of overgeneralization). On the contrary, beginners' productions show a greater variability. The learner L1 generally reduces geminates to singletons in all the production tasks. In the first three production tasks, the learner L2 realizes the geminates appropriately while the singletons are realized as geminates more frequently; further, it's worth noting that in the interaction-poor task her realization of geminates is more accurate than that of the interaction-rich context. The learner L3 is the beginner who realizes geminates accurately in all the production tasks, though she clearly overgeneralizes: singletons are produced as geminates in both poor- and rich-interaction tasks (60.6% and 30.3% respectively).

Spk	Isolation					Minimal pairs					Interaction poor					Interaction rich				
	G	S	R	O	Tot	G	S	R	O	Tot	G	S	R	O	Tot	G	S	R	O	Tot
C1	33	33	-	-	66	33	33	-	-	66	66	66	-	-	132	66	66	-	-	132
C2	33	33	-	-	66	33	33	-	-	66	66	66	-	-	132	66	66	-	-	132
C3	33	33	-	-	66	33	33	-	-	66	66	66	-	-	132	66	66	-	-	132
H1	30	28	3	5	66	26	30	7	3	66	65	42	1	24	132	60	60	6	6	132
H2	33	33	-	-	66	33	33	-	-	66	66	66	-	-	132	66	66	-	-	132
H3	33	33	-	-	66	33	33	-	-	66	61	66	5	-	132	62	66	4	-	132
L1	13	30	20	3	66	9	31	24	2	66	5	63	61	3	132	30	63	36	3	132
L2	28	14	5	19	66	23	20	10	13	66	53	31	13	35	132	31	55	35	11	132
L3	32	27	1	6	66	33	33	-	-	66	63	26	3	40	132	57	46	9	20	132

Table 2. An overview of the target consonant realization by all speaker (G = geminate; S= singleton; R= reduction - geminate -> singleton; O=overgeneralization - singleton -> geminate).

3.1 Consonant duration

As shown in Table 3 and Figure 1 below, geminates are always produced by control speakers with a significantly longer duration in comparison to singletons, for all phonemes and production tasks. The learners H2 and H3 show similar results to native speakers, realizing geminates with a longer duration in all the production tasks and for all phonemes (with the exception of /d/ in rich interaction for H2). The learner H1 shows a higher degree of accuracy in both rich- and poor-interaction – CCs have a longer duration than Cs for all phonemes – and a lower degree of accuracy in isolation and minimal pairs – CCs show a significantly longer duration for /l, n, s/ and /l, n, s, t/ respectively. On the contrary, beginners show a lower degree of accuracy than advanced and control speakers: i) L1 does never differentiate geminates from singletons except for the phonemes /l, t/ in minimal pairs; ii) L2 differentiates CCs from Cs for /s/ in all the

production tasks and also /r/ in minimal pairs and /l/ in rich-interaction context; iii) L3 shows the highest degree of accuracy since she differentiates CCs from Cs for all the phonemes in minimal pairs and also /d, l, n/ in both isolation and rich-interaction context and /l, n, t/ in poor-interaction context.

Spk	t-test	Production tasks				Durat.
		Isolation	Minimal pairs	Interaction		
				Poor	Rich	
C1	p<0.05	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	+CC
C2	p<0.05	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	+CC
C3	p<0.05	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	+CC
H1	p<0.05	/l, n, s/	/l, n, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	+CC
H2	p<0.05	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	+CC
H3	p<0.05	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/l, n, r, s, t/	+CC
L1	p<0.05	never	/l, t/	Never	never	+CC
L2	p<0.05	/s/	/r, s/	/s/	/l, s/	+CC
L3	p<0.05	/d, l, n, s/	/d, l, n, r, s, t/	/l, n, s, t/	/d, l, n s/	+CC

Table 3. T-test results for C2 duration for all speakers and production tasks

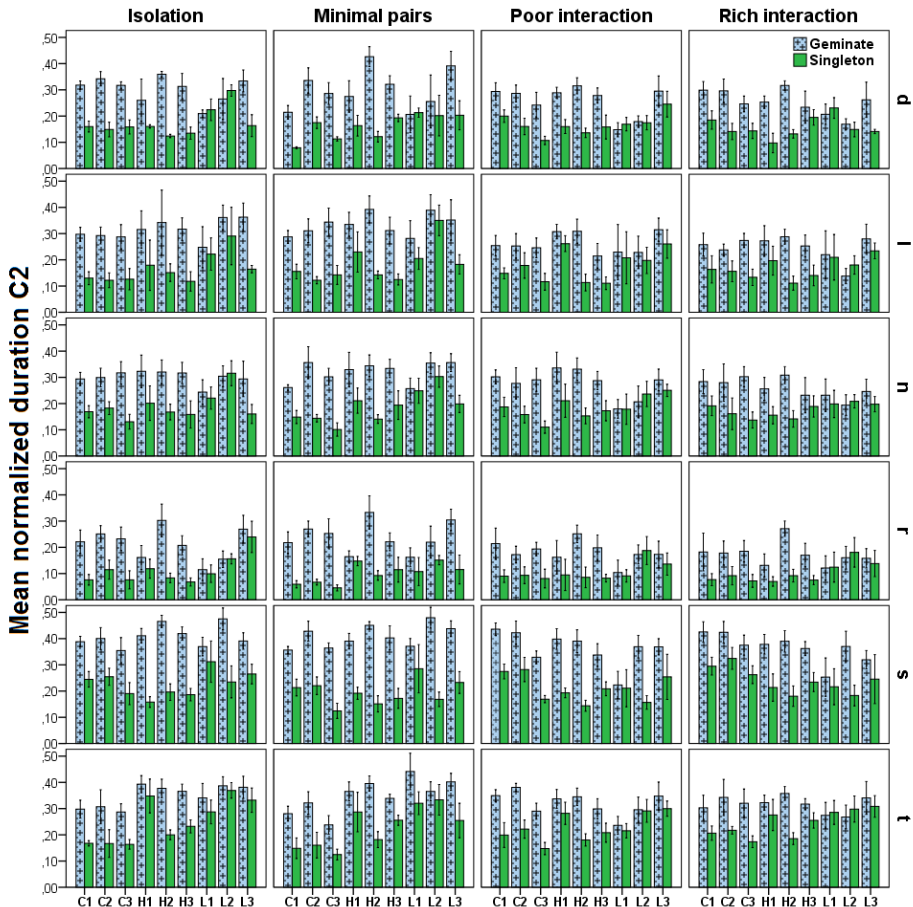


Fig. 1: Bar graph for the C/CC normalized duration

An ANOVA test was performed to observe if CCs are produced with the same accuracy across production tasks. Due to space limits, here only results concerning the phoneme /t/ will be described. The ANOVA shows that for all speaker's CC duration differs significantly across tasks. The Tukey post-hoc test shows that for all learners, there are two distinct groups: consonant duration in isolation and minimal pairs is longer than that in poor and rich interaction. For control speakers C1 and C2 geminates have a longer duration in poor-interaction context, which differs from all other tasks; for C3 geminates show longer duration in rich-interaction, which is only different from minimal pairs. Results are reported in Figure 2 below.

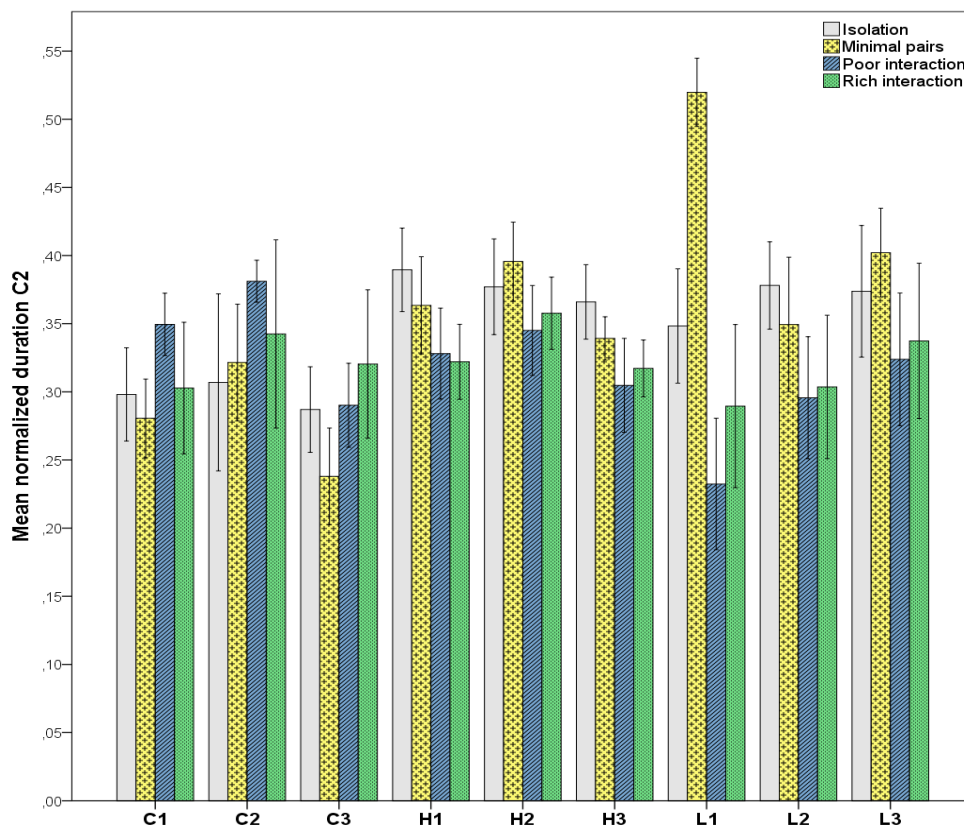


Fig. 2: Bar graph for the CC normalized duration for /t/

3. Discussion and conclusions

The production of the consonant length contrast shows, as expected, an influence of the mother tongue and an interaction with the target language features, as well as differences depending on the competence level. Indeed, in comparison to the advance learner and the control group, the beginner group shows a lower degree of accuracy in differentiating geminates from singletons in all the production tasks, producing geminates as singletons or viceversa. On the contrary, the advanced learners show the same degree of accuracy of native speakers, realizing geminates with a longer duration than singletons. However, geminates are not produced with the same accuracy across the production tasks. Confirming that higher accuracy is reserved to the need of

disambiguation (which is greater in isolation, poor interaction and, though for different reasons, to minimal pairs). French learners produce geminates more accurately in both isolation and minimal pairs than in poor- and rich-interaction context showing higher variation than natives in relation to changes in context information. Two out of three natives produce longer geminates in poor contexts (isolation and poor-interaction) as they pay more attention to disambiguate words.

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Relationships between Students' Grammar Acquisition, Computer Literacy and Self-Regulation Variables in a Virtual Learning Environment with Wiki-Based Grammar E-Tivities

Andreja Kovačić¹, Goran Bubaš²
University of Zagreb, Croatia^{1,2}

Abstract

The literature on CALL (computer-assisted language learning) indicates that various psychological characteristics of learners may determine the process of language learning and its outcomes [1], especially in constructivist, learner-based paradigms [2]. It has been argued that hybrid learning settings offer increased opportunities for individualization and collaboration [3]. However, research on the interrelationships between individual variables that may affect students' grammar development in a hybrid English as a foreign language (EFL) environment supported by web 2.0 tools is fairly scarce. The aim of the study in this paper was to establish the correlation between the acquired knowledge of five morphosyntactic structures, two learner characteristics associated with computer literacy and three self-regulation variables in EFL grammar instruction within the socio-constructivist paradigm. The subjects in our study were students of Information Systems at a Croatian university enrolled in a hybrid EFL course. They were engaged in collaborative out-of-class e-tivities using wikis and other web 2.0 tools to describe and illustrate advanced grammar topics. The acquired grammatical competence (GC) was assessed by a written test. The data on learner variables were collected by a survey questionnaire. Both instruments were administered after the completion of e-tivities. The correlation analysis revealed statistically significant associations between the outgoing GC and two variables: (1) students' perception of self-efficacy and (2) their perceived effort in using the computer (negative correlation).

Keywords: Computer-assisted language learning, EFL grammar, computer literacy, self-regulation

1. Introduction

In the research of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) individual learner characteristics are becoming more intensely recognized as variables that can determine the effectiveness of language instruction supported by digital tools [1], [2], [4], [5]. In terms of learner variability, of particular importance to the Second Language Acquisition field are *individual differences*, or “characteristics of traits in which individuals may be shown to differ from each other” ([6]: 2). In CALL settings, learner autonomy is seen as a prerequisite for utilizing the affordances of CALL and overcoming its constraints [7] which is associated with the use of strategies and self-regulation. Learners' *self-regulatory capacity* refers to the degree to which “they are active participants in their own learning” [6]: 45. Three dimensions of self-regulation are commonly distinguished: metacognitive, motivational and behavioural, manifested as “self-generated thoughts,

feelings, and actions towards attaining one's goals" [8]: 73. Moreover, to successfully engage in instructed FL learning online, students need to possess a satisfactory level of *computer literacy*, which beyond mere technical skills implies the awareness of how computers can be used for learning [9].

This paper focuses on the use of *web 2.0 tools*, which over a decade ago brought about a new approach to the development and design of technological platforms [10].

The affordances of web 2.0 tools (such as creation and publishing of online content, participation and networking [10]) were intertwined with constructivist, learner-oriented pedagogies within the *e-learning 2.0* paradigm [11], also adopted in EFL instruction [12].

Web 2.0 tools are widely used in language teaching as a CALL component in hybrid instruction. The effectiveness of the use of social software (i.e., web 2.0 tools) for promoting active learning will rely on learner's ability to regulate their own learning by "monitoring, reflection, testing, questioning and self-evaluation" [13]: 29. Active and participatory learning can be incorporated in FL instruction through the pedagogical format of collaborative *e-tivities* [14].

In this paper we examine the role of individual characteristics of learners related to their self-regulated learning and computer literacy in performing e-tivities in web 2.0 tools aimed to develop GC. The approach to grammar instruction in our research is a combination of form-focused language instruction, collaborative writing and constructivist pedagogy.

2. Definition of constructs in this paper

The variables defined for investigating the connection between individual characteristics and the development of GC were conceptualized as:

- learner characteristics which constitute *self-regulated learning*:
 - 1) *Perceived self-efficacy in learning EFL* – the motivational component of self-regulation [15]; learner's beliefs regarding their own ability to organize and perform actions needed to fulfil a specific goal [16];
 - 2) *Personal goal-setting* – the metacognitive component of self-regulation [15]; "the process of establishing clear and usable targets, or objectives, for learning [17]: 153;
 - 3) *Effort invested in using online resources in the EFL course* – the students' assessment of the degree of their out-of-class engagement with online materials in their EFL course; the behavioural component of self-regulation [15];
- learner characteristics which constitute their *computer literacy*:
 - 1) *Effort in using the computer* – negative beliefs of a user of technology regarding its use or training for its use that arise from the complexity of its implementation for performing tasks [18];
 - 2) *Internet self-efficacy* – the individuals' perception of the ability to use the internet [19].

In the particular context of our study, the outgoing *Grammatical competence (GC)* was conceptualized as the acquired knowledge of particular morphosyntactic structures in EFL in the post-test after the performance of e-tivities.

3. Method

3.1 Research questions

The aim of the study in this paper was to establish a correlation between the knowledge of five grammatical structures on the one hand, and learner characteristics

associated with their perception of their own self-regulated learning and computer literacy on the other. The following research questions were defined for our empirical study:

- **RQ1:** Is there a relationship between (a) the *three psychological characteristics* within the construct of *self-regulated learning* and (b) the acquired knowledge of particular grammatical structures in English after the performance of e-tivities using web 2.0 tools?
- **RQ2:** Is there a relationship between (a) the *two learner characteristics* within the construct of *computer literacy* and (b) *the acquired knowledge of particular grammatical structures in English* after the performance of e-tivities using web 2.0 tools?

3.2 Sample and procedure

The sample in our study were 89 first-year undergraduate students of Information Systems at a Croatian university – 71 (79,8%) male and 18 (20,2%) female respondents mostly aged 19-21. All the subjects were enrolled in the hybrid EFL course in which the e-tivities were conducted. The survey was completed by all the 89 respondents, while 80 of them participated in the grammar test.

The subjects were engaged in collaborative out-of-class e-tivities using wikis and other web 2.0 tools. Each team was required to create two descriptions of two different grammar concepts on a separate wiki page to which they added multimedia artefacts made by different web 2.0 tools. The tools used to illustrate grammar concepts were: *Bubbl.us* and *Mindomo* (mind maps); *Gliffy* (concept maps) and *Bubblr* (cartoon strips).

Figure 1 shows an excerpt of a students' mind map on the topic of Causative *have* made by means of the *Mindomo* tool. The multimodal artifacts were linked to respective pages in a course wiki which served as a repository of students' short textual descriptions of EFL grammar. The data on learner variables were collected by a survey questionnaire after the completion of e-tivities. The GC test was also administered after the performance of e-tivities. The observed structures were: Unreal conditions; Causative *have*; Subjunctive and unreal past; Reported questions and commands; Participle phrases. The total score in the test was taken as the criterion variable.

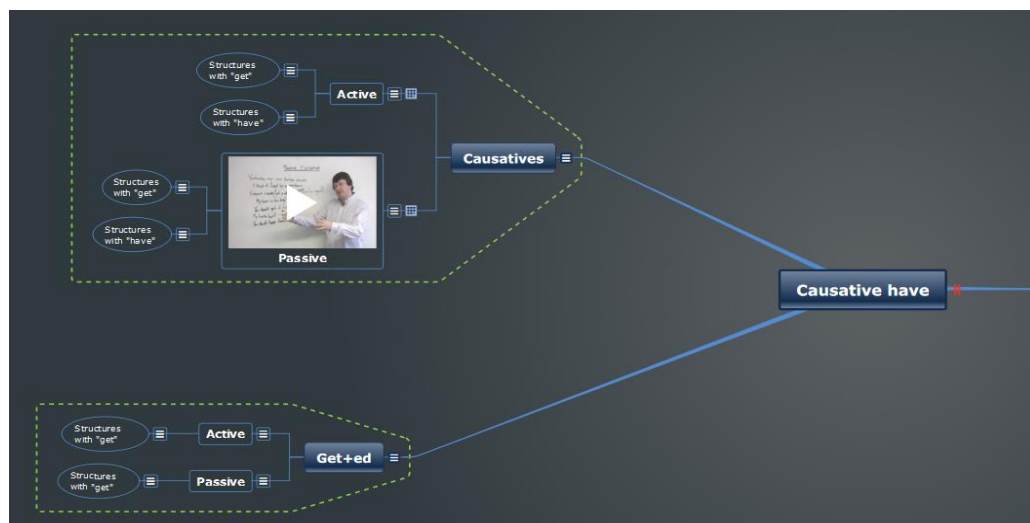


Fig. 1: Excerpt from a grammar multimedia artefact (mind map) in the Mindomo tool

3.3 Instruments

In our empirical research the following two instruments were administered: (1) a *survey questionnaire* and (2) *GC test*. The *questionnaire* was used for collecting data on (a) 3 learner variables related to self-regulation defined in Section 2 of this paper (3 scales; adapted from [20], [21], including several items created by the authors of this paper) and (b) 2 learner variables related to computer literacy defined in Section 2 of this paper (2 scales; adapted from [18], [19], [21], including several items created by the authors of this paper). The total score in the test was taken as the criterion variable.

The first part of the *GC test* consisted of 10 English sentences which contained an underlined grammatical mistake related to one of the five targeted grammatical structures. The second part of the test consisted of 10 English sentences which contained a grammatical mistake which was not underlined. Subjects had to write the correct version of all the sentences (in the first and second part of the test) and also identify (underline) the grammatical mistake (in the second part of the test).

4. Results and discussion

To address the two research questions in our study, we used the Pearson correlation analysis of the data collected by the survey and the GC test. Statistically significant associations were obtained between the outgoing GC in the test and two learner variables: *Perceived self-efficacy* and *Effort in using the computer*.

4.1 Self-regulated learning variables and outgoing GC

We hypothesized that the outgoing GC, i.e. the total score in the post-test as an indicator of the acquisition of the targeted grammar concepts after the performance of e-tivities, would be associated with students perceived self-regulated behaviour. However, from the three variables related to self-regulated learning in our research, the only statistically significant (moderate) correlation between the acquired GC and self-regulation was established for *Perceived self-efficacy in learning EFL* ($r=-0.425$, $p<0.01$).

On the other hand, no statistically significant interrelationships were obtained between GC and *Personal goal-setting* and *Effort invested in using online resources*, respectively. Such findings suggest that students who more positively perceived their own ability to perform the task in e-tivities which implied several challenges (collaborative online format, autonomous out-of-class work, content complexity, usage of digital tools, creating multimodal representation of language content) were also more successful at improving their GC. The literature on self-efficacy provides evidence on positive correlation between self-efficacy and achievement in learning, which may be related to higher levels of intrinsic motivation, self-confidence and positive self-evaluation, and readiness to take up challenge and overcome obstacles [22], [23]. Moreover, we can assume that the acquisition of morphosyntactic structures measured by the GC test in our study was related to self-efficacy in learning EFL (as reported by subjects in the survey questionnaire) as the motivational component of self-regulation.

4.2 Computer literacy variables and outgoing GC

It was also hypothesized that the outgoing GC, i.e. the total score in the post-test after the performance of e-tivities, would be associated with students' perceived information literacy. From the two variables that constitute self-regulated learning in our research, the only statistically significant (weak) *negative* correlation between the acquired GC and information literacy was established for *Effort in using the computer* ($r=-.303$, $p<0.01$), while no significant association was established between GC and the respondents'

perceived *Internet self-efficacy*. In other words, students who perceived less effort invested in working with computers (which probably also included using wikis and other web 2.0 tools in e-tivities) performed better in the GC test. Broadly speaking, we could assume that in hybrid settings, in which students rely on using online tools for learning in addition to face to face instruction and interaction with peers, the ability to use digital tools represents one of the factors of learning success, especially in out-of-class activities in which students need to exercise autonomy in using both the EFL and technology. However, the established correlation between grammar attainment and computer skills manifested by low effort in using the computer does not imply a causal relationship. It could therefore be claimed that, conversely, the lower level of effort in using the computer for e-tivities was reported by students with a higher level of EFL competence who, owing to their language proficiency, more easily mastered new web 2.0 applications and the task that had to be performed online.

5. Conclusion

The aim of the study in this paper was to establish the correlation between the acquired knowledge of particular grammatical structures and learner characteristics associated with computer literacy (effort in using the computer, and internet self-efficacy) and self-regulation variables (self-efficacy in learning EFL, personal goal-setting, and effort in using online resources in the EFL course). After the empirical study was completed the correlation analysis of the collected data revealed statistically significant associations between the outgoing grammatical competence and two variables: (1) students perceived self-efficacy in learning EFL and (2) their perceived effort in using the computer (negative correlation). Such findings imply that learner achievement in EFL grammar e-tivities conducted in a socio-constructivist learning scenario does not only rely on their language ability, but may also be related to their positive perception and awareness of their own capacity to complete academic tasks and resolve potential task- and technology-related difficulties. The obtained empirical evidence may be useful in providing guidelines for training students for online learning success in similar collaborative grammar-based tasks in a hybrid setting.

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Teaching and Learning L2 Spanish Intonation: Technology and Classroom Instruction

Angela George¹
University of Calgary, Canada¹

Abstract

The present study investigates the effects of explicit instruction on the production of dialectal differences in information-seeking yes/no questions (There is a meeting tomorrow?) and neutral broad-focused declarative statements (There is a meeting tomorrow.), which can be distinguished using intonation cues. For example, in Puerto Rican Spanish yes/no questions end with a low tone, while in North-Central Spain they end with a high tone. While learners of Spanish have been known to increase accurate production of target-like intonation patterns in study abroad contexts ([1], [2], [3]), it is unclear if they can do so as a result of training in the classroom. To address this question, 10 advanced L2 Spanish (L1 English) read 14 short scenarios, and after each one produced a target utterance for a total of 14 utterances including 7 absolute interrogatives, 3 information-seeking pronominal interrogatives (distractors), and 4 neutral broad-focused declarative statements. These recordings occurred before and shortly after receiving 30 minutes of in-class instruction on intonation as part of an advanced Spanish course at a large university in the USA. This instruction utilized visuals (map and Praat spectrograms) and their accompanying recordings from the Interactive Atlas of Spanish Intonation housed online. The instructor explained the differences in the intonation contours of the three types of utterances eight macrodialects of Spanish. While the participants listened to the recordings, with the help of the labelled spectrograms, they identified the high and low tones throughout the utterances. Comparisons to English were also made. The participants also completed a Spanish proficiency test and a background questionnaire in which they indicated the dialect they were attempting to speak. The data are compared to eight L1 Spanish speakers of different varieties of Spanish who read the same scenarios and produced the same utterances. The results show a high degree of individual variation, with some effect of instruction on the production of these variable intonation patterns. This presentation will also address ways to improve this instruction and incorporate it in the language classroom.

Keywords: L2 pronunciation, Online atlas, L2 Spanish intonation

1. Introduction

In English, a yes-no question is distinct from a statement not only due to intonation (high (H%) vs. low boundary tone (L%), respectively), but also due to word order. This is not the case in Spanish, where intonation may be the only cue to distinguish a question from a statement when the word order remains the same [4]. As a result, second language (L2) learners of Spanish with an English first language (L1) cannot use the same information in their L1 to distinguish statements from yes-no questions. That is,

they cannot solely rely on word order, but they need to primarily use intonational cues.

On the other hand, *wh*-questions follow similar syntactic and intonational patterns in English and Spanish, so the L2 learners do not have to rely on intonation.

In Spanish, native speakers exhibit regional variation in their intonational patterns (e.g., [5]). This leaves unclear how learners of Spanish will develop their intonation, particularly in places with Spanish-speakers from a variety of geographic origins.

Acquisition of Spanish supra-segmental phonology (syllables, stress, tone, intonation, etc.) is less researched than segmental phonological features (voice onset time) [6], leaving room for research on the production of intonation by L2 speakers. The current paper addresses this issue by determining the effects of a pedagogical intervention involving explicit instruction on intonational variation in Spanish. This intervention involves the use of the Interactive Atlas for Spanish Intonation [5]. This atlas is housed on a website, where upon clicking on a city on a map, a series of recorded utterances appears, detailing the way most speakers in that city pronounce each utterance. This is particularly useful for seeing and hearing regional differences in Spanish intonation.

2. Background

L2 intonation has not been widely studied in Spanish. Nibert [7], [8] found that L2 learners at the intermediate and advanced level could accurately perceive syntactically ambiguous sentences. Most L2 Spanish intonation studies focus on study abroad, where learners can target the intonational patterns of locals. Study abroad has resulted in more target-like production of declaratives absolute interrogatives and *wh*-questions by learners in Spain [9], broad focus declaratives and absolute interrogatives in the Andes of Venezuela [3] and absolute interrogatives in Buenos Aires, Argentina [10].

The usefulness of explicit instruction for learning pronunciation in the Spanish classroom has been debated, with one side stating that input alone may be sufficient to improve pronunciation accuracy and the other side noting the benefits of pedagogical interventions [11]. Explicit instruction has been shown to help with perceiving some regional features and not with others in L2 learners Andalucía, Spain [12]. However, explicit instruction did not aide in the production of declaratives and absolute interrogatives in L2 learners in Valencia, Spain [1]. This could be because the intervention was perception based and the data collected was production based.

Previous theories on phonological L2 learning do not focus on intonation [1]. There is a need to address variation in language input and how this affects production. To address these issues, the current study poses the following research question: What are the effects of explicit instruction in the classroom on the production of intonational patterns of absolute interrogatives, information-seeking pronominal interrogatives, and neutral broad-focused declarative statements?

3. Methods

The participants completed a background questionnaire in which they provided information about their previous experiences learning Spanish and the dialect of Spanish they attempt to use when speaking. They then completed a Spanish proficiency test. All participants were adults taking an advanced Spanish course at a university in the South-eastern USA. Prior to receiving any instruction about intonation, the participants completed a pretest, were they produced 14 utterances.

A few days later, the participants received explicit instruction on intonation, which

involved viewing spectrograms and listening to recordings from the Interactive Atlas of Spanish Intonation (found here: <http://prosodia.upf.edu/atlasentonacion>). This instruction consisted of a presentation of the spectrograms of three sentence types in each dialect by highlighting the overall contours and differences in pitch accents and boundary tones. The students listened to each example and the professor explained the pitch accents and boundary tones of each utterance as shown on the spectrogram. This instruction lasted about 30 minutes.

One week after this instruction for the post-test, participants produced the same 14 utterances as before. The productions were analysed in Praat using the tones and break indices model for Spanish, or Sp_ToBI [13] and were coded for boundary tones and pitch accents. Ten participants completed both the pre and post-test recordings and all but one was L1 English speakers. The other's L1 was French. Their ages ranged from 21 to 42 and they spent between two- and nine-years learning Spanish. Their scores on the grammar-based proficiency test ranged from 52% to 96%.

4. Findings and Discussion

The results of any differences found in the pre and post-test are shown in Table 1.

The Spanish proficiency test score is also listed. Overall, participants changed the most in their production of wh-questions, followed by absolute interrogatives, and changed the least in their production with declaratives. This shows that instruction only has a slight effect on the production of variable intonational patterns, since wh-questions do not vary. The reason for such low numbers of change could be because the students are already at a more advanced stage in their learning of Spanish and have already cemented in their brain the earlier learned form in alignment with the sociolinguistic variationist model for SLA [14].

This research presents similar findings to that of Craft (2015) who found no effect of explicit instruction on the production of declaratives or absolute interrogatives for L2 learners studying abroad. To summarize the findings in light of the research question, explicit instruction provides almost no effect on the production of declaratives, minimal effects on the production of absolute interrogatives, and some effect on the production of wh-questions.

Table 1. Differences from pre-test to post-test

Participant Code F = female M = male	Proficiency score	Absolute Interrogatives (N=3)	Declaratives (N=4)	Wh-questions (N=7)
4F	52%	0 different	1 different	1 different
5F	76%	0 different	0 different	6 different
6F	92%	0 different	2 different	1 different
7M	84%	3 different	0 different	3 different
8M	48%	2 different	0 different	2 different
10M	92%	1 different	0 different	4 different
11M	96%	2 different	0 different	3 different
12F	76%	0 different	0 different	5 different
14F	N/A	0 different	0 different	1 different
16M	N/A	0 different	0 different	2 different
		Total: 8 (33%)	Total: 3 (7.5%)	Total: 28 (40%)

5. Conclusions

This study shows that the use of an online atlas for explicit instruction on variable intonational patterns can be useful for L2 learners, particularly in the production of wh-questions. Future studies may use a similar pedagogical intervention for beginning and intermediate learners, which may lead to more robust results. One limitation of this study is that the intonational patterns of the L1 were not obtained, so it is unclear how the L1 influenced the L2 patterns. Future pedagogical interventions could include students' comparing their recordings to the one's in the online atlas to determine which dialect they most closely resemble.

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The Mosaic of Ecological Discourse in the Light of Translation Studies and Cognition

Irina A. Bykova¹, Elena A. Notina², Nebojša Radić³
RUDN University, Russian Federation^{1,2}
Cambridge University, United Kingdom³

Abstract

Built around complex doctrinal approaches to interactions among human and natural systems and characterized by increasing dynamism, ecological scientific discourse tends to set sights on the interdisciplinarity facet of researches and has its own relevant specificities of language use that are to be paid special attention in what regards science education. In the context of cross-border scientific communication and polylogue as to environmental concerns and agenda suffused by emanation of new concepts, neologisms, and innovative theories, particular relevance is acquired by potential symmetry of presuppositional conditions, including linguistic, cultural, and scientific competencies of communicants that determine the common background of knowledge, essential for ensuring that the information is adequately sent and received, as well as the spatio-temporal limits of a given discourse, in terms of analysis, at which this article is aimed, within the frames of comparison of specificities that characterize the way in which certain parts of knowledge or human experience is reflected in language throughout the process of mediated cross-cultural cross-linguistic scientific communication, along with efficiency and scope of translator's choice and creativity. The methods of semantic and comparative analyses, as well as the method of translation, and the questionnaire method are used in this study. Ph.D. students of RUDN-university (n 78) from different countries with different mother-tongue backgrounds learning academic writing in the English and the Spanish languages participated in the questionnaire. By way of conclusion, cognitive approach to semiotic and functional potential of ecological discourse, to the structures of knowledge and conventional ways of objectivization thereof within cognitive environment, to linking or relating knowledge of field data with language competence enhance motivation of Ph.D. students to participate in cross-linguistic cross-cultural scientific communication. The practical value of this study can be relevant for language teaching, language acquisition, translation studies, intercultural communication and discourse researches.

Keywords: translation; ecological discourse; presuppositions of scientific cross-linguistic cross-cultural communication; conceptual transparency

Introduction

The dynamism and extent to which the key contemporary issues in the realm of environment are addressed by scholars underlie complexity and design of the mosaic of ecological discourse. When exploring problems related to cognitive structuring and linguistic presenting of knowledge and human experience within complex processes of discourse production and comprehension in the context of professional cross-linguistic

cross-cultural mediated communication, issues related to cognitive aspects of language acquisition and connected with the ways in which modern reality is conceptualized in terms of ecological models become crucial for bilingual language users, Ph.D. students, in particular, when forming linguo-cognitive thesaurus in specific professional area of scientific research.

Discussion

Interdisciplinary approach to translation entails complex issues, such as meaning construction in language, cognitive and pragmatic aspects of scientific discourse perception, comprehension and production, along with the phenomenon of intertextuality and speech act efficiency.

Special interest is acquired by spatiotemporal limits of environmental scientific discourse due to the fact that they determine specificities and limitations imposed by particular social necessities and requirements, particular world visions, and communicative situation which to a certain point reflects the views of the society as to environmental issues regarding corresponding period of time. In the basis of this process lies a sign situation and its characteristic features that both involve cognitive experiences of carriers of a particular linguistic culture as a reflection of the reality, and establish associative links in their linguistic consciousness with certain aspects and relevant details of the extralinguistic world.

Generally, neologisms encode one of the parameters of the communicative pragmatic situation, *i.e.*, the sender's intention. Pragmatic sense of such lexical units (LUs) is formed in the cognitive system of a particular socio-cultural community in response to certain communicative and pragmatic needs and intentions. Thus, the addressee is presumed to have the required knowledge, views, and representations forming his cultural or scientific competence that ensure his perception of the information in accordance with the aims and goals of the communication. For example: *eco-capacity*, *eco-system*, *eco-advertising*, *ecological footprint*, *ecotarian*, *veganize*, etc.

Pragmatic and functional potential of such LUs predetermines their usage in qualitative situations when addressing specific features that identify multifaceted phenomena with specific characteristics. The latter play the role of pragmatic sense markers with additional cognitive effects that involve presuppositions and implications based on background knowledge which ensure adequate perception within a given perspective. For example: *eco-warrior*, *ecocide*, *eco-freak*, etc.

Material and methods

Ph.D. students (*n* 78) of People's Friendship University of Russia (RUDN-university) from different countries (Albania, Algeria, China, Egypt, India, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mali, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Syria, etc.) with different mother-tongue backgrounds learning academic writing in the English and the Spanish languages as a second foreign language participated in the questionnaire, 54% of them non-Russian native-speakers.

The methods of semantic and comparative analyses, as well as the method of translation, and the questionnaire method were used when exploring the problem of lack of equivalence and of understanding while producing parallel knowledge structures in the target language (TL) in order to convey the same sense and ensure cognitive transparency in perception of informative content of neologisms in translation, along with contextual effects and constraints imposed on implications in different languages.

Results

Considered as a way of organization of both verbal and non-verbal information appertained to the process of transfer of semantic information, mental spaces are attributed important role in what concerns efficacy and facility for discourse cognitive perception. According to the componential analysis, any semantic process has in its basis the following three lines or axis: (1) the one of meaning reduction in semantic components; (2) the axis of induction or augment of meaning components; (3) substitution axis, *i.e.*, substitution of one semantic component for another [1:68].

Changes in the structure of meaning, in the totality of components thereof, originate new pragmatic restrictions. Having in its basis a referential shift similar to a metaphorical or metonymical transfer within the limits of conceptual building of a meaning, sense shaping of the LU “*ecocide*” and its usage in ecological discourse in the meaning “the destruction of large areas of the natural environment as a consequence of human activity” appeals in human consciousness to well known, stable, and particular characteristics, details, and connotations implicitly present in concept represented by LU “*genocide*”. Extension of relevant conceptual information about the object relates the latter to new circumstances, events or situations, ensuring possibilities for the modelling of a new notion of ecological reality with singular cognitive and discursive parameters that invokes predictable stereotype associations within a new pragmatic context while preserving particular world vision rooted in the background knowledge and associations with “*genocide*”, reinforcing all pragmatically marked connotations thereof that facilitate sense interplay in the context of a given ecological discourse. The building up of conceptual information activates sense-generating mechanisms placing changes in the axis of substitution, *i.e.*, substitution of the same “*humanity*” as a component of the meaning “*genocide*” for the “*eco*”, that is to say, “*nature*”, “*environment*” while the set of semes that form its sense stays unaltered. The two linked concepts, “*ecocide*” as a neologism and already existing and lexically mapped “*genocide*”, express relevant categories that reflect experience, representations, and world visions of the carriers while fixing particular details and qualities characteristically associated with the situation, as well as attitude towards and perception thereof that are explicitly or implicitly encoded within the context of a given discourse and perspective. Moreover, cognitive transparency thereof is manifested in a short and familiar way contributing to reveal additional cognitive effects when processing conceptual information, for example: “*genocide*” ↔ “*ecocide*, (*Eng.*); “*genocidio*” ↔ “*ecocidio*” (*Esp.*).

At the same time, the English and the Spanish languages, as opposed to the Russian language, seem to show more openness in using mechanism of conceptual meaning modelling just referred to above in LUs like “*vegetarian*”, such as, “*flexitarian*” (*Eng.*) – “*flexitariano*” (*Esp.*); “*localtarian*” (*Eng.*) – “*localtariano*” (*Esp.*), etc., for example, “*ecotarian*” that defines “a person who only eats food produced or prepared in a way that does not harm the environment: *an ecotarian cooking blog*” [2], what facilitates discourse usage thereof when translated into the TL.

It is notable that the English LU “*ecotarian*” in contrast to the LU “*vegetarian*” – «*вегетарианец*» eludes an equivalent form in the Russian language. The Russian language when addressing the concept “*vegetarian*” manifests same attitude and associations when addressing the referential situation and providing for the implicit information that is represented by same short form in the English and the Spanish languages, having in consequence a marked impact on intertextuality phenomenon and mediated discourse efficacy.

According to the analysis undertaken in this research, in what regards the LU

“*ecotarian*”, the addressee in the TL (the Spanish language (92%)), succeeds in building up new mental space in accordance with the sender’s perception as to the described fragment of the world picture by means of the English language that grants invariability in perception and interpretation of the LU informative content and involves presuppositions and implications based on common background knowledge, e.g.:

“Diversas personas en todo el mundo utilizan el término “**ecotariano**” para destacar que la alimentación debe, ante todo, pensar en el medio ambiente ... El **Urban Dictionary** ... especializado términos nuevos creados por movimientos ciudadanos, **define** a los *ecotarianos* de dos formas... “alguien similar a los vegetarianos que pone el énfasis en los alimentos locales y ecológicos. Algunos pueden comer carne de animales silvestres, como el venado, si está disponible”. Y por otro lado, “aquel que se abstiene de comer carne que no es de caza silvestre (come ciervo, pato, ganso, jabalí, etc., pero no carne de res, cerdo o pollo criados de forma industrial, etc.).”

(<https://comevidabiocom.wordpress.com/2016/03/16/eres-ecotariano/>)

In the Spanish language this model shows its efficacy both in the modelling of cognitive space in linguistic consciousness of the carriers and in facilitating an adequate actualization of relevant communicative features, cognitive presuppositions, and pragmatic markedness in ecological discourse (95%). Such kind of situation can be observed in case of the English LU “*veganism*” as “the practice of not eating or using any animal products, such as meat, fish, eggs, cheese, or leather” [2] – “*véganismo*”, or LU “*vegan*”, i.e., “*végano*”, as well as some other LUs “*veganize*”, “*vegfriendly*”, “*veggy*”, etc. The following examples may be given:

“**En 2018 se calcula que son más de 1.500 restaurantes en toda España los que ofrecen comida vegana, vegetariana o vegfriendly** en un mercado de 3,5 millones de personas que buscan una alimentación diferente... con un mercado global veggie, se podría elevar la facturación mundial a 5.000 millones de euros en 2020. Hace solamente 5 años era relativamente complicado encontrar hamburguesas vegetales, tofu o hummus en supermercados y grandes comerciales”.

(www.vegmadrid.es/veganismo-vegetarianismo-espana/)

As for successful sense actualization in translation, the English word combination “*ecological footprint*” that is used to define “the amount of the earth’s energy that someone or something uses (*I’m trying to reduce my ecological footprint by cycling more and driving less*)” [2] reveals that adequacy and intertextuality phenomenon can be achieved when using calques «*экологический след*» (Рус.) and “*huella ecológica*” (Esp.) in different contexts of mediated scientific discourse in the Russian and the Spanish languages. The representation of referential situation by ecological neologisms just referred to above promotes objectivization of both emblematic characteristics and the situation *per se* when building up potential symmetry of presuppositional conditions viewed through the prism of linguistic, cultural, and scientific competencies of communicants along with interchange of their conceptual systems. The following examples in the Russian and the Spanish languages may be given as the illustration:

«Экологический след – это площадь биологически продуктивной территории и акватории, необходимой для производства потребляемых человеком ресурсов и поглощения отходов».

(<https://wwf.ru/what-we-do/green-economy/ecological-footprint/>)

“Calculadora de Huella Ecológica Personal

El Ministerio del Ambiente desarrolló la *Calculadora de Huella Ecológica Personal* en la cual se pueden ingresar los consumos per cápita de papel, madera, comida, electricidad, combustible y automáticamente calcular el valor de la Huella Ecológica”.

(www.huella-ecologica.ambiente.gob.ec/calculadora_personal.php)

Conclusion

We conclude that cognitive approach to semiotic and functional potential of ecological discourse, to the structures of knowledge and conventional ways of objectivization thereof within cognitive environment, to linking or relating knowledge of field data with language competence enhance motivation of Ph.D. students to participate in cross-linguistic cross-cultural scientific communication. The new scientific paradigm has theoretical and practical implications in the context of ecological discourse and conceptual diversity intrinsic to human activity within the limits of cross-linguistic cross-cultural mediated scientific communication. Comprehension of principles behind how information is encoded in text and exploration of particular specificities of discourse production and comprehension in foreign languages is to be paid special attention by Ph.D. students for it grants direct access to authentic data in a particular field of science, what represents a crucial factor that has immediate impact on the quality of the research carried out by Ph.D. students.

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The Role of EFL Teachers in Decreasing Learners' Reticence

Nahid Zarei¹

Department of English, Maragheh Branch, Islamic Azad University,
Maragheh/Iran Language Institute, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Republic of Iran¹

Abstract

Willingness to communicate (WTC), as a prerequisite for improving communication skills, has garnered special attention in second and foreign language classes. It is believed that high tendency to become involved in communication activities may expose learners to much more input and as a result more intake. Several factors, some of which are situational and some others trait, have been identified in promoting learners' WTC or reticence. This study set out to unravel the role of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, as the main facilitators of communication, in these classes in encouraging learners' WTC. Data for this study were collected using a focus group interview. For this purpose, 48 EFL learners, with the age range of 17-45, who were taking general advanced and high-intermediate English courses in one of the popular English Schools, were selected to participate in the study. The results of the analysis revealed that both teachers' socio-affective strategies and teaching style have a determining role in learners' WTC. What was more interesting was that these learners found teachers' socio-affective strategies even more influential than teaching style. The findings of the study have important implications for teacher trainers and EFL teachers to improve their pedagogic strategies to foster WTC in learners who prefer reticence to talk.

Keywords: Willingness to Communicate, Reticence, Socio-affective Strategies, Teaching Style

1. Introduction

Willingness to communicate (WTC) defined as the individual's "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (p. 547) [1] functions as a path to language learning inasmuch as higher levels of WTC contribute to more frequent L2 use [2], and this increased interaction is thought to promote successful L2 development [3] [4]. Empirical studies have not only found that L2 WTC is related to some inherently stable individual factors such as personality, age, and gender [5, 6, 7] but they have also discovered that it is related to some situational and contextual factors, such as topic, interlocutors, group size, cultural background, teacher, classroom social environment and so on [8, 9, 10, 2, 3, 11, 12, 13, 14].

With respect to contextual factors, although some of the above mentioned studies [10, 12, 14] have investigated teacher effect as a contextual factor, they have studied it among other factors (12) except for Zarrinabadi [14] and Fallah [10]; however, due to the determining role of teachers in boosting classroom WTC, it still requires due attention.

Therefore, the present study addresses the following question:

What teacher factors do EFL learners perceive to be the main stimulators of learners' WTC in the classroom?

2. The Study

2.1 Participants

The study used a qualitative methodology to investigate teacher factors enhancing learners' WTC. For this purpose, the data were collected in Iran language Institute (a popular English school in Iran). Learners: 48 Iranian female students, out of 146 learners, were selected to participate in the focus group interview. The students spoke Turkish and Persian; were mostly high school or university students; came from high or middle-class social background with the age range of 17-45; and were taking a general English course at a higher intermediate level. The participants were selected through purposeful sampling [15].

2.2 Procedure

Focus group interview: The learners were divided to four groups with 12 students in each. The interview questions were given to participant learners a week before the interview time [16]. Following Krueger's [17] guidelines, we tried to create warm and friendly environment and observe the participants for seating arrangements. Having welcomed the participants and overviewed the topic, we started the interview. The interview was conducted in English with most of the talking done by participants; however, they were allowed to ask for help when they did not know how to express an idea in English. We did the interview in English; otherwise, it would require a translation and member check [18], which might have endangered the validity of the findings.

3. The Results and Discussion

The data were analysed qualitatively following Cresswell's [16] six steps of inductive analysis in order to reveal teacher factors that seemed to contribute to participants' WTC.

Finally, the patterns within the data were developed and categorized. The result is as follows:

3.1 Teachers' Socio-affective Strategies

Fairness

Berry [19] advised needs-based fairness in educational setting, which means that "all students receive the supports or instruction they need to achieve academically, not that all students receive the same supports or instruction"(p. 1150). Similar to these studies, most of the learners in this study believed that when teachers involve just more sociable and more competent students, others withdraw. One of the learners said, "Some students are shy; the teacher should give them roles in discussions, too." (ID: 11, age, 45). Another learner commented, "When the teacher is friendly with other students, it discourages me to talk." (ID: 14, age, 16).

Enthusiasm

Teachers' enthusiasm, active presentation, and dynamism cause students to like him or her [20]. When teachers are liked by students, they are more willing to participate [8].

One of the participants said, "I don't want to talk because the teacher is like a robot; she just does her job and no more." (ID: 12; age, 17). Affirming her, another student commented, "When the teacher is not active and energetic, I lose my motivation to talk." (ID: 9; age, 20).

Respect

As shown in the previous study [12], classroom atmosphere (i.e., moods, emotions or climate) influences the learners' WTC. Respect which has been defined as the

“behaviour that reduces the vulnerability of others, especially those with less power in a relationship” [21, p. 162] is the determining part of the classroom atmosphere. The majority of the learners noted that when teachers value their opinions in the class and evaluate them positively, they become encouraged to talk. As one of the learners remarked, “The teacher feels superior. She tries to find our mistakes, so we don’t talk much.” (ID: 15; age, 19).

Immediacy

Immediacy was defined as communication behaviors that “enhance closeness to and nonverbal interaction with another” [22, p. 203]. It has been found by several researchers to affect students’ interaction and WTC in the classroom [10, 23, 14]. The role of teachers’ immediacy was also emphasized in this study. The interviewed learners mostly mentioned teachers’ friendly behavior, sense of humor, tone of voice, and personalized examples as encouraging factors in their WTC. One of the learners said, “When the teacher is so strict, no one talks.” (ID: 2; age, 16). Another student stated, “I can’t talk in a boring atmosphere. Some teachers don’t make fun at all.” (ID: 3; age, 16).

3.2 Teaching Style

Teachers’ talk time

Teachers are expected to create a balance between teaching time (for example, teaching grammar) and language use [24]. Some of the learners believed that although teachers’ talk functions as useful input for them, when it becomes too long, it denies the learners the chance of involvement. One of the learners said, “I want to talk and use the words and grammar I have learned while talking, but the teacher says we have some important tasks to complete.” (ID: 7; age, 20).

Error correction

Error correction strategies used by the teacher have been found to affect learners WTC [3, 14, 25]. The learners in this study also confirmed the role of error correction.

Most of the interviewed learners believed that when teachers write down their mistakes while talking and judge and mock them because of their mistakes, they choose reticence. One of the students noted that “Teachers shouldn’t expect an impeccable performance from the learners or it will discourage them from talking.” (ID: 40; age 19).

Choice of the topic

The choice of the topic may greatly affect learners’ involvement [3, 9, 14, 25, 26]. The learners in this study asserted that they would like to talk about current events, and real and interesting things. They also said they preferred to talk about special topics related to society and young people and topics related to their age. Nevertheless, most of the time, as they noted, they had to talk about the topics in their text books, which were not interesting enough.

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to delve into teacher factors that facilitate classroom WTC. The results of the study revealed that teachers’ both socio-affective strategies such as teachers’ fairness, enthusiasm, respect and immediacy, and teaching style such as teachers’ talk time, error correction, and choice of the topic have an impact on learners’ WTC.

The results showed that, considering fairness, when learners of different characteristics receive equal attention from the teacher, they become more willing to join discussions. The findings also indicated that teachers’ interest in their job and their liveliness in the class may foster WTC. Furthermore, it was found that teachers’ respect

to learners may encourage WTC. When teachers value learners' opinions on the issues raised in the class and evaluate them positively, they become encouraged to participate.

In addition, the study confirmed the findings from the previous studies [10, 23, 14] that teachers' both verbal and non-verbal immediacy may trigger learners' WTC.

Regarding teachers' talk time, it was found that the more teachers manage class time, the better they can make time for learners' participation in the class. Besides, when it comes to error correction strategies, it was found that when error correction is without judging and blaming students', it may not lead to learners' reticence. Finally, the choice of the topic was found to affect learners' WTC. However, it is not an easy task for a teacher especially in some conservative cultures. On the one hand, young learners wish to talk about recent issues and hot topics in the world; on the other hand, the education system exerts some limitations on the topics discussed in the classroom due to cultural, social and religious rules.

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Conference Secretariat:

PIXEL

Via Luigi Lanzi, 12 - 50134 Firenze (Italy)

Tel. +39-055-48 97 00 - E-mail: conference@pixel-online.net

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